

Are the World's Top School Leadership Development Systems More Effective Than the Best MBA Programs?

**NCEE Report Shows How the World's High-Performing Education Systems
Identify, Develop and Train School Leaders to Drive Excellence and Equity**

Washington, DC- Research has shown that second only to teacher effectiveness, school leadership has the greatest in-school impact on student outcomes. Yet while the *Every Student Succeeds Act* promised increased funding and support for school leadership development, most states have yet to construct comprehensive approaches to identifying and developing school leaders.

Some of the world's top-performing education systems, by contrast, have successfully developed and implemented systems to effectively identify, develop and train all school leaders. These leadership development systems identify highly capable educators and develop them to lead high-performance school organizations centered on teacher professionalism and collaboration. These systems invest in training for not just top school principals, but all leaders, to ensure that every school leader internalizes and helps drive the state, provincial or national agenda for school improvement.

These are the findings of a new report from the National Center on Education and the Economy's (NCEE) Center on International Education Benchmarking, *Preparing to Lead: Lessons in Principal Development from High-Performing Education Systems*. Authored by Australian researcher Ben Jensen, the report finds that many of the world's best education systems are providing current and future school leaders with leadership development that is specifically tailored to the unique context that school leaders face in their work environments. These programs provide development opportunities that mirror the day-to-day responsibilities of their school leaders and are focused on real-world problems of immediate concern to the profession.

This deeply contextualized training, targeted at the participants' specific needs, typically cannot occur in even the most prestigious MBA programs, which offer general training to diverse professionals from various industries. Because the best school leadership development programs are embedded within the education system and the professional context of their participants, they can overcome the common limitations of generalist MBA programs.

"The best programs combine a detailed understanding of principals' roles and responsibilities with a deep grounding in the system's particular philosophy and objectives for how schools get better," said report author Ben Jensen. "Such high-impact teaching and learning uniquely positions these leaders for success and simply is not possible in generalist leadership or MBA programs, even at the highest levels."

Jensen and his research team from Learning First, an Australian education research and policy institute, studied leadership development systems in Hong Kong, Ontario, Singapore and Shanghai, four of the world's top-performing education systems, as measured by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey.

The report found that while their principal-preparation programs vary, all four high-performing systems:

1. Structure leadership development to reflect their vision for schools.
2. Train leaders to manage professional learning.
3. Tie leadership development to real problems of practice that school leaders can influence.
4. Run school leadership programs that build skills for a dynamic work environment.

5. Continue leadership development programs throughout a leader's career.

NCEE is the parent organization of the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL), the largest leadership development provider in the United States. NCEE commissioned the study as part of its continuing efforts to benchmark the world's best education systems and to ensure that NISL's programs and offerings are aligned with and informed by the strategies used by these top-performing systems.

A companion policy brief and four detailed case studies on the leadership development programs in each jurisdiction accompany the main report. To mark its release, NCEE President Marc Tucker presided over a webinar featuring a presentation from Ben Jensen on the report's findings and reaction from leading voices in education leadership from the United States and around the world. An archived version of today's release event will be available at www.NCEE.org.

Reporters interested in speaking with Marc Tucker or Ben Jensen may contact NCEE Director of Communications Brendan Williams-Kief at bwilliamskief@ncee.org or 202-905-6284.

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The National Center on Education and the Economy was created in 1988 to analyze the implications of changes in the international economy for American education, formulate an agenda for American education based on that analysis and seek wherever possible to accomplish that agenda through policy change and development of the resources educators would need to carry it out. For more information visit www.ncee.org.

The Center on International Education Benchmarking, a program of NCEE, conducts and funds research on the world's most successful education and workforce development systems to identify the strategies those countries have used to produce their superior performance. Through its books, reports, website, monthly newsletter, and a weekly update of education news around the world, CIEB provides up-to-date information and analysis on the world's most successful education systems based on student performance, equity and efficiency. Visit [www.ncee.org / cieb](http://www.ncee.org/cieb) to learn more.

Analysis for the *Preparing to Lead* report was conducted by Learning First. Learning First is an Australian education research and policy institute committed to change and reform in school education founded in 2014.