

## **BALANCED LEADERSHIP:**

**What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement.  
Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel), 2003**

### **Overview**

Principal leadership is significantly correlated with student achievement. One standard deviation improvement in principal leadership is associated with a 10% percentile gain in student achievement. This study found that twenty one specific leadership responsibilities, and 66 associated practices, have statistically significant relationships with student achievement. The study also found that leaders can also have a marginal or, worse, a negative impact on achievement, if they focus on the wrong responsibilities or practices.

### **Balanced Leadership Framework**

Researchers at McRel developed a Balanced Leadership Framework to integrate theory and research into a practical format for education leaders. The framework is conceptualized according to first order and second order change, though findings clearly demonstrate that school improvement often resides in the domain of second order change. Seven leadership responsibilities & practices (change agent, flexibility, ideals/beliefs, intellectual stimulation, knowledge of curriculum/ instruction/ assessment, monitors/evaluated, & optimizer) were identified by how they are positively impacted by second order change. Four leadership responsibilities and practices (communication, culture, input, & order) were identified by how they were negatively impacted by second order change.

### **Recommendations for policy makers**

Based on the results of the study, researchers at McRel make the following recommendations to policymakers:

1. Review and approve principal licensure programs to verify they adequately address knowledge and skills needed by principals to engage in research based practices.
2. Insure faculty has knowledge and skills needed to teach research based leadership practices.
3. Commit resources for high-quality, rigorous, and research-based professional development for principals.
4. Support use of tools that allow practitioners to assess their use of research-based leadership practices
5. Be aware of changes initiated through policies and the implication of those changes for different stakeholders.
6. Collaborate with chief state school officers and other senior leadership to influence the conditions necessary to support change with second-order implications.

Waters, T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel).