School Empowerment Network

LEAD THE CHANGE

ASPIRING LEADERS PROGRAM

A one-year, applied development program for mid-level school leaders ready to step into the next level of leadership.



WHO WE ARE

About SEN

Founded in 2015, SEN partners with districts, networks, and state agencies to build the conditions where rigorous instruction, strong leadership, and clear strategy meet. Strong leaders. Aligned systems. Lasting change.

100K+
students impacted

500+
leaders developed

200+
schools strengthened

40+
districts across 8 states

FOUR WAYS WE PARTNER *woven together by a focus on leadership*

THIS SERVICE

Develop Leaders

Building the leadership pipeline that drives better instruction and stronger schools.

Teach to Lead
Aspiring Leaders
Leader-Driven School Improvement

Design Schools

Helping leaders create new, better school models and strong early-childhood programs.

School Design and Redesign
Early Childhood

Strengthen Teaching

Coaching teachers directly to lift the quality of daily instruction.

ENACT HQIM
Responsible AI
Special Education Coaching

Evaluate & Plan

Diagnosing where a school or system stands, then setting the priorities and strategy to move it forward.

School Quality Reviews
Executive Coaching
Special Education Audit

WHAT IT IS

SEN's Aspiring Leaders Program is a one-year, applied development program for mid-level school leaders who are ready to step into the next level of leadership.

Built for instructional coaches, deans, and assistant principals, the program prepares participants to assume new assistant principal and principal roles within one to two years of completion.

Districts and charter networks rarely struggle to identify potential. They struggle to develop it on a predictable timeline.

> The Aspiring Leaders Program is designed to fill that gap — a year of hands-on practice with critical school leadership competencies supported by 1:1 coaching, a cohort of high-performing peers, and structured learning from leaders in exemplary schools.

THE PROGRAM

At a Glance

LENGTH

One year, organized in four nine-week quarterly cycles

AUDIENCE

High-potential teacher leaders, instructional coaches, deans, and assistant principals

COHORT SIZE

Typically 12 to 15 participants

FORMAT

Applied learning anchored to two real projects in each participant's school

COACHING

Weekly 1:1 and group coaching from senior SEN coaches with decades of leadership experience

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

90% proficient on EOY performance tasks; 80% promoted within one year of completion

THE KEY TO HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

The Leadership Pipeline

Most districts and charter networks have the people. What they lack is a reliable system for converting strong teachers and mid-level leaders into ready-now school leaders. The result is too familiar: principal vacancies filled with under-prepared candidates, instructional coaches who plateau in their roles, and schools that lose momentum every time a leader transitions.

The Aspiring Leaders Program treats the leadership pipeline as a system to be engineered, not left to chance.

It produces a defined number of competitive candidates each year, ready to fill the openings that will inevitably come.

Principal Pipeline Programs Drive Student Outcomes

In a recent study by the RAND Corporation, an evaluation of 6 districts with principal pipeline programs showed that schools with newly placed principals outperformed comparison schools by more than 6 percentile points in reading and almost 3 in math within three years. (Principal Pipelines: A Feasible, Affordable, and Effective Way for Districts to Improve Schools, RAND Corporation for The Wallace Foundation, 2019. Study of 1,100 principal-pipeline schools compared to 6,300 non-pipeline schools.)

PROOF POINTS FROM OUR WORK

Since 2015, SEN has partnered with 40+ districts across 8 states, supporting the school experience of 100,000+ students.

43% → 65%

Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership

Through our Leader-Driven School Improvement program, the share of assistant and associate principal roles held by leaders of color rose from 43% to 65% since 2021, alongside double-digit student achievement gains.

100%

San Antonio Aspiring Leaders Pilot

In our partial year pilot in San Antonio in 2025-2026, 100% of participants stated that participating in the program significantly impacted their desire to continue in a school leadership role and 100% would recommend the program to a colleague.

83%

School Leader Coaching and Development

End-of-year evaluations of program participants in SEN's School Design Fellowship demonstrate that 15 out of 18 school leaders increased at least one proficiency level in 3 or more of SEN's Instructional Power Moves from BOY to EOY in 2024-2025.

What Sets the Program Apart

Most aspiring leader programs over-rely on workshops and case studies. Ours is designed around the way adults actually learn.

70-20-10 by design

The program is built on the well-established 70-20-10 model:

- **70%** from real on-the-job work
- **20%** from peer and coach feedback
- **10%** from formal training

The schools where participants already work are the primary classroom.

Two real projects

Every participant runs a year-long teacher development project and a year-long school improvement initiative in their own school. The work is real, the stakes are real, and the impact stays in the building when the program ends.

Quarterly gates with calibrated feedback

Four performance gates plus a capstone create a steady cadence of evidence-based feedback. Participants always know where they stand — and so do the LEA leaders sponsoring them.

Two Leadership Skills, Anchored to Real Projects

Aspiring Leaders develop two skills across the year, each tied to a project they complete in their own school.

Instructional Leadership

Participants learn to see, name, and improve the quality of instruction in their school. By the end of the year, they have set a clear bar for what good instruction looks like and can use SEN's three power moves, observation and feedback, curriculum leadership, and data-driven instruction, to drive measurable teacher growth.

APPLIED PROJECT

Each participant selects one teacher and coaches them from beginning to end of year, owning the cycle of observation, feedback, and improvement.

Continuous Improvement

Participants learn to drive a school priority forward using project management, progress monitoring, change management, and stakeholder engagement. By the end of the year, they have planned and executed a real improvement initiative, with documented impact.

APPLIED PROJECT

Each participant launches and runs a school improvement initiative aligned to a real priority in their building, sized to be ambitious but completable in a year.

It takes a lot of skill to lead an excellent school. At SEN, we believe there are two foundational skills that every great leader possesses – the ability to set, hold, and help others to meet a high bar for instruction, and the ability to drive results through others by moving continuous improvement initiatives forward every year. Instead of trying to teach all the skills that go into being a great principal, we teach these two high leverage skills, and practice them until they are second nature.

Applied Continuous Improvement Projects

From our partial year pilot in San Antonio in 2025-2026, run by participants in their own schools.

Every Reader Counts: Driving K-1 Literacy Growth

88% of kindergarteners and 75% of 1st graders are reading on grade-level, a significant increase from beginning of year.

Let them Talk through Turn and Talk: Increasing Pre-K Student Discourse

Moved from 25% to 90% of students demonstrating proficient English language production on the pre-K CIRCLE assessment.

Driving Rigor and Ownership: Implementing Habits of Discussion to Create Scholar-Led Classrooms

Moved from 20% to 80% of teachers implementing Habits of Discussion consistently.

Targeted Academic Intervention System: Data-Driven Growth

96% of students achieved their growth goals.

Four Quarterly Gates + a Capstone

Each gate builds on the last, so the work compounds across the year.

	GATE 1 October	**GATE 2** January	**GATE 3** March	**GATE 4 (Capstone)** June
Instructional Leadership	Accurately assess instruction across content areas, aligned to evidence-based best practices in instruction. Identify a high-leverage action step.	Script and conduct a coaching conversation that changes teacher practice.	Break a complex improvement need into a multi-week development plan.	Independently manage a development plan that produces measurable teacher growth. Presentation of learning.
Continuous Improvement	Set a vision and clear plan for a meaningful initiative. Define annual and interim milestones.	Demonstrate progress monitoring. Inspect what you expect.	Deliver a mid-year state of the initiative summary to stakeholders. Respond with urgency to data.	Step back, reflect, and summarize impact. Presentation of learning.

Inside a Single Quarter

Each nine-week cycle follows the same rhythm, so participants and LEA sponsors always know what's coming next.

WEEK 1	Full-day professional development that sets the foundation for the quarter's skill work.
WEEK 2	Quarterly plan presentations. Participants present a backward plan to reach the gate goal and receive coach and peer feedback.
WEEKS 3–4	School visits and observations from the SEN coach.
WEEK 5	Group coaching session focused on the trends emerging from observations.
WEEKS 6–7	A second round of school visits and observations.
WEEK 8	1:1 coaching based on evidence from the visits.
WEEK 9	Gate performance task submission and group presentation.

What the Full Partnership Includes

The leader development described earlier is the core. Three additional components extend its reach and impact.

1 LEA-Level Talent Bench Strategic Support

The program begins at the district level with a half-day Talent Bench Workshop where senior leadership identifies their high potential future leaders and looks ahead to their future demand for new leadership. Then, once the program is rolling, LEA leaders meet quarterly with the SEN team to review participant Gate performance scores, revisit the talent supply/demand map from the workshop, and update the talent strategy.

2 Recruitment and Selection Support

For regions offering this program across multiple LEAs, SEN provides strategic support with recruiting and selecting high-potential program participants including outreach strategy, nomination and selection tools, and onsite participant interviews.

3 Excellent School Residencies

A one-week guided residency at a high-performing host school. Participants shadow an effective leader and complete a structured reflection journal. SEN handles all logistics — host-school stipend, flights, lodging, ground transportation, and per diem meals.



Not a remediation program. A development program for high-potential leaders preparing for a next step in one to two years.

SELECTION

How Participants Are Selected

01 **Nomination Window**

Depending on the regional strategy and approach, LEAs identify and nominate candidates.

02 **Brief Application**

Candidates share their motivation and prior experience.

03 **Selection Visit**

A school visit with the candidate. Includes structured interview questions and brief classroom observations — so we can assess how candidates see and talk about instruction in a real building.

What We Expect & How We Measure It

The program is designed to do one thing: generate competitive school leadership candidates who get hired into the right roles. Two outcomes anchor the program.

90%

of participants achieve a proficient rating on end-of-year instructional coaching and continuous improvement performance tasks.

80%

of participants are promoted to a next leadership role within one school year of program completion.

Beyond the headline outcomes, SEN reports Gate-by-Gate progress to LEA leaders so sponsors can intervene early when a participant is off track — and so the program functions as a real-time talent development signal for the LEA.

What It Takes to Launch

Cohorts launch most successfully when SEN, the regional partner, and participating LEAs align on a few questions before recruitment begins. The first conversation typically covers:

- Cohort size and target launch date.
- Strategic priorities for participant selection (target LEAs, school types, grade bands).
- Whether residencies and the LEA-Level Talent Bench Analysis are included in year one.
- Cost-sharing structure across the regional partner and participating LEAs.



GET IN TOUCH **SEN@schoolempowermentnetwork.org**