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James Spillane's work explores the policy implementation process at the state, school district, school and classroom levels. He has worked to develop a cognitive perspective on the implementation process, exploring how local policy-makers, both administrators and teachers, come to understand state and national reforms. Spillane is also interested in organizational leadership and change; his work conceptualizes organizational leadership as a distributed practice involving formal and informal leaders, followers and a variety of organizational tools and artifacts. His most recent projects include a social network analysis of instructional advice structures in elementary schools, a study of how organizational routines enable and constrain practice in schools, and an examination of the selection and socialization of school principals.

