

Introduction – Christine DeVita

- Good morning and thank you for taking the time to be with us today. I'm Christine DeVita, the president of The Wallace Foundation, one of the few national charitable foundations singularly focused on improving learning for children, particularly those living in distressed neighborhoods. We invest in states, cities, school districts and non-profits to help test out possible solutions, fund research to fill in knowledge gaps, evaluate the results of our work, and then share what we've learned with others. That's why we're here today. We want to share what we've learned over the past decade, in the hope that it might inform your own thinking as you work to improve our education system.
- Consider these two points: As a nation,
 1. We're appropriately paying a great deal of attention to teachers – and how to ensure our children have great teachers. But we can't get excellent teachers in every classroom, in every school, without effective principals.
 2. We're also focusing on ways to turn around failing schools. Well, there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by an effective leader.
- Both the research and our experience in schools are crystal clear on this point: We cannot create a world-class public education system without an effective principal in every school. Principals whose main job is not managing buildings, but teaching and learning. Principals who set a vision, build a team that makes high-quality teaching the norm, and create a culture of improvement.
- Although more people are recognizing the importance of principal leadership we have not yet given it the careful, thoughtful attention it deserves. And we're paying the price for our neglect – most especially in our lowest-performing schools where, as you will hear, it's hard to find, attract and retain principals who can turn them around.
- But ... and here is the upside, if we could get more, well-qualified leaders where they are badly needed, and support their success, research suggests that the impact on students would be disproportionate. Here's why.

1. ***Student achievement.*** Leadership is second only to teaching among-school related factors in its power to raise student achievement.
 2. ***School turnaround.*** The impact of good leadership is greatest in schools where it is needed most.
 3. ***Attracting and retaining good teachers.*** As you will hear, it's a little known fact that a good principal is the single most important factor in determining whether teachers will go to the most troubled schools – and stay there.
- And in today's tough fiscal environment, there's a fourth reason.

Cost-effectiveness. Research confirms that because one principal can shape the work of many teachers in a school, investments in improving the recruitment, training, evaluation and ongoing development of principals should be considered highly cost-effective approaches to successful school improvement.
 - So the question is – what can we do to get the principals our children – particularly those in troubled schools – need and deserve?
 - In the next half hour or so, we'll share what we and our partners have learned based on ten years of research and work with 24 states and school districts across the country.
 - Our panel of distinguished experts will talk about what needs to change – in how we train principals, in how we accredit universities doing the training, in how we coach and mentor new principals, and in how we evaluate them. We'll briefly look at what some states and districts have done to improve the quality of their principals. And we'll hear from an accomplished principal about what the job is really like. I'll ask each panelist to offer their own views on the implications for federal policy of what we've learned.
 - In addition to our panel, we also have some Wallace staff here as well, Richard Laine, Lucas Held, and Jessica Schwartz, all of whom are very knowledgeable about these topics as well. So between all of us, I hope we'll be able to answer your questions in the 20 minutes or so we will reserve for that purpose.

That's a lot to do, so let's get started.

