



WOODROW WILSON FOUNDATION MBA FELLOWSHIP IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP



The Problem:

Principals account for at least 25 percent of a school's total impact on student achievement. And yet, according to the research, we are failing to prepare, support, and retain school leaders across the country. This has a direct impact on children across America.

Woodrow Wilson Foundation President Arthur Levine was one of the pioneers to identify this problem when, in 2005, as President of Teachers College, Columbia University, he published a research study called *Educating School Leaders*. Levine noted that more than 40 percent of the nation's principals, and an even higher percentage of superintendents, would be expected to leave their jobs over the next decade.

Unfortunately, a decade later, achievement gaps, both domestic and international, are still a grave problem. Even well-resourced U.S. schools still rank below those of many other nations—such as Finland, Singapore, and China—on measures of student achievement, according to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Meanwhile, high-need U.S. schools—those serving underprepared students and under-resourced communities—continue to fare far worse.

Yet many school leaders are not prepared to address these gaps. Current school leader preparation programs, which typically offer the M.Ed. to educate principals, have admission and graduation standards that are the lowest among programs offered by education schools. Many teachers enroll in these graduate programs for the step increases and salary bumps that come with the degree, not to prepare for school leadership positions. As a result, many of these programs do not prepare educators to analyze data; make complex, data-driven decisions; think systemically when addressing schools' toughest challenges; and, most of all, lead transformative improvement.

A Solution:

Building on more than 70 years of experience preparing educational leaders for the challenges of tomorrow, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation has worked to develop a solution: the **WW MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership**.

The mission of the program is to recruit, prepare, and support outstanding prospective leaders for schools and districts and to transform the way in which school leaders are prepared at American universities. The Foundation began the WW MBA Fellowship in 2012. Today it involves six universities in three states.

The skills taught to WW MBA Fellows in Education Leadership, emphasized in classic MBA coursework, are not typically taught in education administration programs. It would be an error, however, to simply replace existing school leadership preparation with standard MBA programs void of the context and realities of public schools and the demands



put on their leaders. By marrying the needed skills and abilities of successful school leaders with the proven models of industry-leading MBA programs, the WW MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership aims to identify and integrate the critical and most relevant leadership skills, knowledge, tools, and competencies needed from both fields. More simply, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation adapts the traditional MBA in design, curriculum, and content to prepare leaders specifically to lead schools and/or districts.

How Does It Work?

Woodrow Wilson collaborates with partner universities to develop an education leadership MBA program that more closely matches the specific needs of leaders who must transform schools and districts. The program works closely with districts through a business-to-business model: School districts must nominate educators before they can apply, ensuring that only those candidates with the greatest potential for school leadership can participate, and must agree to participate in certain aspects of the program if their nominee is selected. Engaging districts in this way, initially and throughout the program, provides avenues to influence more systemic improvements that will lead to more sustainable success for Fellows and their students and teachers. All WW MBA Fellows are expected to hold an education leadership position in their state after completion of the program.

The interest in the program has been astounding: demand from districts nominating candidates always dramatically exceeds the 15 slots available at any given campus in each year, and many districts clamor to send more candidates. WW MBA Fellows range from Teach for America alumni to charter school teachers and leaders to midcareer traditional public school educators.



Evaluation:

Evaluation of the WW MBA program is primarily tied to two measures of progress. The first is the placement of WW MBA Fellows in school leadership positions. Once Fellows are in place, Woodrow Wilson will measure their progress toward the goal of closing the achievement gaps at those schools where Fellows are placed as principals. Progress will be determined by metrics such as student test scores and graduation rates, in comparison with the best schools nationally and internationally. The Woodrow Wilson Foundation has retained a third-party evaluator to measure the programs at each partner university against these metrics.

All WW MBA Fellowship programs also have a self-sustainable model embedded in them. Partners such as the University of New Mexico has been able to generate additional revenue by spinning off WW MBA-based executive education courses for district leaders and superintendents in their regions.

More Information

To learn more about the WW MBA program or nominate a candidate, visit woodrow.org/fellowships/ww-ed-mba/ or email WWMBA@woodrow.org.



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