Planning and Changing Special Issue Learning to Lead: An Examination of Innovative Principal Leadership Preparation Practices

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LEARNING TO LEAD: AN EXAMINATION OF INNOVATIVE PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION PRACTICES

For the past 42 years, Planning and Changing has provided a forum in which to present ideas that inform educational policy and practice. In a sample of the first five years and the last five years of Planning and Changing’s issues, of the 313 articles published in those 10 years, only 6% focused on the preparation of school leaders. This special issue shifts the rudder, focusing the reader on specific components of leadership preparation that provide research-based evidence of improving teaching and learning in PK–12 settings. The genesis of this issue’s theme was a deep interest in exploring what is being developed successfully across the country with confirmatory, pragmatic evidence that leadership does, in fact, matter (Kottkamp, 2011; Tillman, 2010; Theoharis, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, M.T., 2009; Skrla, Scheurich, & McKenzie, 2009; Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009; Shields, 2010; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Earlier research on innovative leadership programs has been encouraging (Pounder, 2004; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Kottkamp & Rusch, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008; Orr & Barber, 2007; Orr & Orphanos, 2007; Orr, 2006; Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, & Wilson, 1996), indicating that graduates of these programs actually followed through in pursuing leadership positions, and their practices were described as focused on instruction.

Leadership preparation studies in general have been limited relative to specific program practices and outcomes (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006; Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2011). The authors in this special issue provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of their program approaches, including newly-developed tools to inform programmatic and curricular decision-making, consistent with a growing interest in establishing a link between leadership preparation and program outcomes (Orr, 2009). Critics of university leadership preparation programs have focused on their purported lack of effectiveness, as well as low admission standards, irrelevant curriculum, and inadequate clinical experiences (Haller, Brent, & McNamara, 1997; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005). This special issue presents a different focus, an examination centered on a shift from accountability, demonstrated previously as a response to shifting policy mandates, to responsibility to prepare effective leaders who are trained to lead learning-centered schools (Southern Regional Educational Board, 2007).

In this first of two special issues, we present a critical discussion of leadership preparation practices that improve organizational conditions, and which focus on improving learning for every student, reaching
across urban, rural, suburban and exurban contexts. This research furthers our understanding of the real and significant impact of leadership program benchmarking, the utility of using multiple data sources to evaluate program effectiveness, and the impact of principal preparation on student learning (Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Orr, 2011; Pounder, 2011; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). The authors in this issue focus even more granularly on leadership preparation practices and processes that yield demonstrable evidence of serving the rapidly evolving needs of today’s—and tomorrow’s—students, teachers and communities.

Authentic partnerships between school districts and higher education are a common and critical factor, described by a number of authors in this issue, in developing principals who are prepared to identify problems of practice and then effect profound change in schools, as documented by scholars for several decades (Goodlad, 1988; Murphy, 1992; Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988; Jacobson, 1998; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Orr & Barber, 2006; Young, 2011). Innovative school leadership that promotes and supports inclusive school cultures has been the subject of empirical and critical research (Riehl, 2000; Dantley, 2003; Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Kose, 2007; Evans, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2008; Brooks & Tooms, 2008; Cooper, 2009; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Theoharis, 2009; Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009; Pounder, 2011; Tillman, 2010). Despite this significant corpus, principals often risk their jobs when they attempt to shift the cultural norms of a school, advocating for significant changes in instructional delivery in order to provide access to high-quality instruction for every student.

Articles published in this special issue address specific changes to current practice in leadership preparation, including descriptions of the challenges faced by departments as some faculty propose dramatic shifts across their principal preparation programs, from admission practices to curriculum, from formative assessment that informs programs about the effectiveness of their courses to longitudinal studies tracking the effectiveness of program graduates. They address the consistent need to fully integrate data analysis to inform instruction—at the university level, as well as in PK–12 classrooms. Using a continuum of methodological traditions, the authors in this issue describe practice-oriented concepts and critical pedagogical skills requisite to the development of socially just school leaders. They write about the challenges of changing university faculty practices, a microcosm of the challenges that await aspiring principals in schools where mental models need to be collaboratively surfaced and challenged in order to develop a shared vision of transformative possibility. One university department developed a well-articulated theory of school leadership, and identified an essential question that served as a filter through which to guide their individual and collective thinking.
Many of the program recommendations made by UCEA Executive Director Michelle Young to a meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (Young, 2005) are detailed in this issue as they are implemented throughout the programs highlighted here. One study thoughtfully describes the preparation of leaders in specific content in order to improve instruction in such areas as science and math. One study does an in-depth scan of the demographics of candidates in school leadership programs nationally, and several offer a look at unique approaches to coaching to scaffold support for aspiring—as well as new—school leaders. The reciprocal nature of learning that occurs between PK–12 school personnel and university faculty emerges from behind a previously undisturbed curtain, with important findings for both sets of stakeholders about learning to lead as well as leading to learn.

This issue builds on the most contemporary scholarship and validates by example the essential role of praxis in preparing exemplary school leaders who “our children deserve” (Theoharis, 2009), bridging the historical span between program preparation and PK–12 student learning. The authors whose manuscripts comprise this special issue present exemplars of innovative, promising, and research-based approaches, programs, policies, and teaching strategies that contribute to the redesign of programs to prepare school leaders who will improve teaching and learning for every student. Their articles describe elements of university-based promising practices that prepare effective leaders, from generational poverty in the Mississippi Delta to inner city Chicago, from Washington State to rural North Carolina. Their innovative methods prepare principals to be active reformers knowledgeable about leadership implications related to issues of race, class and gender on instructional practices in PK–12 classrooms. These authors illustrate specific approaches being implemented successfully, based on the analysis of evidence, as they collect and analyze a broad range of data about the impact of their graduates on learning for every student in whose schools they serve. In their insightful articles, they offer recommendations for leadership preparation programs to adopt and contextualize deep and equitable change as leaders for American schools. One of the articles suggests that the result will be educated citizens, a cornerstone of viability for the democracy.

Not only must today’s new instructional leaders be engaged in constructivist experiences that provide opportunities to do far more than simply manage complex organizations, they must demonstrate competency in creating schools that can actually learn and change to meet emerging needs. As one author explains, evidence must be collected to demonstrate effectiveness of a specific program in producing authentically innovative programs with significant outcomes at the PK–12 student level.

The response to the Call for Manuscripts for this special themed issue was unprecedented, both in terms of quality and the number of submissions. We offer this first of two special issues, as a contribution to a re-
imagined body of scholarship—specifically innovative, promising, and research-based approaches, programs, policies, and teaching strategies that are foundational to second order change in programs to prepare school leaders whose decisions will truly improve teaching and learning for every student.

References


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CALL FOR RESEARCH ON CANDIDATES IN LEADERSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Research on leadership preparation programs in our field typically focuses on program design and delivery mode (e.g., closed cohorts, internships, distance learning, partnerships), curriculum and pedagogy (e.g., learning theories, syllabi content, learning outcomes), and occasionally program faculty. A critically missing component of research is about those actively engaged in learning—the candidates—and their lived and learned experiences. This call for research on program participants emerged from a review of research literature conducted by the authors.

Our search to identify who participates in educational administration and leadership programs was framed by two propositions. First, the intent of leadership preparation is “to produce leaders” (Milstein, 1992, p. 10) able and willing to assume responsibilities as school administrators. Second, leadership preparation is a developmental process requiring not only professional training, but also personal transformation (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Lashway, 2006; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Ortiz, 1982; Young & McLeod, 2001). Viewed from these perspectives, information about characteristics and experiences of individuals actively engaged in formal leadership-development activities—prospective candidates for administrator positions—is critically important for assessing the effectiveness of leadership preparation (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009).

We discovered, however, that our field’s research on program participants has been sparse—in truth, they “have been routinely overlooked” (McCarthy, 1999, p. 134). The “limited body of empirical knowledge” (Murphy, 2006, p. 73) about prospective administrators is evident in the results of an analysis of articles published in key journals between 1975 and 2002 by Murphy and Vriesenga (2004, 2006). Our review of studies reported by professors and doctoral students published between 2001 and 2007 likewise yielded evidence of few examinations of candidates in educational administration and leadership preparation program. Conversely, studies about career paths of program graduates were more common.

We begin our discussion about those who participate in school-leadership preparation with an overview of personal and professional characteristics of candidates gleaned from research published in articles, book chapters, and dissertations. We close our article with recommendations for closing the research gap and concerns about the future of university-based preparation programs.
Personal and Professional Characteristics

In the second edition of the *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (Murphy & Louis, 1999), McCarthy cited the need for “a national database on the personal and professional characteristics of educational leadership graduates” (p. 134). Data collected nationally and maintained at a single location or by several cooperating institutions would allow the field to conduct trend analyses about candidates’ attitudes and characteristics, their assessments of changes in program design and delivery, their career paths following program completion, and perhaps their successes in their chosen positions. A national database would likewise “build the reputation of the educational leadership profession” by having data readily available to “publicize the performance of program completers” (Browne-Ferrigno, Barnett, & Muth, 2003, p. 283).

The Taskforce on Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs, a grassroots initiative by professors and others co-sponsored by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership Special Interest Group (LTEL SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), has begun to collect such data through its survey of program graduates (Orr & Pounder, 2006). Results of statewide studies (Black, Bathon, & Poindexter, 2007; Pounder & Hafner, 2006; Waddle & Watson, 2005) and a study of exemplary leadership development programs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007) based on the *School Leadership Preparation and Practice Survey* provides a promising first step toward developing a national database. Such a database would make feasible large-scale longitudinal studies about “who we are and what we are doing in the area of leadership preparation” (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006, p. 192). Further, such data might create foundations for needed longitudinal studies of program impact through effects on school outcomes (Barnett & Muth, 2003).

The few published empirical studies that mention candidates typically report the number of participants in the sample; only rarely do the researchers report demographic information about candidates (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). Because recruitment and admission practices among programs vary considerably across the United States, the individuals enrolled may or may not “mirror the existing demographic composition of the local district and community” (Carr, Chenoweth, & Ruhl, 2003, p. 207). Thus, the location of a program does not necessarily predict characteristics of participants in it, an issue in a time when calls for diverse leadership, particularly in urban schools, are so prominent.

Further, research on program graduates typically target only those serving as administrators, whose contact information is supplied by state certification or licensure offices. Rarely is data collected about program graduates choosing to remain in teaching or pursue other career paths.
Findings gleaned from research published between 1975 and 2007 are presented in the next two sections.

**Student Characteristics: 1975-2002 Article Analysis**

Among the 2,038 articles published between 1975 and 2002 in the four leading journals in the field (*Educational Administration Quarterly, Journal of Educational Administration, Journal of School Leadership, and Planning and Changing*) reviewed by Murphy and Vriesenga (2004), only 162 (8%) were about preservice preparation of school leaders. Among those 162 articles, 56 (35%) reported findings from empirical studies, but only 7 (4%) reported demographic information about the program participants. For example, Parker and Shapiro (1992) used purposeful sampling to explore the extent to which diversity was integrated into three preparation programs across the United States; the authors reported that a total of 28 candidates participated in semi-structured interviews. To assess the effectiveness of a pilot program, Norris and Lebsack (1992) gathered data from all 18 participants. Using purposeful sampling, Cordeiro and Sloan (1996) selected 18 interns among the first four cohorts of a new program to investigate impact of the internship on participants’ learning. To examine the quality of internship experiences at two other university-based programs, McKerrow (1998) analyzed internship logs prepared by 45 candidates.

Two other empirical articles among the seven reporting demographic data on principal participants were qualitative (Rapp, Silent X, & Silent Y, 2001; Shapiro, Briggs-Kenney, Robinson, & DeJarnette, 1997). One traced the rites of passage experienced by four women during two years of doctoral studies; the other article examined the extent to which patriarchy silenced the voices of four female candidates, each from a different program. The seventh article (Veir, 1993) presents results from content analysis of program application files; not reported is the time period spanned or the admission status of applicants. Table 1 displays candidate characteristics described in these studies.

**TABLE 1**

Students in Educational Leadership: 1975–2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Average age range</th>
<th>Years as educator</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39</td>
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(continued)
Six of the seven articles cited by Murphy and Vriesenga (2004) presented findings from data gathered or documents created while candidates were actively enrolled in programs; assuming that each participated in only one study, only 117 candidates were mentioned in research published between 1975 and 2002. Eighty-eight of the 117 (75%) participants were female: This skewed gender distribution may be due to purposeful sampling used by some researchers, or it may reflect that a significant gender shift has taken place in programs nationally. Only three articles mention race; among those 77 candidates 15 (19%) were identified as African American.

Student Characteristics: 2001–2007 Review

During the closing years of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st, forces external to higher education generated new interest in leadership preparation. First, the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium introduced national standards for administrative practice (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Murphy, 2005), which forced universities and colleges to revise their preparation programs to meet changed accreditation standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1989, 2002a, 2002b). That redesign effort, however, did not require programs to align admission requirements with the program-expected learning outcomes (Muth, 2002; Muth et al., 2001) inherent in the new standards.

Second, the federal government initiated accountability requirements for all P–12 schools receiving Title I funds (No Child Left Behind, 2001), which forced states to examine closely the learning performance of all students. Third, the principalship became a popular topic for criticism and scrutiny (Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003; Educational Research Service [ERS], National Association of Elementary School Principals, & National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 2000; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, & Chung, 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000).

When a projection of a nationwide principal shortage (ERS, 1998; NASSP, 2003) was proven to be unsubstantiated, criticism focused on the

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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Average age range</th>
<th>Years as educator</th>
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<td>F 4 M 0 A 3 C 1 H – O –</td>
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<td>Shapiro, Briggs-Kenney, Robinson &amp; DeJarnette (1997)</td>
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<td>F 4 M 0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rapp, Silent X, &amp; Silent Y (2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 94 M 49 A 17 C 94 H 32 O –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Veir (1993) [Review of applications]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. F = Female, M = Male, A = African American, C = Caucasian, H = Hispanic, O = Other Minorities (Native American, Pacific Rim)*
quality of principals (Hess, 2003; Levine, 2005). Calls for reforms in leadership preparation were voiced by groups outside the academy (Fry, O’Neill, & Bottoms, 2006; Hale & Moorman, 2003) as well as by those inside (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Knapp, Copland, Plecki, Portin, & Wallace Foundation, 2006; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). Despite these external forces, the field continues to eschew research on leadership preparation (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006), particularly those for whom the programs were designed—prospective school administrators.

Only a few studies published between 2001 and 2007 contain demographic information about program participants. Among the sources cited in Table 2, only one, an article which was based on a dissertation, was published in a leading journal identified by Murphy and Vriesenga (2004). Interestingly, this article was listed among the top 50 most read articles in that journal for several years following its publication. The only other empirically based article in the table was published in a journal on the periphery of educational administration. The remaining sources are book chapters—all but one published in yearbooks of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA)—or dissertations by doctoral candidates. The Kentucky statistics came from a study by professors, requested by the state department of education and supported by a grant from the Wallace Foundation (Rinehart, Winter, Keedy, & Björk, 2002).

**TABLE 2**

*Students in Educational Leadership: 2000-2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Average age range</th>
<th>Years as educator</th>
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<td>Browne-Ferrigno &amp; Muth (2006)</td>
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<td>24–60</td>
<td>Browne-Ferrigno (2001, 2003)</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>30–50+</td>
<td>Hung (2001)</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>25–57</td>
<td>Brooks (2002)</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>22–45+</td>
<td>Harris, Crocker, &amp; Hopson (2002)</td>
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<td>303</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>27 476 5 2</td>
<td>23–59</td>
<td>Rinehart et al. (2002)</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>2 52 1 0</td>
<td>23–59</td>
<td>Zimmerman, Bowman, Salazar-Valentine, &amp; Barnes (2004)</td>
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<td>Effinger (2005)</td>
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<td>Ruiz (2005)</td>
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Note. F = Female, M = Male, A = African American, C = Caucasian, H = Hispanic, O = Other Minorities (Native American, Pacific Rim)

The only observations about data displayed in Table 2 are that (a) women outnumbered men and (b) the range of ages among program participants is quite wide. The table also shows that data reported are not standardized, which makes comparisons across studies difficult. If a national database of information about candidates and graduates is created, then standardized data types will need to be established to support comparative, longitudinal analyses.

Candidate Characteristics: Summary

Among the minority of professors who conduct disciplined inquiry and publish findings in leading journals of our field, few have selected candidates in educational leadership as the unit of study. When professors collect data from those participating in preparation programs, they typically intend to assess effectiveness of program design formats or learning activities. Only one published study was found that intentionally sought to capture participants’ perspectives on their learning—at multiple intervals throughout their active engagement in preservice preparation—to assess professional growth attributed to program experiences (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Thus, it is troubling that “practically no empirical investigations of students inside preparation programs” (Murphy, 2006, p. 73) are found in our field’s published research. Without evidence-based information collected regularly from candidates at multiple intervals from their entry to their exit of formal preparation, the field is without a foundation for understanding program influences on candidates’ leadership development and their eventual career choices.
Recommendations for Research

In the late 1990s, a task force appointed by a past vice president of AERA Division A began exploring ways to “improve research and knowledge production in educational administration and leadership” (Pounder, 2000b, p. 336). After working two years on this project, the Task Force on Research and Inquiry recommended that research in our field “should be communicated effectively to its primary audience” and “subject to public evaluation” (Pounder, 2000a, p. 472). It is thus perplexing why research on candidates in our programs continues to be nearly nonexistent in refereed publications. The review of research discussed above clearly surfaces a significant gap in this critically important area of work in our field.

Every year, professors and students of educational administration and leadership present dozens of research-based papers at conferences sponsored by the AERA, NCPEA, and UCEA. Building a knowledge base about participants in our programs requires access to these studies. Hence, to expand our database of studies about program participants, those who present research about preparation programs, such as those in the leadership development strand of AERA Division A and the LTEL SIG program and those in the annual NCPEA conference program, need to submit their conference papers to ERIC. With open access to copies of refereed conference papers and other publications, such research would be more widely available for public scrutiny and evaluation and perhaps usable to address concerns about preparation and practice cited herein. Further, the identity of scholars in our field whose research agenda is leadership development would become public, perhaps generating a community of scholars whose purpose is to close the gap in research about candidates in educational administration and leadership.

A recent study estimates that 80 percent of the research concluded in the United States is reported in dissertations (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006). But dissertations do not contribute significantly to expanding the knowledge base in our field when findings are not published in refereed or practitioner journals. Unless a search for research is intentional, findings generated from dissertations rarely are cited in our literature, perhaps because such studies may be deemed less rigorous than those published in refereed journals. Unfortunately, this constitutes a tremendous waste of resources.

Dissertations thus need to be converted into papers presented at professional meetings and then submitted to ERIC, published as articles in refereed journals, and shared more broadly through appropriate practitioner journals. But evidence suggests that the task historically has not been completed by novice scholars working alone. Thus, senior faculty need to assist doctoral graduates with the important, and sometimes arduous, task of converting hundreds of pages in a dissertation into a manuscript of presentable or publishable length. Some professors do that, securing secondary authorship for their work. Likewise, journal editors need to be willing
to publish articles about leadership development. One alternative might be to develop an online, peer-reviewed journal that publishes only dissertation research on the various phases of leadership development for schools and school districts. This multi-pronged effort may be the only way that dissertations can contribute systematically to our knowledge base. Regardless how the task is accomplished, more research is needed about candidates in educational leadership-preparation programs, particularly if the field ever hopes to become fully professionalized.

Because research on candidates in leadership preparation programs is woefully underdeveloped, we have unique opportunities to develop and standardize methodologies that support cross-study comparisons. Two examples are the methodologies used to examine career paths of Texas teachers across a ten-year period (Fuller, Young, & Orr, 2007) and to analyze certification in New York (Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002). Both studies used existing personnel databases, and assuming that most states allow professors access to such sources for research purposes, these two studies could be replicated in other states.

Another important consideration is standardization of data collection and a national database. As evidenced by the entries in Table 2, data about candidates in our programs is not gathered or reported in any standard way. The UCEA/LTEL-SIG Taskforce has developed surveys—available now for broad use—that collect data intended for future use in national studies about the effectiveness of preparation programs. Professors and researchers in several states now are conducting studies using these instruments; survey results are being archived by the National Center for the Evaluation of Educational Leadership Preparation and Practice (http://www.edleaderprep.org/slpps/). A national database on our program candidates and graduates is becoming a reality.

Closing Thoughts

Conducting this literature review affirmed our concerns that professors of educational administration and leadership need to be actively—even aggressively—engaged in research about candidates and graduates in their programs and then need to disseminate those findings widely. Because our literature search within traditional venues yielded little information about candidates, we were forced to look elsewhere for information. In the process, we reviewed publications and Web sites sponsored by special-interest groups engaged in leadership preparation, discovering that in many cases institutions of higher education—particularly research universities—appear to be excluded. Whereas departments of educational administration once held a monopoly on the preparation of school administrators (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007; McCarthy, 1999), that is no longer the case.

We believe that we can avert the continuing charge that university-based preparation programs are irrelevant—but only if we face the
fact that we are becoming so—and that the current political agenda does not intend to help us change. It is thus entirely up to us to recognize the problems that we have and aggressively collaborate to attack them to ensure that our graduates produce fundamental change in learning for public-school students. Anything less presages our deepening irrelevance and eventual demise.

Authors’ Note

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INNOVATIVE PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS: WHAT WORKS AND HOW WE KNOW

This article provides an overview of the contexts, the key features, and the evidentiary data—the criteria regarding candidates to engage in administrative work—for five innovative principal preparation programs. Short case studies and cross-case analysis of the sample programs are used to provide thorough descriptions. The five programs in fact share many characteristics and design structures that warrant close consideration, given each program’s specifically measured success.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra wrote in Don Quixote that “the proof of the pudding is in the eating.” That is to say, simply proclaiming something to be good doesn’t make it so. Such has been a longstanding concern among scholars, policy makers, and practitioners with programs that prepare school principals. Claims of program effectiveness rest upon a very thin foundation empirically and rarely include measurable evidence of a principal’s impact on important organizational outcomes such as teaching practices and student performance. Unquestionably, current policy initiatives (such as Race to the Top) and methodological developments in educational research underscore the imperative for greater clarity and accuracy regarding the attributes and qualities of principal preparation programs and their effects on school leaders, teachers, and students.

To shed light on this issue, in this article we highlight five university-based principal preparation programs that contain design elements aligned with seven key features of effective leadership preparation programs (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, & LaPointe, 2005, pp. 8–15). These features include

1) Clear focus and values about leadership and learning around which the program is coherently organized,
2) Standards-based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management,
3) Field-based internships with skilled supervision,
4) Cohort groups that create opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in practice-oriented situations,
5) Active instructional strategies that link theory and practice, such as problem based learning,
6) Rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty, and
7) Strong partnerships with schools and districts to support quality field-based learning.

Although a sample of five programs is too small to support conclusions that can be generalized to the larger population of innovative or reputedly effective principal preparation programs across the nation, the selected programs are widely recognized as possessing exemplary features and provide insightful perspectives into the “state of the art” of program evaluation in the field and related claims of effectiveness.

Specifically, in this article we provide an overview of the contexts, key features, and evidentiary data established by sample programs to determine program quality (e.g., criteria regarding candidate readiness to engage in administrative work). We present our findings through short individual case descriptions and a cross-case analysis of the sample programs.

**Exemplary Principal Preparation Programs: Empirical Bases and Policy Contexts**

The focus on the skills and abilities of school principals and the quality of programs that prepare them has never been more intense, and for good reason. Among the many school related factors that influence student learning, the importance of principal leadership is second only to that of teachers and may explain as much as 25% of the variation in student learning that is attributed to school related factors (Creemers & Reezigt, 1996; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). At both national and state policy levels, principals are being held accountable for the continuous growth in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, and increasing college or workplace readiness among disadvantaged students. And the stakes have never been higher. The careers of principals who fail to perform effectively are literally on the line. For example, within the schedule of sanctions outlined in No Child Left Behind and in several state statutes, principals of persistently underperforming schools may be removed from their jobs (Davis et al., 2005).

National policy initiatives such as No Child Left Behind and, in particular, Race to the Top (RTT) underscore the centrality of school leadership to improved teaching and learning in schools. Eligibility criteria for Race to the Top funding require that states design performance-based systems for assessing principal and program effectiveness. Specifically, RTT links its definitions of effective leadership and leadership preparation to student achievement growth in addition to other factors such as high school graduation rates and a supportive learning environment. In concert with the emergent federal policy interest in school leadership, many states have developed, or are developing, new policies that strengthen administrator licensure requirements (Davis, 2010) and systems to evaluate principal performance as instructional leaders (Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, & Leon, 2011; Hale & Moorman, 2003). Although when we wrote this article,
Congress had yet to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it appears likely that developing effective principals and establishing robust methods for assessing their impact on important school outcomes will continue to be a topic of great interest to federal policy makers.

Concerns about principal effectiveness are not new. Long before the advent of No Child Left Behind, scholars and policy makers raised serious questions about the quality of principals and the viability of programs that prepare them (McCarthy, 2002), and these concerns continued to fester well into the new century (Levine, 2005; Hess & Kelly, 2005). In response, during the last 20 years, professional standards for administrators began to emerge from various national and state professional organizations. Importantly, many states adopted or adapted licensure and accreditation policies based on the standards for school administrators developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium in 1996 (and revised in 2008), and several have established alternative pathways to administrative licensure in order to attract talented leaders from within and outside of education (Fry, O’Neill, & Bottoms, 2006). Nevertheless, even today not all states have explicitly aligned professional standards with principal preparation programs, licensure requirements, and evaluation systems (Davis, 2010).

Efforts to study, revise, and improve principal preparation and professional development programs have paralleled the standards movement, particularly over the past decade. For example, a growing number of innovative programs such as those described by Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) began to frame program elements around theories of adult and experiential learning (Fenwick, 2003; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005) by placing greater emphasis on hands-on internship experiences, thematically integrated curricula, problem-based instruction, and closer partnerships with school districts. More recently, the Rainwater Foundation and the University of Illinois at Chicago sponsored research to better understand innovative practices by studying a select group of principal preparation and training providers (Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010).

Pockets of innovation were also stimulated through United States Department of Education sponsored Leadership Development grants such as The Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy (GLGSA) at Cal Poly Pomona, California’s first principal preparation program to be fully accredited under the state’s experimental accreditation standards. Constructed upon several design features described by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), the GLGSA differs from most traditional programs in the strength of its partnership with a neighboring school district, its thematically integrated and problem-based curriculum, and full-time administrative apprenticeship. Meanwhile, non-profit groups and collaboratives such as the Wallace Foundation, the Alliance to Reform School Leadership, and the Southern Regional Education Board examined innovative programs, disseminated promising practices, and facilitated networks of innovative programs across the country.

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Similarly, recent research about principals and their impact on teaching and learning has contributed to the conversation about program effectiveness by illuminating the specific behaviors and leadership actions that matter most for learning to thrive—and thereby providing outcome benchmarks that may be traced back to program components, processes, and assessments of effectiveness. Notably, in their six year study of the relationship between school leadership and student learning, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) identified four key leadership practices of successful school leaders that remained constant across differing school and environmental contexts—setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. The authors’ finding that a principal’s impact on student learning is mediated through the work of teachers and other organizational variables reinforced earlier research that examined leadership effects (most notably, Hallinger & Heck in 1996). Seashore Louis et al. concluded that it is the principal’s ability to create synergy across these variables that has the greatest stimulative effect on student learning.

Although the design components of reputedly effective principal preparation programs and affiliated pockets of innovation are well known, much less is known about the impact of innovative programs and their components on principal behavior, and most important, on how those behaviors influence teaching and learning (McCarthy, 2002; Orr & Barber, 2009; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Moreover, for the research that does exist, “evidence” is commonly based upon the self-reported perceptions of principals or the perceptions of various school stakeholders rather than measurable data of school and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

The limited empirical evidence linking credentialing program elements and individual performance on the job is emblematic of the tenuous relationship between research and educational reform in general (Cuban & Tyack, 1998; Davis, 2008). Nevertheless, with the growing use of statistical methods like hierarchical linear modeling that can examine nested relationships within schools, educational researchers are now poised to move beyond investigations of the relationship between leader behavior and organizational processes, and toward the alignment of program features, leadership behaviors, and organizational outcomes (Meyer & Dukumaci, 2011; Orr & Barber, 2009; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

In the following section, we describe the contexts and key design features of our sample of five exemplary university-based principal preparation programs, including evidence of their effectiveness in preparing school leaders who can promote powerful teaching and learning.

**Five Exemplary University-Based Principal Preparation Programs**

The five sample programs include the Educational Leadership Cohort Program at Delta State University (ELCP), the University of Connecticut’s Administrator Preparation Program (UCAP), the Principals’ Institute
(PI) at Bank Street College, the Educational Leadership Development Academy at the University of San Diego (ELDA), and the Urban Educational Leadership Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UELP). With the exception of the UELP, descriptions of these programs were drawn from the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (SELI) publication titled, *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Case Studies of Exemplary Programs* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

The SELI study examined several kinds of evidence about program outcomes: candidates’ and graduates’ perceptions about their preparedness for various aspects of the principalship, self-reports of practices in key areas known to be related to effectiveness, and entry and plans to remain in the principalship, compared to a national sample; perceptions of employers about graduates’ capacities; observations of graduates’ practices on the job; and data about student achievement trajectories in graduates’ schools. The UELP program has also published outcome data about graduates’ preparedness, practices, and student achievement gains in comparison to those occurring in other schools serving similar students. In all five cases, these programs have emerged as producing significantly more positive outcomes across these indicators of effectiveness than the comparison samples. (S. Tozer, personal communication, December 2, 2011; for details see Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

To provide more current information about program features and assessments, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with several program directors in November 2011. Not surprisingly, since the 2007 Stanford study most of the programs have experienced changes in funding support and design elements. This posed the dilemma of how to describe the assessment of important program outcomes from two distinct periods of time. In our analysis, we make note of these distinctions.

The UELP was not one of the Stanford study subject programs, but was included in the sample as a result of its recognition as an exemplar of innovative administrator preparation by the Rainwater Charitable Foundation (Cheney et al., 2010) and by the Alliance for Reform in Educational Leadership (a nationwide initiative for leadership development sponsored by the George W. Bush Institute—see http://www.bushcenter.com/portal-edreform/education-reform). Beyond the published outcome data described above, information about the UELP program was obtained through telephone interviews with program directors and the analysis of related program documents.

Delta State University Educational Leadership Cohort Program

**Context.** Located one hundred miles south of Memphis, Tennessee and 100 miles north of Vicksburg, Mississippi, Delta State University (DSU) sits at the epicenter of one of the poorest regions in the United States. It is a relatively small public university, with approximately 1,350 graduate students and 2,800 undergraduates. About 40 percent of DSU’s students are
of African American descent. Persistent problems associated with extreme poverty and chronically underperforming schools in the region led Delta State administrators and faculty members to pursue a bold new strategy for preparing school leaders with the skills and abilities to transform schools through the advancement of powerful teaching and learning.

The work began in the mid-1990s and was both stimulated and supported by a statewide administrator preparation reform initiative. Delta State University’s reform efforts were framed upon the newly enacted Mississippi School Administrator Sabbatical Program, which provided funding to release teachers from their classroom duties to participate in a full-time administrative internship program. A consortium of rural Delta districts works with the university to select candidates and support internships for them in local schools.

Recent conversations with Delta State program faculty and administrators revealed that the state recently mandated another statewide overhaul of educational administration programs. In the spring of 2010, Delta State University Educational Leadership Cohort Program (ELCP) emerged as the first program in Mississippi to fully meet the new state accreditation requirements.

**Key Design Features.** There are at least six distinctive features of the ELCP:

- Its admission process is highly rigorous and highly selective, focusing on educators who have been successful teachers in Delta schools. The university fills about half of its positions with African American educators.
- It develops the core values and skills administrators need to lead instruction.
- It cultivates self-reflection and ethical behavior.
- It aligns problem-based learning with relevant theory.
- It develops leaders who are oriented to organizational change and renewal.
- It cultivates strong partnerships with school districts in the Delta region.

Program candidates begin Delta’s 13-month program in June with a 12-credit session during summer school at the university. In each of two 4-week periods, they take one core course and one seminar. The program’s theory of action is anchored by three key thematic foci, (a) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (b) continuous improvement and culture of learning, and (c) leading organizations for learning. In addition, the curriculum is informed by the ISLLC standards and all courses are taken within a cohort structure.

During the school year, candidates complete three 12-week full-time and supervised internships in elementary, middle, and high schools and also a two-week internship in their district’s central office. During these internships, the cohort returns to DSU one day a week for a gradu-
ate seminar. Between internships, members of the cohort spend one to two weeks on campus in all-day seminars.

The program is capped with a second 12-credit summer session that provides continuity between cohorts and frames the year for the graduating cohort. At the end of these 13 months, graduates have taken 39 graduate semester credits in a mixture of university courses and school-based experiences. Following the completion of all required coursework and a passing score on the School Leadership Licensure Assessment (SLLA) they receive a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership and initial certification as an administrator in the state of Mississippi.

ELCP program faculty members have identified seven areas of competence that all candidates must attain in order to graduate. These include the ability to:

1) Make data-driven diagnoses of school conditions and subsequent decisions.
2) Foster external partnerships with communities and parents.
3) Understand the processes and politics of school change.
4) Make ethical and morally sound decisions.
5) Assume administrative positions with the ability to successfully perform required tasks and skills.
6) Promote powerful teaching and learning.
7) Understand the nexus between curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Outcomes. By 2011, the ELCP had graduated 144 licensed administrators. Of that group, 122 have found administrative employment in Mississippi public schools—currently 52 are school principals, 46 are assistant principals, 18 are middle level district office administrators, and three are superintendents. These rates are much higher than the averages for most programs, a minority of whom take administrative jobs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Three ELCP graduates are Milken Award recipients.

In 2007 several elements of program effectiveness were illuminated by Stanford researchers, who found that ELCP graduates were significantly more likely than non-ELCP graduates to experience a full-time, mentored internship. Likewise, graduates were far more likely than non-ELCP graduates to participate in site-based internships across school types. Importantly, ELCP graduates who became school principals were significantly more likely than non-ELCP principals to engage in job activities centered upon facilitating student learning, providing instructional feedback to teachers, and fostering teacher professional development. In contrast, they were significantly less likely than non-ELCP graduates to spend time on the management of school facilities, resources, and operational procedures (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).
Although the ELCP has yet to complete research connecting its program features with the impact of its graduates on important school outcomes (it is currently working on this with the assistance of an educational consultant), it has developed several mechanisms for assessing the performance of its candidates as they progress through the program. Such assessments, which are made both by faculty and by supervising principals, are based on written assignments, portfolios, presentations, and individual and group work. Candidates must, for example, design and implement a major school-wide change project at each internship site. They write several “clinical correlations” for each site; these are problem-based case studies of complex issues facing school leaders that require literature reviews and the development of authentic administrative responses.

Rather than completing typical graduate courses, DSU’s candidates earn their credits by documenting their work in portfolios and building a body of knowledge over the school year. A typical transcript includes a large number of incompletes until all the portfolios and activities are completed at the end of the school year. The work in the DSU leadership program is ongoing, and assessment is based on authentic, applied projects and portfolios.

In summary, program leaders report that ELCP graduates are proportionately more likely than non-ELCP graduates in Mississippi to find school site and district level administrative jobs. Similarly, students are more likely to report greater levels of program satisfaction, feelings of self-efficacy, readiness to assume administrative tasks and responsibilities, and instructional leadership skills. The impact of program graduates on measurable school and student outcomes has yet to be examined.

University of San Diego, Educational Leadership Development Academy

Context. With more than 130,000 students, the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is the eighth-largest urban school district in the country. Like many of its urban counterparts, SDUSD students are predominantly students of color (75%) and from low-income families (60%). Approximately 30% of the students possess limited proficiency in English. In the late 1990s, chronic disparities between minority and non-minority students in important measures relating to academic success prompted newly hired superintendent Alan Bersin and his chancellor Tony Alvarado to initiate a set of reforms designed to train and support school leaders who could promote powerful teaching and learning for all students. In 2000, in partnership with the University of San Diego, the district launched an innovative approach to administrator preparation and development titled the Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA). Simultaneously, key district office functions and structures were reorganized and mobilized to strengthen the district’s ability to guide and support the instructional leadership of school principals. A key feature of the ELDA was the depth and strength of the relationship between the school district and its program sponsor, the University of San Diego.
Key Design Features. Initially, the ELDA consisted of two programs: preparation for aspiring leaders and induction and support for newly hired leaders. The preparation component of ELDA—the Aspiring Leaders Program (ALP)—began as a one-year, cohort-based credential program serving the San Diego Unified School District. Initially, the 24 units of required coursework were co-taught by university faculty members and district practitioners. Program content consisted of tightly woven learning experiences, based upon principles of adult learning that emphasize knowledge of learning and instruction, professional learning and development, organizational behavior, and school management and change.

Candidates would study teacher supervision and development and then engage in the San Diego teacher evaluation system as part of their internship. They would study school improvement strategies while immersed in the district-wide reform process, allowing them to experience and reflect on the theories they were learning. Projects required that they identify professional development needs of a subset of teachers in their school and then design and support a professional development process.

Today, with growing interest from other districts, the ALP program is no longer linked as directly to San Diego Unified schools, and about half of its students come from other school districts in the San Diego region. Core academic instruction is provided by University of San Diego faculty members, while practicum activities occur under the supervision of both district mentors and university supervisors. However, after 10 years, the program’s theory of action, curriculum, and core goals remain largely intact. The program now requires 48 hours of coursework over two years and culminates in both a credential and a master’s degree. Similar in many ways to the Delta State model, ELDA candidates are chosen in partnership with the districts through a rigorous nomination and selection process. In the original model, they were released from their teaching duties to work as full-time interns under the supervision of a skilled mentor principal. After 2005, the discontinuation of outside funding forced the program to transform the internship to a set of practices conducted while candidates are employed, often as assistant principals, supplemented by a full-time internship stint of forty hours conducted during after school hours and vacation periods.

As the program began to serve non-SDUSD students, internship placements were made in districts other than the student’s home district, and particularly in districts where vacation schedules did not coincide. Unfortunately, the current budget crisis in California has added an unexpected challenge by reducing the variations among district academic calendars, and thereby reducing opportunities for mentored internships. The solution has been to locate internship placements in school district offices or in the County Office of Education during vacation periods.

Recently, ELDA and teacher education faculty began pairing up administrative credential students with student teachers to facilitate the development of instructional leadership skills while providing aspiring
teachers with useful feedback. As part of this process, lessons are video-taped and shared with the ALP cohort for collective analysis and feedback. This is part of the long-standing focus of the program on developing hands-on instructional leadership skills.

The culminating assessments include a problem-based learning project, portfolio, and professional platform statement. These are evaluated by a panel of district practitioners and university faculty members using rubrics aligned with the ISLLC standards. Candidate progress is carefully monitored through individual meetings with supervisors, monthly site visits, and formal evaluations. The emphasis on connecting theory and practice in a carefully supervised process of learning to lead remains intact.

Outcomes. Between 2000 and 2005, shortly after its inception, research on the Aspiring Leaders Program showed that it generated impressive results. For example, it graduated 53 students, and of these, 45 became SDUSD administrators. During this time, more than 60% of ALP graduates received a principal’s position within two years of graduation. Ninety-three percent of District supervisor ratings of the administrative performance by ALP graduates fell within the “good to excellent” range, and after five years, 88% of ALP graduates remained in their administrative positions. In 2005-06, the SDUSD reported that 31 of the 38 schools led by ALP graduates showed growth on the California Academic Performance Index (API).

On a 2006 survey of program qualities and characteristics, graduates of the Aspiring Leadership Program (ALP) were significantly more likely than non-ALP graduates in California and a national comparison sample of principals to give their programs high ratings on 12 key variables:

1) Emphasis on instructional leadership.
2) Emphasis on leading school improvement.
3) Comprehensive coursework and coherent learning experiences.
4) Participation in a cohort.
5) Use of practitioners to teach in the program.
6) Multiple opportunities for self-assessment as a leader.
7) Opportunities to reflect on practice and analyze how to improve it.
8) Regular assessments of candidate skill development and leadership competencies.
9) Integration of theory and practice.
10) Knowledgeable faculty members.
11) Strong orientation to the principalship as a career.
12) Several opportunities to evaluate the program.
The survey data also revealed the deepened involvement of San Diego principals in improving instruction. Most of them reported substantial participation in guiding curriculum development and building learning communities. A striking 60% reported providing daily instructional feedback to teachers (compared to about 20% of principals elsewhere). An impressive 78% of San Diego principals reported working with teachers to change teaching methods where students are not succeeding (compared to only 3% of other California principals and 14% of principals nationally).

Currently, assessments of effectiveness (much like Delta State) rest upon candidate “in-program” performance assessments, and self-reported perceptions among graduates regarding program qualities and personal abilities, which remain strongly positive. Today, anecdotal feedback from ALP graduates suggests that most view their courses as highly relevant, because they often include applied tasks and problem-based learning cases, and they are linked to the challenges the candidates experience in their practicum activities.

**Bank Street College Principals’ Institute (PI)**

**Context.** Established in 1989, the Bank Street College Principals’ Institute (PI) has been an important pathway for the preparation of New York City’s principals, and particularly those from the portion of the Bronx formerly known as Community District 10 and, following a reorganization, Region 1. In recent years, the NYC school system has undergone additional changes in organizational and governance structures, leadership, policy initiatives, and funding support, all of which have resulted in program modifications. Despite these challenges, the well-respected Principal’s program continues to operate and now partners with schools throughout the city.

The PI was initially established following a request by NYC district officials to train a new and more diverse cadre of leaders who could address the complex educational demands of city schools. The district was particularly interested in increasing the proportion of leadership positions filled with women and people of color. Then-regional superintendent Irma Zardoya was instrumental in cultivating and building NYC’s ongoing relationship with Bank Street. Through her efforts, the PI received both federal and foundation funding to support the institute, which included a full time administrative internship for candidates. A formal partnership with District 10, which became Region 1, allowed the district to work closely with Bank Street to recruit and select promising candidates and to partner in designing strong clinical experiences for them tied to district practices. The partnership continued past hiring to support a continuum of learning experiences for principals throughout their careers.

Throughout its existence, the PI program has enjoyed positive relationships between school system and university stakeholders. However, current participants note that, since the city has disbanded its Regional dis-
tricts and reorganized into non-geographically based networks of schools, there is no longer a formal district structure to guide the relationship, making the collaboration less formal, if still vibrant at the school level.

**Key Design Features.** Conceptually and functionally, the PI reflects the shared vision and beliefs of its partner institutions that promote ongoing leadership development activities (such as mentoring, advising, and self-reflection) in concert with the values of lifelong learning, inquiry, and advocacy. A central focus of the program is to develop self-actualized leaders who can learn from experience while cultivating constructive relationships with others.

Candidates undergo a selection process that includes transcript reviews, reference letters, an autobiographical statement, and a filmed group interview framed around a collaborative problem-solving situation. Eligibility for the program requires both strong instructional experiences and demonstrated leadership potential. The final selection of program candidates is made by the superintendent and deputy superintendent. After successfully completing 36 semester hours of coursework, including a passing score on a state leadership assessment test, candidates receive a master’s degree and are eligible for a provisional state certification as building-level leaders.

Grouped as a cohort, candidates attend classes two nights a week and meet with advisors one night a week over four consecutive semesters beginning in the fall. Courses are thematically arranged around teaching, learning, school reform, and school redesign. Administrative skills and practical knowledge such as law, budget, supervision, and technology are infused within the coursework. The pedagogical approach emphasizes individual discovery, data-based decision-making, reflective inquiry, and a highly structured set of field-based practical experiences guided by state and school system standards. Because funding cuts eventually eliminated the full-time internship, the internship experience depends heavily on candidates’ flexibility during the school day, the strength of their mentor principals, and placement as assistant principals during summer school. Mentoring and advising from district and university faculty is ongoing and includes regular meetings with conference groups of six to nine candidates from various school levels. Candidates also participate in a series of special topics seminars and off-site school visits in order to expose them to other school leaders and school environments.

**Outcomes.** From a program perspective, PI graduates fare better in a number of important ways than do graduates from other programs that serve the city and from a sample of principals from across the nation. Stanford researchers found that nearly three quarters of program graduates have gone on to become school administrators. In addition, graduates are significantly more likely than candidates from other programs to rate their program faculty highly and to experience student-centered instruction, leadership focused content, and reflection-rich content. PI graduates
are also more likely to have experienced a full or part-time administrative internship under the supervision of a trained mentor principal. Candidate competence while in the program is assessed through a variety of coursework and internship mechanisms, including a portfolio of critical work products that is subject to review by faculty advisors. The program assesses its own effectiveness through the various measures of candidate competence while in the program, candidate perceptions of program quality both before and after graduation, and evidence of career advancement.

**University of Connecticut Administrator Preparation Program**

**Context.** The University of Connecticut Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP) is now in its 20th year of operation. Thanks to a favorable statewide policy environment that has promoted a steady and long-term commitment to school system reform and teacher and principal development, UCAPP continues to represent a strong model of what a university can do to prepare principals within a conventional program structure and with limited resources. Since the early 1980s the state of Connecticut engaged in many efforts to improve schools by professionalizing teaching, including the establishment of new teaching standards, revised teacher certification criteria, new evaluation systems, and a comprehensive system of preparation and support for new teachers.

To ensure the successful implementation of its school reform agenda at site levels, the state turned its attention in the 1990s to the training and support of school principals. It trained principals to analyze instruction, evaluate teachers, and develop professional development, and integrated these skills into a performance-based assessment used for licensure. In 1999 it developed an ISLLC-based set of principal preparation program standards. And, two years later, thanks to the infusion of Wallace Foundation “State Action for Educational Leadership” (SAELP) funding grant, these standards became firmly rooted across administrator credentialing programs. During this time, the state also mandated programs be evaluated by how many of their candidates achieve a passing score on the innovative performance-based licensure assessment. Programs cannot be accredited if their graduates do not achieve a pass rate of 80 percent. On the performance assessment, principals must demonstrate that they can analyze a videotape of teaching, identify areas of development, and design appropriate professional learning experiences, among other things. All of these initiatives have shaped administrator preparation across the state.

**Key Design Features.** The UCAPP is a two-year program framed upon the theory that leadership is a multi-dimensional process involving the interactions of many individuals and groups at various levels of the education system. The principal’s ability to engender stakeholder support and engagement in the development of a school vision and related goals and programs is central to this theory of action.
Candidates to the UCAPP are selected through a pre-application recruiting process involving UCAPP faculty and school district leaders that effectively pre-screens desirable applicants according to a set of professional criteria and experiences. Those who make it through the pre-application process submit a written application and are personally interviewed by the program director.

The UCAPP program is cohort-based and requires 32 credit hours of on-campus coursework, one-third of which are associated with internship requirements. Courses and intern activities occur over a two-year period, bookended by two summer sessions. Students and advisors work closely to develop individual learning plans. Related artifacts and work products are documented through a portfolio that includes a school/community analysis project that begins in the first summer session and continues throughout the internship. Spread over two years, the internship requires 80 days of administrative fieldwork at another school, supervised by a mentor principal. Although students continue to teach full time, they typically complete a significant portion of internship activities during summer sessions and vacation periods. Activities may include shadowing, assigned administrative duties, or serving as a paid administrative intern.

**Outcomes.** Virtually all UCAPP graduates pass the rigorous state licensure assessment, in contrast to a statewide failure rate that averages about 20%. Stanford researchers found that UCAPP graduates were significantly more likely than graduates from other state programs and a national sample of principals to rate the program highly in three key areas:

1) The integration of theory and practice.

2) An emphasis on leadership for school improvement.

3) Knowledgeable faculty members.

Similarly, UCAPP graduates were more likely than most principals to engage in practices associated with facilitating student learning, building professional learning communities, fostering teacher professional development, and providing assistance to teachers who are not succeeding. Finally, UCAPP graduates who assume school leadership positions reported feeling better about their jobs than most non-UCAPP graduates.

**University of Illinois at Chicago Urban Educational Leadership Program**

**Context.** In 2001 a team of faculty members at the University of Illinois at Chicago launched an innovative administrative preparation program called the Urban Educational Leadership Program (UELP) designed to address growing concerns about persistently underperforming urban schools and the uneven quality of Chicago area principals in their ability to promote powerful teaching and learning. At the time, the program was one of only a few across the nation to require a full time administrative in-
ternship and extensive follow-up executive coaching. But what makes the UELP particularly distinctive from most traditional administrative credentialing programs is its culmination in both an Illinois “Type 75” administrative credential and an Ed.D. in urban school leadership. In contrast, the norm among programs is to combine a professional credential with a master’s degree. As a result, UELP students come to the program with extensive academic and professional experiences and skills. Although the program is open to educators from districts outside of the Chicago Public School system (CPS), the majority of candidates are teachers in Chicago. The UELP is currently working in collaboration with several other university and non-profit programs to provide the CPS with high quality school leaders.

Key Design Features. The administrative credential and doctoral degrees require 88 semester hours of coursework beyond the Master’s degree that includes a series of specialization courses in various administrative content areas, a theoretical core consisting of two courses, a series of research methods courses, and dissertation research. From start to finish, the program is designed to take three years.

The UELP is distinguished from most traditional programs by its rigorous selection process. Annually, only 15 to 20 candidates are accepted. Candidates are selected on the basis of demonstrated success in various educational leadership roles, instructional competence, analytic and interpersonal skills, and a deep commitment to the challenges of promoting school improvement. For the first 18 months, the program requires full-time enrollment, which includes an intensive 12-month, full-time administrative internship under the supervision of an experienced mentor. Once hired in an administrative position, graduates receive three years of executive coaching support. All courses are designed to address the 10 Core Leadership Competencies established by the CPS and are framed around the overarching theme of transforming high need schools. Currently, the UELP is revising its curriculum to adhere to the new standards established by the National Board Certification for Educational Leaders.

Outcomes. UELP has made important inroads into the assessment of its graduates’ impact on various school outcomes. Since 2002, 62 of 94 candidates who have completed the certification part of the program (most have not yet completed the Ed.D.) have become principals in urban schools; all but three are in Chicago. Internal program research has identified a number of markers of program success:

1) Entry and retention in the principalship:
   - Since the UELP’s founding 10 years ago, 100% of completers have obtained administrative positions, 65% as principals. State-wide, approximately 15% of credential program graduates obtain principalships.
• Over 90% of UELP principals take over high-need schools, nearly all of them non-selective neighborhood schools.
• To date, UELP Principal retention rate is over 90%.

2) Progress in leading high-need elementary schools:
• In 2010-2011, 80% of UELP elementary school principals led school gains that surpassed the CPS district median gains for (a) exceeding state standards, (b) scoring at/above the state average, and (c) being on-track to meet/exceed ACT college readiness standards when students reach grade 11.
• State testing gains (on the ISAT) in all 10 of the high-poverty African American enrollment elementary schools led by UELP graduates are in the upper half of all 184 CPS schools in that demographic. Five of the ten schools led by UELP graduates are in the top 10% of the demographically similar schools in ISAT gains.
• Nine of these ten UELP principals led one-year gains during their first year as principal that were in the top fifth of gainers among their comparable schools.
• UELP-led elementary schools are 3.5 times more likely than other CPS schools to place in the top 5% of CPS school rankings on “value-added” measures in 2010.

3) Progress in leading high schools:
• UELP principals currently lead 10% of Chicago’s 130 high schools. All UELP-led high schools are showing significant gains on improved school culture and climate measures and nearly all are exceeding district gains in freshmen-on-track and graduation rates.
• In 2011, TEAM Englewood, a non-selective neighborhood high school founded by a UELP Principal, graduated 95% of its senior class, of whom 95% were accepted into college with over $1 million in scholarship money earned (S. Tozer, personal communications, December 2, 2011; Hendershot, 2011).

Program director Steven Tozer recently noted that the UELP is beginning to apply a UIC developed statistical tool called “The Nearest Neighbor Analysis” (NNA) to compare a group of closely matched schools on a set of demographic and academic performance data. Currently being piloted with K–8 schools in the CPS, the NNA compares ethnic, socio-economic, and underserved student characteristics with attendance rates, ISAT scores in reading and math, and grade level benchmarks. However, by 2014 the model will have the capacity to compare CPS schools with comparable schools across the state and nation. The 2014 analysis will include several additional performance measures including state quar-
tile comparisons, comparison of schools according to an “average” student ranking across the state on ISAT scores, the percent of students who meet college readiness standards, and a longitudinal “same-student value-added” calculation by achievement level.

Discussion and Conclusions

Each of the five programs described in this article contain several common features: Each is driven by a theory of action that locates instructional leadership at the heart of school reform and where effective school leadership is best developed through the integration of practical and problem-based experiences and research-based knowledge. Each program is also highly selective, under the theory that exemplary leadership best emerges from the cultivation of highly experienced, dedicated, and instructionally competent teacher leaders with strong motivations to become school administrators. And, each program provides either full time or part time mentored internships at school or district office sites other than the candidate’s school of employment.

The five credential programs appear to have several attributes that are relatively uncommon among more traditional programs. All five programs work with one or more local districts to recruit and train candidates and to integrate the work of the program into the work of the schools. All five use a cohort model in which a group of students enroll in and move through the coursework together. Finally, in all five programs candidate competence is assessed via multiple performance measures, and most commonly through the use of structured portfolios. Essentially, all five programs contain design features that are tightly aligned with the principles of adult learning described by Knowles et al. (2005)—most notably, an approach to learning that is experiential, problem-based, and authentic.

All of these programs have also endured fiscal crises, changes of personnel, and program modifications, a sign of the strength of their designs and the commitments of both the universities and districts involved.

Outcomes suggest that the programs have moved the field forward in learning how to train administrative leaders effectively. For example, across the five programs, survey results from the Stanford research project and, more recently, anecdotal testimonials from graduates and faculty directors uniformly point to high levels of student satisfaction with their programs, and high levels of confidence and efficacy relating to administrative tasks and working with teachers to promote powerful teaching and learning. Graduates of these programs appear to be significantly more successful than those from other programs in finding and keeping administrative positions. They commonly report that the skills acquired through their credential programs prepared them well for the complexities of organizational management in schools, and particularly for their roles as instructional leaders.
We also know something about the impact on teaching and learning by principals who have graduated from these five programs from the tracking of a small sample of each program’s graduates in the Stanford study and from much more ambitious data collection by the UELP at the University of Illinois at Chicago. While all of these programs have some evidence of their effectiveness and of their graduates’ impact on schools, derived from both internal data collection and external research, we note that well-developed outcome-based measures of programs’ and candidates’ effects are not yet well-rooted even in these notable programs, much less in the field as a whole.

We can think of three plausible explanations for the general paucity of impact data for program graduates. First, the fiscal crisis that has engulfed public school systems across the nation has had a calamitous effect on the ability of many states to develop and support robust data systems that can provide information about administrators’ career trajectories linked to data about the schools they have led.

Second, for many school districts, the fiscal crisis has resulted in the reduction of teaching and administrative positions. Consequently, over the past five years a smaller proportion of credential program graduates have been hired as administrators than in previous years. Finally, revealing measurable relationships between a principal’s leadership and student learning is considerably more difficult than analyses of the relationships between teaching and student learning. Moreover, in the wake of No Child Left Behind, the locus of school reform efforts has landed squarely upon the measurement and evaluation of teaching effectiveness. The nascent interest in calculating the impact of school leaders on important school outcomes (such as student learning, persistence in school, graduation rates, access to high-quality learning experiences, school climate, teacher capacity and retention in the field) has yet to deeply penetrate the field.

We believe that the University of Illinois at Chicago is on the right track. In its emergent value-added model, the UELP uses multiple (and longitudinal) measures of student success that extend beyond standardized test scores. For example, the program assesses several factors that relate to student learning and the principal’s ability to impact organizational systems and structures such as changes in attendance and truancy rates. In these ways, the model acknowledges and responds to Hallinger and Heck’s (1996) point that the principal’s impact on student achievement is largely indirect. It also reflects the conclusions by Seashore Louis et al., (2010) that the principal’s impact on student achievement is stimulated by his/her ability to create synergy among the school’s resources (fiscal, material, human) and educational processes.

Of course, the range and types of variables that could be measured in a comprehensive approach to the assessment of a principal’s impact on schools and students is undeniably vast, and most probably beyond the capacity of any one model to capture perfectly. However, in addition to
system-wide measures of student academic performance, the research on principal effectiveness points to six critical abilities of the principal to impact teaching and learning that could be assessed by credential programs. These are the ability to:

1) Influence teacher feelings of efficacy, motivation, and satisfaction,
2) establish the organizational and cultural conditions that foster a positive environment for teaching and learning,
3) promote professional collaboration,
4) promote and support the instructional abilities and professional development of teachers,
5) focus resources and organizational systems toward the development, support, and assessment of teaching and learning, and
6) enlist the involvement and support of parents and community stakeholders.

We look forward to seeing increased documentation by researchers and programs themselves about what leadership preparation programs do and with what results for principals’ capacities, actions, and outcomes. It is imperative that the field be able to move forward with purposeful use of information about what works so that programs can better arm principals for the challenging and important work they must undertake.

References


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RACING TO THE TOP WITH LEADERS IN RURAL, HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

This article describes an innovative approach, developed by North Carolina State University, to prepare leaders specifically for work in rural schools in high poverty districts. Operating with Race-to-the-Top funding, the Northeast Leadership Academy is a selective program with embedded practice and focused summer community internships. The program aims at spanning developmental psychology across K–12 grades. Models of turnarounds are chosen for their rural contexts, and executive coaching and mentoring aid in the transition to leadership positions. Perhaps most innovative is the aim that leaders of rural schools in poor districts need to be both community-focused and student-focused. The activities for NELA Fellows are designed to graduate turnaround leaders who are diagnosticians of student learning as well.

A primary challenge for 21st century schools is achieving higher levels of learning for all children. Research clearly indicates that effective teachers increase student achievement and decrease achievement gaps. Even in the lowest-performing schools there are often examples of “heroic” teaching where an isolated teacher has a major impact on student achievement. However, if the effective teacher is the outlier, a lone island in a sea of ineffective teachers, then that teacher’s impact quickly fades out in subsequent years.

A critical and often overlooked aspect of increasing teacher quality is the role of the principal. The principal is best positioned to ensure consecutive years of effective teaching for students—thus influencing a child’s overall academic achievement (Cheney & Davis, 2011). Principals strongly influence teacher quality and, therefore, student achievement through the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers and through the creation of a school culture focused on learning and characterized by high expectations for all students (Cheney & Davis, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Young, Crow, Orr, Ogawa, & Creighton, 2005).

Effective schools are led by principals who are equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions required to improve teacher quality. In historically low-performing schools, improving teaching and learning requires a strategic investment in school leadership capacity. These schools, which are in great need of outstanding leadership, often struggle to find qualified individuals willing to serve as principal.

In this era of accountability, school leadership has become more stressful, more political, more complex, and more time-consuming (Duke, Grogan, & Tucker 2003). Transient student populations, ethnic and cul-
tural diversity, and achievement gaps contribute to creating hard-to-staff schools. In geographically isolated rural settings, high concentrations of poor and minority students, low per-pupil expenditures, and low principal salaries also create challenges for school districts when they attempt to recruit and retain principals who are capable of improving student learning outcomes (Browne-Ferrigno & Maynard, 2005).

Understandably, policymakers have become increasingly concerned about a pending shortage of qualified individuals to fill principal positions in the nation’s high-need, hard-to-staff schools. It has been projected that more than forty percent of principals in U.S. public schools (and over 50% in North Carolina) will be eligible for retirement by 2015 (Education Schools Project, 2005), making the focus on educational leadership all the more timely.

A New Era

A new era of educational reform is knocking at the schoolhouse door. The U.S. Department of Education is focused on innovation, and they have targeted $5 billion in competitive funds to back initiatives to transform schooling. The Investment in Innovation (I3) and Race to the Top (RttT) funding programs are clear and present signals of this swift move toward transforming normative practices. Both funding mechanisms have brought turnaround efforts to the fore. Secretary Duncan (Richardson, 2009) called investments such as the $100 billion for education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act our educational “moon shot.” The president provided specific details in his 2011 State of the Union Address: “Race to the Top is the most meaningful reform of our public schools in a generation … the approach we follow … [will] replace No Child Left Behind.”

In 2010, North Carolina was awarded $400 million of Race-to-the-Top funding. Like many other states, North Carolina is facing a looming leadership crisis; over 50% of principals will be eligible for retirement over the next three years. Three regional leadership academies (RLAs) were established “to address the need to recruit, prepare, and support leaders of transformational change in challenging school contexts.” Each RLA was charged with preparing 50–60 school leaders by providing a customized, comprehensive, research-based program that will position leaders to improve high-poverty, underperforming schools.

Building Leadership Capacity for High-Need, Hard-to-Staff Schools

Recognizing the impact that school leadership has on student achievement, particularly in high-needs schools, a major component of North Carolina’s RttT proposal was to systemically design and deploy multiple pathways for recruiting, selecting and training a cadre of school leaders (both new and current) who can improve student achievement in a vari-
ety of school contexts. When North Carolina wrote its first RttT proposal, North Carolina had approximately 216 low performing schools (schools with performance composites below 50%, the vast majority of which are located in northeastern North Carolina). North Carolina’s accountability model requires schools to provide students with a year’s worth of academic growth annually as well as requiring a minimum performance level. Therefore, in addition to the low performing schools, a significant number of schools have not delivered student growth in recent years, which further highlights the need for school leaders who can sustain improvement once the minimal level of performance is met.

In January 2009, the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA) received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to design a preparation program for school leaders in rural, low-performing schools in northeast North Carolina. North Carolina State University’s Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA) is a new model of preparation, early career support, and continuous professional development for leaders who have the desire and commitment to lead high-need schools. NELA is derived from research-based promising practices and was the pilot RLA for North Carolina’s RttT proposal.

The Directors of NELA recognize that various permeations of “innovative” leadership programs have been tried in the past. However, two common criticisms arise: (a) programs often look more like traditional programs than being truly innovative and different and (b) little evidence is provided in regard to the effectiveness of the school leaders produced by these programs.

North Carolina State University (NCSU) believes that NELA truly represents a sea change in the preparation of school leaders. While NELA has invested in a number of innovative, research-based strategies that have been initiated elsewhere, the program also invests in new thinking about the preparation of future leaders in rural, poor, and underperforming schools. Additionally, an evaluation design incorporates what NELA fellows (our students) are learning and their impact on a school’s teachers, students, and surrounding community.

In designing NELA a dramatic change from the ways school leaders have traditionally been prepared was sought. The directors have done more than tinkering around the edges of the program or shuffling the metaphorical deck of cards—more of the same, just in a different order. NELA truly represents a change in the deck. The Northeast Leadership Academy aims to balance theory and practice and inquiry and action. NELA did a deep dive into our Master’s in School Administration curriculum and examined every assignment, every core reading and every experience to make sure that they were relevant, useful, and linked to our theory of action and North Carolina Standards for School Executives. NELA designed what was believed to be powerful learning experiences that force our students to stretch themselves and grow both professionally and personally.

NELA vetted components of our program design to panels of na-
tional and state leadership educators (including individuals from corporate leadership development and non-traditional school leader preparation programs) and continues to receive input from our external stakeholders through both our formal advisory panel and through more informal feedback processes. NELA is confident that coursework is rigorous, instructors and mentors are helpful and experienced, and internships are meaningful—focused on solving real school issues. Graduates will have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be effective leaders of change—using data to focus on results and reflect on practice. The NELA fellows are deeply committed to improving persistently low-achieving schools and make a three-year, post-degree commitment to work in high-need schools in the region.

NELA is aligned with constructivism and adult learning theory—tapping the wealth of adult experience and knowledge that when aligned with new knowledge, can foster deeper learning in adults. Fellows are supported through executive coaches and mentors as they are placed into challenging situations to apply their new learning. During various stages in the program, fellows are placed in project teams, the composition of which maximizes the diversity of experiences, perspectives, and leadership styles within the group.

Through role plays and challenging projects on child cognitive and developmental psychology, purposeful pressure is placed on the teams as a mechanism to help the fellows understand group dynamics, develop interpersonal skills and learn interdependency. This process prepares them for their first principalship by helping the fellows develop the skills necessary to build productive professional relationships and work with teachers and staff they did not hire and may not have chosen as employees. This is particularly important in the rural context in which they will work. They will be leaders in hard-to-staff schools in politically charged school districts where “cleaning house” by firing teachers and re-staffing the school would be impossible. The fellows will need to work with the existing faculty and lead the continuing professional development of both the faculty and staff.

NELA integrates three essential “anchors” of effective school leadership. These “anchors” encompass many skills and attributes that when combined help create a leader who is committed to excellence for students, empowers teachers and staff, and engages community stakeholders. NELA’s anchors of practice are: (a) relationships (developing and maintaining inter-personal relationships focused on the goal of educational improvement); (b) diagnosing effective teaching and learning and; (c) leadership and management skills and processes to implement change and transform schools.

**Key Components**

NELA incorporates a number of strategies to prepare innovative, effective leaders for rural, high-poverty schools.
Rigorous selection. Educational leadership programs have historically been populated by students who self-select into the program by meeting minimum academic requirements (most typically GPA and GRE scores). Little is done to ensure that applicants have a minimum threshold of competency in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that research indicates are requisites for effective leadership.

For example, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified 21 characteristics of principals that are linked to higher levels of student performance. Seven of these are positively correlated with deeper school change: (a) change agent (challenges the status quo, leads change); (b) flexibility (comfortable with major changes, open to new ideas); (c) ideals and beliefs (holds strong professional beliefs about teaching and learning, shares those beliefs, and demonstrates behaviors consistent with those beliefs); (d) intellectual stimulation (up-to-date on current research, exposes staff to new ideas); (e) knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (f) Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and (g) optimizer (inspires teachers, portrays a positive can-do attitude, drives major initiatives). However, leadership programs typically do little to screen for these characteristics in their applicants.

Further, emerging research indicates that while many of the indicators Marzano, Water, and McNulty identified can be taught, the most promising aspiring leaders also possess intrinsic values, orientations, and belief systems that include: a belief that all children can achieve at high academic levels (and they have accompanying high expectations for students and teachers); a sense of urgency; personal accountability for achieving results for students; and resiliency and perseverance when confronted with setbacks (Cheney & Davis, 2011). These intrinsic qualities are difficult to teach so NELA established a selection process that helps identify candidates with these promising qualities.

Potential candidates for NELA engage in a multi-phase assessment process which, in addition to the university requirements, includes a full-day candidate assessment during which applicants engage in authentic scenario-based activities. Candidates are assessed by evaluation teams composed of current teachers, principals, K–12 students, Department of Public Instruction representatives, district superintendents, and university faculty. (For a more detailed description of the Assessment Day, please see: https://ncsunela.wikispaces.com).

The multi-phased assessment process helps select NELA fellows who share the belief that all children can achieve at high academic levels, have a sense of urgency and personal accountability for achieving results for students, and have strong resiliency skills to persevere when confronted with setbacks.

As a strategy to build trusting relationships, expand collegial networks, and develop high-performing teams, fellows are admitted into a closed cohort of approximately 20 participants who progress through the
program together. Through strategic team building experiences, an expected outcome from the cohort structure is the creation of a region-wide leadership support network or community of practice which is sustainable across the fellows’ professional careers.

**Individualized leader development plans.** At each milestone (every 4 months), NELA students use self, peer, instructor, and coaches’ assessments to rate their knowledge, skills, and dispositions on the state school executive standards. Like an individualized education plan (IEP) for K–12 students, multiple diagnostic tools are used to identify areas for improvement; comprehensive action plans are developed for targeted improvement and measurable growth.

**Daytime learning experiences.** The very public criticism of colleges of education in recent years stems in part from the design and delivery of typical educational leadership programs. Typically teachers who want to become principals take night classes and squeeze in internship hours during their prep periods or lunch breaks—even supervising school dances counts as internship experience in some programs. Rightfully, critics have questioned how one learns to lead without authentic opportunities to practice leadership in the daily action of the school day.

NELA’s learning experiences occur during the day on Tuesdays. To help bridge the geographic distance and to make the learning contextually authentic, the program is delivered in northeast North Carolina (not on North Carolina State University’s campus). While our primary meeting site is at a local college campus, meetings are often held in K–12 schools to complete a school site visit before beginning the session.

During the first year of the two-year program, NELA fellows are released from teaching each Tuesday to experience facilitative, experiential learning, delve into case studies, and role play authentic scenarios, including using flip cameras for reflective practice and digital stories.

To create the time and space needed for leadership preparation and principal succession while maintaining a high quality teaching faculty, in the first year of the program, each NELA Fellow is matched with a full-time student teacher and a devoted substitute teacher (a retired master teacher). This team is involved in co-planning and co-teaching during the days each semester that the NELA fellows engage in the practicum and other NELA activities. The substitute and student teacher co-teach the lessons those days—giving the student teacher hands-on experience and guidance from two experienced teachers. Thus, as excellent teachers exit the classroom to become effective school leaders, the teaching corps is replenished by having the aspiring leaders mentor and supervise the new teacher.

**Embedded practicum.** Each course has a leadership application block or practicum with related field activities and an action research project. Every other Tuesday (fellows are in training one week and in the field the next), fellows are in schools engaged in powerful learning experiences.
and completing field-based assignments. Here, experiences take place in the daily flow and life of a school that is in session. Students utilize flip cameras to document their experiences for self-reflection and feedback provided by instructors and coaches.

**Rural context and turnaround principles.** Program curriculum and experiences are customized to the specific context—in this case rural, low performing, high-poverty schools and communities.

**Community internship.** NELA fellows are required to have a focused summer internship experience in the community that surrounds the district’s school. Fellows are immersed in the community and learn how to build networks of partnerships to provide the critically needed resources, support, and opportunities for students in high-need schools.

The Northeast Leadership Academy partnered with the Rural School and Community Trust (www.ruraledu.org) and an extension professor from College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) (4H) to offer that experience. This is the first time that this program has engaged in such cross-university, interdisciplinary efforts. It is also the first time the program has partnered with a non-profit organization to provide the highly specialized training our students will need to be successful in rural schools.

Fellows learn about grant writing and complete a grant application on behalf of the community organization. To date, four of the 10 grant proposals from summer 2011 have been funded, providing a tangible benefit to both the school and the community agency partner.

**Specialized training.** NELA is preparing community-focused school leaders who are diagnosticians of learning in their school. To this end, students engage in experiences and specialized training on a variety of specific topics including: poverty, grant writing, crucial conversations, data boot camp, relationship building/trust, conflict resolution, local and federal educational policy, content area expertise (with a concentrated focus on literacy and numeracy), etc. NELA has training on utilizing digital technologies to both improve organizational skills and to model appropriate use of technology for the “wired generation” of students in our schools.

NELA fellows complete Facilitative Leadership© (FL) training and utilize FL’s seven practices of facilitative leadership in their internship work: share an inspiring vision; focus on results, process, and relationships; seek maximum appropriate involvement; design pathways to action; facilitate agreement; coach for performance; and celebrate accomplishments.

**Replenishing the pipeline.** The program compels the development of a succession plan for leadership. Moreover, stipends are paid to encourage student teachers to go to these geographically isolated schools - providing an opportunity to replenish the teaching pipeline and fill the vacancy during the internship year and potentially beyond.
Pre-K–12 developmental psychology. Each semester students engage in a grade spanning developmental project. For instance, the first semester focuses on early childhood to early elementary age students—looking at developmentally appropriate teaching and learning practices. Similar projects are completed for upper elementary, middle school, high school, and adult learning.

The fellows gain experiences in schools across grade levels, know what resources are available in the districts, and understand developmentally appropriate pedagogy. An important component is for each fellow (or team) to design a way to “give back” to the districts or community in the form of a useful resource. The fellows share what they learned by creating various pamphlets, digital stories, web resources, professional development seminars and other materials for teachers, parents, and community agencies.

Learning exchanges. Because NELA firmly believes that seeing is believing, NELA fellows visit high-poverty, high-performing schools both in and out of the state. They also apply for grant funds to attend professional development conferences based on their individualized leadership development plans.

Executive coaching and mentoring. Executive coaches (retired expert principals and superintendents) are deployed to work with fellows based on specific needs from their individualized leadership development plans. In-school mentors play a different role—targeted at advisement in the daily functions of the internship. These school mentors receive concurrent specialized training with NELA fellows in order to integrate reforms for the individual leader and the school as an organization. As a result, both fellows and their mentors (practicing principals) receive advanced leadership training and development as they work together to solve real problems of practice at the mentor principal’s school. This degree of purposeful alignment of professional development for current and aspiring leaders helps create systems open to innovation and continuous improvement efforts.

NELA fellows have both a principal mentor and an executive coach. The principal mentor is a source of advice and information regarding district matters and help guide the action research projects. The coach is as an external source of confidential and expert support.

While executive coaching is an established practice in corporate America, the literature on the coaching of school leaders is very limited. Coaching is based on a collaborative partnership between a coach and individuals willing and ready to engage in work to develop their skills to their full potential. As such, coaching is a vehicle for analysis, reflection, and action. The business model demonstrated that effective executive coaching must be both strategic and individualized.

The executive coaching model resolves some of the long-standing problems with typical principal mentor programs. For example, in a traditional mentor program the mentors are senior organizational insiders,
often in job-similar positions. The supervisory nature of the relationship means that it may be difficult for mentees to share confidences—especially when they are struggling. Further, informal mentors have their own demanding jobs, and though they may have the best of intentions, they are usually not fully available to their protégés.

The NELA model of coaching was designed around the particular needs of school leaders. Loosely drawing from Bloom, Castagna and Warren’s (2003) work, it is designed around the following precepts: (a) the coach’s fundamental commitment is to student success, and the coach will appropriately direct the coachee to that end; (b) the coaching relationship is based upon trust; (c) the coach moves between instructional and facilitative coaching strategies based upon assessment of the coachee’s needs and in pursuit of agreed-upon goals; and (d) the professional standards (North Carolina’s Standards for School Executives) are the framework for goal-setting and ongoing formative feedback.

Before working with their mentees, the coaches participated in a customized coaching training program. The principal mentors also participated in a customized mentor training program. To enhance the work of the coaches and reduce isolation, a community of practice for the coaches was built. They share tools and resources during periodic meetings and through an electronic network. In addition to their work with the NELA fellows, the coaches are also available to work with the mentor principals of the fellows they coach.

Full time internship. Fellows participate in a full-time, paid internship in the second year of the program. Fellows continue to come together each week for learning and reflection. During the internship each fellow conducts a comprehensive review of his or her school’s educational program, a review that uses both qualitative and quantitative data regarding student performance trends and other performance indicators.

Fellows use this review and other data to identify a problem of practice, develop a logic model and theory of action, and then implement a year-long school improvement project with input from their mentor principal, NELA executive coach and leadership faculty.

Transitional and early career support. Upon program completion, graduates are provided ongoing support from North Carolina State University faculty, coaches, and mentors for two years. This transitional support marks a break from the past practice of “get them through and bring in the next group” common among school leadership programs.

External evaluation, performance tracking, and internal feedback loops. NELA is being evaluated by an external evaluation team as a part of North Carolina’s Race to the Top award. In addition to the external evaluation team an electronic data collection system is utilized to track individual student growth and additional dynamic internal feedback loops to drive continuous program improvement (see: https://ncsunela.wikispaces.com/NELA+Home).
Conclusion

The NELA design aims to disrupt the two inhibiting forces that have stalled previous reform efforts. First, educational reform efforts have been thwarted by the public’s perception of what schools look like—mostly from their own experience. This has led to innovations morphing back to current practices. Second, developing individuals’ capacities can be usurped by organizational dysfunction. That is, working on the individual alone will not lead to meaningful, effective, and lasting reforms. Systems that are rife with dysfunction must be simultaneously dealt with.

Currently, NELA is supported from various external funding sources, including over $6.2 million from Race-to-the-Top (RttT) funds. The institutional barriers to reform that seemed almost insurmountable when this work began are steadily being broken down. NELA is strategically building partnerships, support structures, and highly productive inter-agency relationships so that North Carolina State University will continue to be able to provide the innovative components of NELA after the RttT funding ends.

The prowess of reforms like NELA will be predicated on the skills of school leaders that emerge and the new forms of schooling that materialize through such innovations. Early indications signal that this new era of educational reform funding is in fact creating a new wave of sustainable innovative educational reforms. NELA is utilizing an innovative, systems-based approach to leadership development and is tapping into and building on local strengths to bolster both human capital and system capacity. In doing so, NELA has re-conceptualized leadership preparation—taking it from the “I” to the “we;” from school leadership to community leadership; from superhero to servant leaders; and from lone wolf to critical mass. Thus, the cadre of 60 NELA graduates (along with their like-trained mentors and coaches) can create a tipping point—creating a new narrative of high expectations and performance.

Author Note

To learn more about the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA), please visit: https://ncsunela.wikispaces.com

Endnotes

1North Carolina’s lowest performing schools are disproportionately clustered in rural school districts in the northeast region of the state.

2Identifying undergraduates who are willing to student teach in challenging, geographically isolated schools has been a difficult component of the model. While NELA hopes to have even more success with this component in the future, only a few fellows currently have student teachers. However, NELA has been highly successful in securing retired teachers to work every Tuesday in the fellow’s classroom.
References


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Matt Militello is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and a Director and Principal Investigator of the Northeast Leadership Academy at North Carolina State University, Raleigh.
The Educational Leadership Master’s Cohort Program at Delta State University was redesigned in 2011 to reflect current industry standards and streamline the program. Since its inception in the mid-1990s, the program has provided a nationally acclaimed model for principal preparation. The recent redesign focused on preparing school principals to provide leadership for continuous school improvement in an era of stringent accountability and diminished resources. The program description allows program planners at other universities and colleges to consider program elements that may enhance school leadership preparation at their institutions. The program is applicable to both rural and urban settings.

For well over a decade, the Educational Leadership Cohort Program within the College of Education at Delta State University has prepared leaders for schools within the storied Mississippi Delta, noted for its extremes of poverty and wealth, as well as its rich alluvial soil and intricate culture associated with the blues and the arts. The program was initiated by the College of Education in the 1990s in response to an environmental scan, which identified a declining K–12 educational system in the Mississippi Delta, reflective of the generally low socioeconomic conditions pervading the area. The plight of area schools spotlighted the need for effective and change-oriented school leadership. Visionary leaders extending from the State Superintendent of Education to the Dean of the College of Education, legislators, and local school superintendents recognized that a major shift was in order. These stakeholders, guided by national experts, reviewed the current scientific literature of the era to conceptualize and implement a program that called for a bold initiative to undergird the manner in which school leaders and principals were being trained in the state. As a result, a cohort model was designed to bring together a cluster of candidates identified as having leadership potential to take a leave of absence from the classroom and commit to a 14-month, full-time program (LaPointe, Darling-Hammond, & Meyerson, 2007). Although the program has undergone continual revision consistent with the dynamic nature of curriculum, the cohort model has been sustained since its inception. A state sabbatical leave program was established in 1998 and has been continually funded since that time through legislative appropriations to the Mississippi Department of Education, enabling candidates to make this commitment. The model was founded upon the premise that theory without intense and ongoing practical application within a clinical setting (i.e., the school site) is limited in its ability to translate into effective practice.
The program has successfully prepared school leaders each year since its inception in large part due to its flexibility with respect to changing contextual factors that affect both candidates and the schools they ultimately serve. In recent decades the Mississippi Delta region and the schools which service the region have changed dramatically in several respects. Depressed socioeconomic conditions continue to prevail, compounded by a declining population. According to the State of the Region Report by the Mississippi Delta Strategic Compact (encompassing 18 Mississippi Delta counties), the population in this region has declined 9.34% since 2001, while the State of Mississippi experienced an overall growth of 3.99% for the same period (Mississippi Delta Strategic Compact, 2011). From 2001–2010, the Delta Compact Region suffered a 7.1% decrease in overall jobs in various sectors, while the state benefitted from an overall increase of 2.6% in jobs. Further, in 2009, 59% of households in the region were headed by single mothers, compared with 44% for the same group statewide (Mississippi Delta Strategic Compact, 2011). These indicators underscore the drain of human and financial capital and the entrenched poverty that directly impacts schools within the region.

With the general decline of the Delta, the mandate to provide quality educational leaders becomes urgent. Current literature on effective schools is clear: quality leadership and quality teachers are essential for schools to be successful in preparing students. In turn, educated citizens are essential to growing a strong workforce and “contribute to the economic viability and quality of life in Delta communities” (Delta State University, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, essential to the viability of the region is the “continued development and retention of high quality leaders and teachers ... imperative to improving the health and achievement of students in the Delta area where many low-achieving students and most of the underperforming schools in Mississippi are located” (Delta State University, 2010, p. 1).

Given that the literature emphasizes the link between quality leadership and quality schools, it is important to note that the excellence of the Master’s Leadership Cohort Program at Delta State University has been acknowledged nationally by several organizations. In 2006, a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation and conducted through Stanford University identified the program as one of the top eight educational leadership programs in the nation. The study cited the following as contributing to the program’s success: components of the program that reflect scientific literature findings; program graduates who exhibit proficiencies associated with effective leaders; and financial support to sustain the program (LaPointe, Darling Hammond et al., 2007). As these researchers reported, “other schools’ programs offered important components such as internships, cohort structures, close partnerships with local school districts, and integrated curricula. However, few that we examined put these pieces together as comprehensively or as consistently well as the Educational Leadership Program at Delta State University” (LaPointe, Davis, & Cohen, 2007, p. 1).
The Leadership Cohort Program was chosen for the state’s first Institutions of Higher Learning Best Practices Award in 2006. Further, the program was cited at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) annual conference in February 2010 by Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who commented, “I want to be clear that it doesn’t take an elite university to create a fantastic principal preparation program. Delta State University in Mississippi, and the University of San Diego’s Educational Leadership Development Academy, have also been singled out as top-notch programs ....” (p. 77). The program has been highlighted in Our Children, Education Week, the Delta Business Journal, and Southern Regional Education Board materials. Two program graduates have been named Milken Award Winners, while numerous others have been named Principal or Administrator of the Year for the State of Mississippi.

After two decades, the program continues to boast a retention rate that reflects success. A review of the most recent follow-up data for program graduates revealed the following. Seventy-nine (79) candidates have graduated from the Leadership Cohort Program in the past six years (Cohorts VI–XII). Of this number, 74 (94%) remained in Mississippi schools as of the 2010–2011 school year. Of the graduates remaining in Mississippi, 69 (87%) are working in Delta area schools. Of those working in the Delta, 50 are in administrative positions, while 19 are employed as teachers eligible to fill future administrative vacancies. Additionally, the five graduates employed in Mississippi, but outside of the Delta region, are working in administrative positions; four of them are in districts identified as “critical needs” due to a shortage of highly qualified teachers (Delta State University, 2010).

Historical Context

The evolution of the current Master’s Educational Leadership Cohort Program may be best understood with a brief stage setting relevant to conditions in the Mississippi Delta that led educational leaders at Delta State University (DSU) in the early 1990s to build a better program for the preparation of school leaders. Further context is provided that chronicles social, cultural, and economic conditions in subsequent decades that shaped the current Master’s Cohort Program. Throughout these decades, the consideration of context is a consistent theme, as is the need for responding to school districts with the provision of capable leadership. This consideration of context has been and continues to be a critical factor in preparing candidates to work in regional school districts. Therefore, it is only natural that helping candidates to understand that education is culturally contextualized, requiring both an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of all individuals within the learning community, is a strand of the College of Education Conceptual Framework (Delta State University, 2012) as well as a critical dimension of the Leadership Program’s anchors (Moorman et al., 2011).
Consider first the social, political, economic, and cultural forces at play in the decades leading up to the 1990s. National attention was drawn to the Mississippi Delta’s Quitman County in the 1960s when visits by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1964 and U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy in 1967 called attention to conditions in this area. Quitman County was one of the poorest counties in America in the 1960s and remains so (U.S. Census, 2011). The visit was the impetus for Rev. Dr. King’s creation of the Poor People’s Campaign, a movement to raise awareness of the need for nutritious food, jobs, adequate housing, and non-discriminatory treatment for predominately black families living in poverty. After his visit, Senator Kennedy drew national attention to the issue of childhood hunger and malnutrition, which brought better access to free school lunches and breakfasts and to food stamps (Cass, 2010). Eventually, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Julia Cass visited Quitman County in 2008 to provide updated intonation on improvements and continued challenges. Cass found that the “basic safety net” (p. 5) constructed over 40 years ago is still helping families living in generational poverty, as well as newly poor families who lost jobs and homes during the recession of that time period. She also found that many children remain in poverty, with 98% of the students in the Quitman County public schools qualifying for free or reduced price lunches. At the high school, Cass was impressed with the atmosphere of civility and order, but also identified an aging physical plant, a shortage of certified teachers, and low test scores and graduation rates. About 30% of the high school graduates go to college, with the majority attending local community colleges while the rest typically attend a historically Black state university. Those who do not graduate from high school remain in poverty with marginal jobs or a life-style supported by illegal activity that often leads to prison (Cass, 2010).

Improving academic achievement in the Mississippi Delta public schools continues to challenge teachers and administrators. Based on the 2010 accountability results, 11 of the 27 (41%), of the state’s “Failing Schools,” the lowest level on the accountability scale, are located in the Mississippi Delta. On the other hand, 9 of 53 (17%) of the “Star Schools,” the highest designation, are also located in the Mississippi Delta. The Star School information is deceptive because seven of those schools are located in Desoto County, a middle-class suburb of Memphis, Tennessee; only two (out of 53 in the state) “Star Schools” are located in high poverty Delta counties, and both of these are magnet schools that draw their student population from across the school district. Clearly, the call for exemplary administrator preparation programs is a strong one that requires vigilance and responsiveness to the changing forces that influence schools.

Program Evolution

As introduced previously, in the mid-1990s thoughtful program planners at the university level, the State Superintendent of Education,
legislators, and vested school superintendents, all cognizant of the challenges facing the rural Delta region, embarked on the development of a leadership preparation program linked to professional standards. The standards reflected the role of practice and the dynamic nature of school leadership, tenets which would greatly influence the experiential nature of the program. It was also during this time period that the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NBPEA), chaired by Dr. Joseph Murphy, created the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), whose members set forth ISSLC Standards for School Leadership (Murphy, Moorman, & McCarthy, 2008).

Program faculty along with nationally recognized educational leadership reformers, a local school district task force, and several collaborating universities networked through meetings to build a strategic plan for restructuring the leadership development program. In addition, in 1995 the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, and several Mississippi universities, including Delta State University, formed a statewide collaboration for the purpose of changing leadership preparation in Mississippi. This collaboration reinforced the new model of restructuring the Delta State University Leadership Preparation Program Initiative, and Delta State University submitted this proposal in March 1997.

The approved proposal led to the creation of Cohort I of the Master’s Leadership Cohort Program, which began in June 1998. The program focused on the preparation of assistant principals and principals and was founded on three cornerstones of program design. These cornerstones were a collaboration and partnership between local school districts and the university, an instructional design that embraced the concepts of teaching and learning as a leadership outcome and model of application in the preparation process, and an integrated field based development process that supplied the instructional design of the preparation program. The vision of the leadership preparation program was to develop the instructional and leadership skills and behaviors of participants to a functional level that would enable graduates to assume an entry school leadership role and make a significant contribution to the improvement of educational programs and outcomes in local school districts in the Delta region and Mississippi. The three interrelated program anchors were teaching and learning, organizational effectiveness, and school and community (Delta State University, 1997). The reconceptualized program was delivered by program faculty with practical experience as school leaders and scholarly knowledge of leadership, organizational, and adult learning theories.

During ensuing years, the program has remained true to its course, while evolving in response to research and best practice. When, in 2011, the Mississippi Department of Education requested that state universities with leadership preparation programs examine their curricula and practices in light of industry standards, program planners stepped up to the plate eagerly and with confidence. The faculty, division chair, and a national
consultant examined the program in depth in light of an extensive review of current literature and research. Program anchors were redefined, curriculum was developed around the anchors, and program assessments were refined to more tightly reflect the outcomes desired of candidates. The program was also streamlined from 14 to 13 months and 48 to 39 hours to focus on salient curriculum features and experiences and bring the program in line with similar programs in the state and nation. The nationally acclaimed reviewer identified by the Mississippi Department of Education rated Delta State University’s plan as excellent and as one of the best he had reviewed in over twenty years of doing so. A detailed description of the redesigned program follows.

Program Description

Overarching Framework Utilizing Cohort Model

The current program (approved in 2011 by the Mississippi Department of Education) focuses on scaffolding learning experiences for candidates over the course of a 13-month, 39-hour program with delivery of curriculum through a progressive approach providing rigorous content and experiences at the foundational, developmental, practice, application, and mastery levels. The program continues to employ the cohort model, with candidates supporting one another while moving through the program as a group. With the cohort model, all candidates begin the program of study on June 1 of each year and complete the program on June 30 of the following year. The cohort model is superior in its ability to provide a supportive learning community for candidates where common and diverse learning experiences provide substance for rich discussions. Though challenging in terms of scheduling and the intense time commitment required of candidates, the cohort model allows for shared experiences, intensive field experiences interspersed with discussion, and meaningful connections among classes and experiences. Program planners identify these as some of the advantages over the typical part-time program with course offerings spread over a two to three year period.

Conceptual Framework

The early phase of the redesign focused on identifying and developing a conceptual framework, which would drive all curricular and program changes throughout this process. Within the conceptual framework, a research-based theory of action evolved that would focus and leverage “beliefs and values about effective teaching and learning, organizational capacity, and the socio-political context of the students’ families and communities, all used by leaders for learning to positively impact student learning” (Moorman et al., 2011).
From the theory of action, the previous program anchors of teaching and learning, organizational effectiveness, and school and community were redefined to reflect current research and literature about what effective principals should know and be able to do with respect to impacting change and continuous improvement in schools. The new program anchors that emerged were curriculum, instruction, and assessment (CIA); leading operations for learning (LOL); and continuous improvement and a culture of learning (CICL). With the three new program anchors, a foundation was provided for the development and refinement of content and instructional modules within the program. The revised core anchors focus emphatically upon leadership for learning oriented toward accountability for student outcomes, building individual and organizational capacity to achieve a powerful vision of student learning, and engaging and responding to the community.

Ultimately, the concepts of each program anchor were infused into the development of new course syllabi that defined the direction of learning goals and outcomes in each identified course. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment anchor is the primary anchor in the curriculum and focuses on the elements of effective teaching and learning; the second anchor, leading operations for learning, focuses on organizational leadership processes that promote effective and efficient use of appropriate human, fiscal, technological, and physical resources to positively affect student achievement; and the third anchor, continuous improvement and a culture of learning, is designed to help candidates understand and be able to use data to drive decision making for continuous improvement in the areas of student achievement and school operations. Additionally, this anchor focuses on the cultivation of relationships within the school and community that result in successful partnerships with parents, stakeholders, and various agencies.

Course of Study Progression

Program candidates begin their intensive coursework with two academic courses in the first of two four-week summer terms, followed by two academic courses in the second term. One course within each summer term is a core course that is required of all graduate level students; however, special sections of the core courses are offered to cohort members exclusively, fostering an environment in which discussions of content can be tailored specifically to the program’s learning goals and outcomes. The other course within each summer term is foundational and focuses on theory-based leadership styles and practices, as well as models and processes to facilitate effective change to drive improvement. In the fall semester, candidates complete six hours of coursework and internship hours. During this time instruction focuses on the content from the foundational courses and requires candidates to further develop and apply their knowledge and skills in the area of instructional leadership practices. The spring semester
consists of six hours of coursework and two internships with a sustained focus on application of instructional leadership practices, while developing capacity in the areas of effectively leading operations for learning and leading and supporting continuous improvement for a culture of learning. During each of the fall and spring semesters, candidates return to campus for five to ten days of concentrated coursework after each internship. A culminating course in the final summer term allows exiting program candidates the opportunity to demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills in program curricular areas while facilitating and leading the transition of new program candidates who are entering their first summer of study.

In addition to the progressive learning stages provided within the cohort model, the opportunity for candidates to develop strong personal and professional relationships with fellow cohort members throughout the duration of the program is evident in feedback gained from current candidates, graduates, employers, and reviewers outside of the program. Deep and trusting relationships between the candidates and program faculty have also been cited as a key component for maintaining the cohort model; with these collaborative relationships, feedback between program faculty and each individual candidate is viewed in a positive, constructive manner when monitoring and directing progress and growth toward learning goals. Positive relationships are essential between the candidate and program faculty, especially considering that many of the program assessments are performance-based and require candidates to receive direct input from the program faculty and principal mentors. This promotes the successful integration of theory-based instruction and field-based experiences.

**Internship**

A program strength that has long been a hallmark feature of the program is its three twelve-week field-based internship experiences in an elementary, middle, and high school setting during the regular school year. An additional one-week central office internship is completed during the spring semester of the program. Candidates, principal mentors, and superintendents consistently identify the intensive internship experiences as the backbone of the program. Candidates are supervised by trained principal mentors and serve four full days each week at the internship site and return to campus one day each week. National reviewers of the program, graduates, and employers have consistently noted that the prescribed experiences within the respective internships provide candidates with the needed background to perform the duties and responsibilities of a principal upon exiting the program.

The internship experiences account for nine hours of the candidate’s coursework and are integrated with the once-a-week classroom experience on the campus. It is a requirement that each candidate be placed with a principal mentor who has been appropriately recruited and trained by the pro-
gram coordinator. Mentors are selected based on the demonstration of high moral and ethical character and an overall professional disposition, qualities that will contribute to a positive learning experience for the candidate, the principal mentor, and the program. Principal mentors are also required to participate in all training activities relevant to the supervision of an administrative candidate, as well as have an outstanding background in curriculum, instruction, assessment, successful operations of a school, and establishing positive relationships with stakeholders in the school and community.

The partnership established by the school district and the university creates a win-win situation in which candidates get authentic training and schools grow future leaders knowledgeable of their needs, often resulting in candidates being hired by mentors or to work at internship sites. Once administrative candidates are placed in an internship, the principal mentors work collaboratively with candidates to guide their learning experiences while also assisting them in fulfilling a detailed, but not exhaustive list of specific, ISLLC standards-based internship activities. These activities are related to coursework and based on the program curriculum anchors. The candidates are required to complete all items on the list in each internship and must provide a written narrative to program faculty for review, which explains their depth of understanding about each item, as well as include evidence or artifacts supporting completion of each activity.

Along with completion of the internship activities, progress toward additional stated learning goals throughout the internship is monitored by program faculty, with assistance from the principal mentor. Detailed feedback is provided to the candidate to make the necessary corrections or adjustments to account for growth over the 13 months. Mentor principals are also directed by program faculty to use their own discretion in providing site-specific activities and additional administrative experiences that are relevant and appropriate for the grade level, school, school district, or community. Program faculty work with the principal mentors to supervise the candidates during each 12-week internship and the one-week central office placement through site visits, telephone calls, e-mails, and mid-term and summative mentor evaluations of the candidates.

**Recruitment, Application, and Selection**

Each individual who enters the program engages in a rigorous recruitment, application, and selection process. The program is designed to accept a maximum of seventeen (17) candidates and no fewer than eight (8) candidates. Through targeted recruitment efforts, program faculty identify a pool of quality applicants based on a desired candidate profile aligned with program goals. The ultimate goal is placement of the most highly qualified and best prepared leaders in Mississippi Delta schools. Each potential applicant must have a strong desire and possess the ability to: (a) serve as a school leader of learning; (b) provide effective leadership
in the often challenged, low achieving, and poverty stricken Mississippi Delta schools; and (c) be successful in the curriculum and internships offered through the program (Moorman et al., 2011).

Traditional and focused recruitment strategies are intended to identify candidates who will reflect the characteristics of a quality school leader as defined within the vision, mission, and foundational principles of the program. Traditional recruitment strategies include informational mailings to school districts, superintendents, and principals, as well as information mailed to candidates in response to their queries. E-mail recruitment blasts are conducted using a promotional flyer with program and contact information sent to all school districts and superintendents. Word of mouth among current and past program candidates, as well as school superintendents and other school district administrators, remains a most valuable means of sustaining interest in the program. Through partnership with the Teacher Education program faculty at Delta State University, high performing teachers and graduates of the teacher education program are identified and strategically recruited as potential candidates (high performing teachers include those individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership abilities, are National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT), or have received other accolades). Utilizing the university website for program updates, applications, and photographs, as well as other university social networks to publicize and promote the program proves highly beneficial to focused recruitment strategies. While recruitment strategies are ongoing, focused recruitment strategies leading to the start of the application process begin in late October of each year and culminate with the interview and selection process in early April.

Potential candidates who have shown a strong interest in applying to the program must have the support and recommendation of their local school district superintendent. Each candidate is then required to submit a prescribed and detailed application portfolio for consideration and review by a team consisting of program faculty from Educational Leadership and Teacher Education, program graduates, and area superintendents and principals.

The interview, application, and selection process consists of two phases. Phase I contains five components which must be met by all applicants and includes the following: (a) evidence of having taken the Graduate Record Exam (GRE); (b) evidence of having completed a writing component (GRE Analytical preferred with a required 3.0 or higher to move forward); (c) evidence of a 2.75 undergraduate grade point average on qualifying undergraduate work in teaching or related field; (d) a structured resume with required components set forth in the program application; and (d) three letters of professional reference (to be followed by telephone conferences with appropriate references). Evaluation rubrics are used to score each component of Phase I; candidates are ranked and then moved forward accordingly to Phase II of the application process.
Phase II consists of a structured interview process and is conducted by the review team cited previously. During the interview, prospective candidates are asked a series of prescribed questions structured to ascertain candidates’ knowledge and background related to foundational principles and effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Specific questions are designed to reveal the candidate’s desire to become a school leader. A commitment to high moral and ethical standards for themselves and others must be demonstrated during the interview process and is done so through responses to scenarios presented by the panel. An interview guide, interview evaluation rubric, and overall rubric are used to chart progress during both phases of the application and interview process.

**Candidate Assessment and Performance**

Candidate performance is assessed through the use of eight key performance-based assessments that are aligned with the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 and the 2002 Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership. While the eight assessments are a primary data source for tracking candidate growth and progress, additional assessments, both formative and summative, are embedded in coursework that is aligned to support the learning goals and outcomes stated in each course syllabus.

With the internships comprising four days of each week for a total of 36 weeks over the entire program (with a minimum of 1,152 total internship hours), it is by design that the assessment of individual candidate performance is primarily based on experiences from each internship and the weekly day of instruction on campus. Supplemental assignments to enhance learning and support progress on the performance-based assessments are provided during intense on-campus course sessions between internships, via e-mail or online assignments, and through assigned readings of professional journal articles, books, book chapters, or research studies about the current instructional topics. Through the constructivist theory approach, it is the expectation of program faculty that candidates are active participants in their own learning through research methods and other forms of inquiry.

**Clinical Correlations and Administrative Intern Performance Assessment**

Two of the eight key performance assessments, the Clinical Correlations and the Administrative Intern Performance Assessment, are largely dependent on the internship experience and require completion at each internship site. The Clinical Correlations are based on real experiences that occur while the candidate is in the internship. There is a set format for completing each of 12 Clinical Correlation papers at each of the 12-week internship sites. The Clinical Correlations must demonstrate an alignment with
the appropriate ELCC/ISLLC standards based on the situation, provide a vivid narrative description of the situation, address any legal or ethical issues or state accountability standards that may apply to the situation, discuss possible alternative actions that the principal could have taken, and include a reflection on the situation and what the candidate learned. The Administrative Intern Performance Assessment relies primarily on feedback from the principal mentor at the conclusion of each internship. The instrument is aligned to each of the ELCC standards and performance elements for which the principal mentor provides a candidate rating. Principal mentors are also asked to rate the candidate on 24 items to provide insight into the personal characteristics and dispositions of each candidate in areas such as professionalism, punctuality, appropriate attire, and teamsmanship.

**School Leaders Licensure Assessment**

The School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), developed and administered by Educational Testing Services (ETS), is a nationally normed assessment based on the ISLLC 2008 Standards and is designed to measure whether or not entry-level principals and other school leaders have the standards-relevant knowledge believed necessary for competent professional practice. The SLLA has been required by Mississippi as part of the licensure process for school administrators since 1999. Since its inception, candidates of each of the Educational Leadership Cohorts have completed the SLLA. Since the ISSLC and ELCC standards are aligned, this assessment provides evidence of a candidate’s proficiency on the ELCC Standards as well. The four hour SLLA is organized into two sections. Section I consists of 100 multiple-choice items and is administered over a time frame of two hours and twenty minutes. Section I contains multiple-choice items measuring the ability of the candidate in the areas of vision and goals, teaching and learning, managing organizational systems and safety, collaborating with key stakeholders, and ethics and integrity. Section II consists of seven constructed-response items administered over a time frame of one hour and forty minutes. The seven constructed-response items require the candidate to analyze situations and data, to propose appropriate courses of action, and to provide written rationales for the candidate’s course of action.

Currently, a minimum score of 169 on the SLLA is required for school administrator licensure in Mississippi. The minimum score of 169 is the highest of any state in the United States. In the last five years, the Mississippi Department of Education has changed the minimum score three times, moving the minimum score through 2007 from 154 to 165 in 2008, to 167 in 2009, and most recently to 169 effective January 2010. Candidates from each of the 13 Delta State University Educational Leadership Cohort Programs have completed the SLLA. In September 2009, ETS introduced a new format of the SLLA that continues to reflect can-
Candidate performance based on the ISLLC 2008 Standards. Since the program’s inception, 169 of 172 total program candidates have passed the SLLA on their first attempt, resulting in a 98% first-time pass rate.

Since program inception, 169 of 172 (98%) students have passed the SLLA on their first attempt. From 1999–2007 the mean score was 176, the median was 177, and the range was 161–192. These scores represented a 100% pass rate for licensure and were well above both the state and national average. Students in the program continue to perform well on the SLLA with a median score of 181 and a mean of 179 for the years 2008–2011. Overall the scores continue to increase and to exceed the state and national averages.

Challenges

Funding

In 1993 a strategic plan was developed for funding the master’s educational leadership cohort design. A partnership was formed between Delta State University and the Delta Area Association for Improvement of Schools (DAAIS), a consortium comprised of Mississippi Delta public schools and parochial schools. From 1998 through 2006, the partnership received funding through a grant from the Delta Education Imitative (DEI), providing financial support for faculty salaries, faculty and student travel, textbooks, and supplies. Since the program required students to commit to full-time student status, scholarships were particularly critical to the success of the program. The Mississippi Department of Education School Administrator Sabbatical Program enabled school districts to continue to pay candidates their salaries during the 14-month program, and DEI provided additional scholarship funding. Delta State University allowed the tuition to be waived for all students. Since 2006, funding has been provided in a similar fashion by the Delta Health Alliance, a collaborative of regional health service and educational agencies funded through the Health Resources and Services Agency (HRSA). While the Mississippi sabbatical program and the DSU tuition waivers continue to be critical aspects of program success, current economic and funding pressures will assuredly cause program planners to look for creative ways in which to continue support for the program.

School Districts

Economic constraints upon school districts have also presented a challenge for superintendents faced with reducing faculty and staff, making it difficult to release teachers to the program with the assurance that their jobs will be secure upon their return after completion of the 13-month program. Additionally, some superintendents have voiced concern that it
becomes a morale issue to have faculty losing positions through budget cuts while others are being provided a sabbatical to pursue their education.

**Professional Development for Sustainability**

The turnover rate of administrators in the field presents a challenge for program planners who must continually educate them regarding the model and earn their buy-in. Without the support of area district school administrators, promising candidates do not have the environment or the support to avail themselves of the program. The same is true of other stakeholders such as legislators and state school leaders: their support is tantamount to the sustainability of the program supports in place (i.e., state sabbatical leave program, community partnerships, others).

**Generalizability**

Although a description of this model program would not be complete without considering its context and mission, it is significant to note that it has broad application for other universities and colleges with principal preparation programs. The basis for its success is the strong commitment stemming from a partnership between an educational institution and the school districts it serves. While this strong regional identity is rural, the leadership skills developed within the program are predicated upon industry standards and could be applied in any region where a strong partnership can be forged between the university program and school districts. Further, the commitment to analyzing the context of the service area is applicable and beneficial to all regions and one that bodes well for program planners wishing to adapt the model. The program is particularly advantageous for areas with disadvantaged populations, whether rural or urban. Schools in such areas should benefit from the program’s comprehensive and intensive approach to leadership development with a focus on understanding contextual factors and relationship building and its emphasis on continuous school improvement based on data analysis.

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PREPARING URBAN SCHOOL LEADERS: WHAT WORKS?

Extant research, though limited in quantity, increasingly demonstrates the critical connection between quality preparation experience, candidates’ leadership capacity, and their subsequent instructional and transformation leadership practices. Using mixed methods, this study builds on the current knowledge base and aims to further verify the link between program preparation and participant learning by examining the various program features and their effect on participant learning as measured by both candidates’ self-reported preparedness in key leadership areas and their objective performance from NASSP’s Assessment Center. Descriptive analyses indicated that the program in question was comparable to many exemplary preparation programs in terms of participants’ perception in curriculum content quality and self-reported preparedness in key leadership areas. Correlation analyses resulted in a consistent positive relationship between cohort structure and participants’ self-reported preparedness. NASSP’s Assessment Center demonstrated less optimistic results in candidates’ leadership skills. However, this did not seem to impact participants’ overall positive experience with the program. Qualitative data, while confirming many of the exemplary features of the program (e.g., cohort, mentoring and coaching) demonstrated that quick and episodic changes that characterize many urban school districts seemed to exert a great influence on the consistent implementation of the program, in particular, in internship placement, one of the most important learning blocks in the studied program. The study calls for more systematic support from the district and more seamless collaborations among the partners.

The primary goal of leadership preparation programs is to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of future school leaders. Although empirical data on specific leadership preparation program policies, practices, and outcomes have been slim historically (Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2011), a growing interest in advancing program improvement and further establishing the link between preparation and program outcomes has emerged (Orr, 2011). Extant research, though limited in quantity, increasingly demonstrates the critical connection between quality preparation experience, candidates’ leadership capacity, and their subsequent instructional and transformation leadership practices (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). This study builds on the current knowledge base and aims to further verify the link between program preparation and participant learning with explicit attention to the urban context where the program is situated. It is designed with reference to the following three strands of literature: (a) levels of evaluation, (b) effective leadership, and (c) quality leadership preparation program features and their effects.
Four Levels of Evaluation on Training Program

Kirkpatrick (1998) proposed four levels of outcomes in assessing the effectiveness of training programs: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Level 1 (reaction) evaluation assesses what participants think and feel about a training program; level 2 (learning) evaluation gauges the extent to which participants have improved their knowledge or skills; level 3 (behavior) measures participants’ knowledge transfer on the job; and level 4 (results) measures the extent to which the training has contributed to the achievement of organizational goals (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2001). Although it initially emerged half a century ago, Kirkpatrick’s taxonomy continues to represent a state-of-the-art model of training evaluation (Kraiger, Ford, & Salas, 1993). When operationalized in the context of school leadership preparation, these four levels of evaluation have the potential to assess program outcomes related to aspiring leaders’ satisfaction with their preparation programs, their learning about desired leadership knowledge and skills, their on-the-job performance once placed as school administrators, and their contribution to school improvement and student learning.

Effective School Leadership

Over the past three decades, a significant body of empirical research indicates the following: (a) principal leadership contributes significantly to school effectiveness and student performance (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010); (b) principal practices primarily affect student learning indirectly through developing teacher capacity and creating positive organizational conditions (Hallinger & Heck, 1996); and (c) effective principal practices include but are not limited to establishing a focus and vision, developing the capacity of school professionals, building a student-centered learning climate and fostering parent and community trusting relationships (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). These findings have significant implications for school leadership training. On the one hand, they confirm the strategic importance of leadership development. On the other, they signal important domains of knowledge and skills that preparation programs should focus on in order to develop effective school leaders.

Quality Program Features and Their Effects

With the realization of the principal’s role as the change agent and the leverage of school improvement, another body of literature has emerged to identify preparation program features that are effective in cultivating leaders who exemplify the aforementioned leadership behaviors. These program features include an authentic university-district partnership in the rigorous
recruitment and selection of candidates and program delivery (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, & LaPointe, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Orr & Barber, 2007) and a standards-based curriculum grounded in well-tested theories on instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and organizational learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, & Wilson, 1996; Orr, 2011; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Also a particularly noteworthy finding reveals that active learning strategies with emphasis on rigorous internship, quality mentoring and coaching (Perez et al., 2011), the use of a cohort structure, and data-driven program improvement are critical to the quality of preparation experience. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005). This body of literature also suggests that innovative program features are associated with graduates’ increased satisfaction with the program, improved knowledge and skills, faster advancement into leadership positions, and more effective school improvement practices once placed.

Although the results of these studies converge on the positive influence of high-quality program features on graduates’ learning and their subsequent leadership practices, the finding is less clear regarding how authentically such quality preparation program features can be implemented in urban school districts confronted with unstable central administration and lessened desirability of principalship positions resulting from high turnover of building administrators and teachers and other difficult issues that typically characterize large urban school districts (Morris, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Payzant, 2011). These include a challenging student population, and disengaged parent and school community (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). Additionally, current literature is short on answers to questions regarding what program features are more effective in facilitating participant learning and strengthening their capacity in turnaround leadership. The present study aims to address these pressing questions.

The purpose of this article is to present findings on the nature of leadership preparation experiences of two cohorts of students enrolled in a federally funded leadership preparation program in a large urban school district from 2009 to 2011. Further, the article aims to investigate the relationships among the participants’ characteristics, preparation experiences, leadership learning, and graduate preparedness. Specifically, it addresses the following questions:

• What are the characteristics of program graduates (gender, race/ethnicity, years of teaching experience, prior leadership experience) at the program entry?

• How well does the preparation program reflect the core quality preparation program features, such as authentic district-university partnership, rigorous selection of candidates, research-based curriculum, active instructional strategies, rigorous internship enhanced by quality mentoring, cohort structure, and high quality faculty?

• How well do the graduates do as a result of the program in terms of

Planning and Changing
satisfaction, participant learning, and sense of preparedness at the exit of the program?

- What design features are most conducive to developing the capacity of urban school leaders as measured by participants’ self-perception of learning in key leadership domains and the ratings from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Assessment Center?

Method

Program Background

The leadership preparation program studied here is a partnership program between the Center for Developing Urban Educational Leaders (CDUEL) at Lehigh University, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). The Institute for School & Society (ISS) at the Temple University College of Education serves as the external evaluator. It is funded by a federal competitive grant. The program uses a rigorous selection process to recruit exemplary teacher leaders or non-instructional staff with teaching experience and leadership potential and prepare them to lead the district’s most disadvantaged high schools, often classified as not having achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. The program implementation leverages each partner’s strength and features a highly organic and authentic collaborative process. CDUEL serves as the knowledge base, designs the program curriculum, takes primary charge of the academic content delivery, and provides the certification to the principal interns. The SDP coordinates recruitment, selection, internship arrangement, and graduate placement. NASSP provides an assessment tool to measure participant leadership skills at various points of the program and trains principal mentors.

The cohort-based program represents an integrated continuum of leadership preparation and development that spans the trajectory from aspiring school leaders to early career principals and assistant principals. It consists of three discrete groups: (a) Aspiring Leaders (AL) program that provides leadership preparation and principal certification through rigorous coursework and two years of intensive site experiences split in both the home school and the host school guided simultaneously by an high-performing practicing principal and a retired principal mentor; (b) a Developing Leader (DL) program that provides intensive leadership development to individuals with principals’ certification by using intensive site experiences also guided by an experienced practicing principal and a retired principal mentor; (c) an Emerging Leaders (EL) program that provides intensive leadership development that is aligned to state mandated job-embedded induction support, and mentoring for those in their first two years as an assistant principal or principal. Participants from both the AL and DL groups...
are asked to work in teams and design a school restructuring plan based on their research on the real data of one of the most challenging schools in the district as a culminating project. The three groups are related in that participants who complete the AL and DL programs and have been placed as principal or assistant principal will automatically advance to the EL program.

In addition to an authentic partnership and tailored curriculum for participants with varied credentials and experiences, some other program features are worth mentioning. The Philadelphia High School Leadership Program (PHSLP) utilizes an intensive set of recruitment strategies to attract a large and diverse pool of applicants. It also uses formalized processes for screening and intake to ensure high quality program candidates. The coursework, designed and taught by Lehigh faculty, provides research-based practice-oriented knowledge and skills applicable to turn around low-achieving high schools in a large urban school district. Classes are delivered in the school district during after-school hours and in the summer at 50% subsidized tuition rate to participants. Off-campus classes with the purpose of developing creative and innovative thinking are also provided periodically. One example of such classes is the visit with the residential teaching artists at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Since a fulltime year-round internship is not possible, a structured alternative (100 days over two years for ALs and 50 days in one year for DLs) was created to immerse participants in a variety of urban educational leadership settings and put them in contact with trained and experienced host principals and mentors. A standardized 360 degree assessment of educational leadership skills linked to NASSP’s 21st Century Principal Skill Dimensions is used to identify participants’ areas of strength and weakness with specific emphasis on assignments tailored to individualized leadership plans (ILP) to bolster identified areas in need of improvement, and to evaluate program effectiveness. To keep a coherent experience for participants, mentors and host principals also receive training from NASSP to help aligning their design of coaching and learning experience for principal interns with the 21st Century Principal Skill Dimensions.

Research Design

The study uses a triangulation mixed methods design (a QUAN-QUAL Model) (Creswell, 2009). We used survey instruments with demonstrated theoretical foundations and high quality psychometric properties to collect information on program participants’ demographic and professional information, program attributes and participants’ perceived learning in several key leadership areas. Specifically, our survey measures were developed based on Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards and the survey design work of the Stanford University study of exemplary leadership preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al, 2007). In conjunction with candidates’ self-reported learning, candidates’
performance data from the NASSP’s Assessment Center were used to test the link between preparation experience and candidate learning. Finally, we complemented the quantitative data with in-depth interviews with selected program participants and their host principals and mentors to gain a realistic picture of their internship experience and learning. Additionally, other qualitative data collected from interviews with program staff, observations of program participants at intern sites and in class, and document analyses were used to further inform our interpretations of program effect. All quantitative and qualitative data were collected and provided by the external evaluator group from Temple University. Together with the triangulated mixed method design, the objectivity and independence of the data source strengthen the integrity and validity of the findings.

Measures.

Dependent measures. The dependent measures fell into three categories: participants’ program satisfaction, leadership learning, and sense of preparedness. Using a single 5-point Likert scale item anchored by definitely yes and definitely no, we assessed program satisfaction by asking the participants the likelihood they would choose the same program if provided the opportunity to do it over again. To measure participants’ leadership learning, we asked the participants to rate the effectiveness of the program in preparing them to do the following: (a) develop and sustain a learning-centered vision and lead ethically (learned to lead with vision and ethics, 4 items), (b) create a coherent educational program and provide instructional feedback and professional development opportunities to help teachers improve (learned to lead instruction, 3 items), (c) engage staff in school decision making, use data to lead change and monitor school progress, and create a collaborative learning organization (learned to lead organizational learning, 5 items), (d) manage various physical resources and handle disciplinary issues (learned to lead management and operations, 4 items), and (e) work with parents and community (learned to lead parent and community engagement, 2 items). All items were constructed using a 5-point Likert type effectiveness scale anchored by not at all and very well. The validity and reliability of these measures have been assessed previously by other scholars (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Orr, 2011).

In addition to the candidates’ self report, leadership learning was also measured by the candidates’ performance in the NASSP’s Assessment Center. The NASSP’s Assessment Center uses various simulation activities to measure participants’ authentic performance in the following 10 leadership skill dimensions: setting instructional directions, teamwork, sensitivity, judgment, organizational ability, results orientation, oral communication, written communication, development of others, and understanding own strengths and weaknesses. Early validation studies (Schmitt & Cohen, 1990; Schmitt, Noe, Merrit, Fitzgerald, & Jorgensen, 1981) indicated that the content validity and criterion validity of the assessment

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were satisfactory. A conceptual congruence (see Table 1) has been found between the assessment center skill dimensions and ISLLC standards (P. Reed, personal communication, June 12, 2012). Therefore, there is reasonable evidence to believe that NASSP’s Assessment Center can serve as a valuable tool to measure aspiring leaders’ learning outcome in terms of effective leadership behaviors.

Table 1

Alignment between ISLLC 2008 & NASSP’s 21st Century Leadership Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Leadership Policy Standards ISLLC 2008</th>
<th>NASSP 21ST Century Leadership Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SI  T  S  J  RO  OA  OC  W  DO  US  W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.</td>
<td>√  √  √  √  √  √  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.</td>
<td>√  √  √  √  √  √  √  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.</td>
<td>√  √  √  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.</td>
<td>√  √  √  √</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethic manner.</td>
<td>√  √  √  √</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Standard 6: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Note. SID = Setting Instructional Direction, T = Teamwork, S = Sensitivity, J = Judgment, RO = Results Orientation, OA = Organizational Ability, OC = Oral Communication, WC = Written Communication, DO = Development of Others, USW = Understanding Own Strengths and Weaknesses.

The measure of sense of preparedness was assessed using two Likert scale items. Participants were asked how strongly they agree or disagree that they could secure a principal job and could perform well.

Independent measures. Independent measures include graduate characteristics at program entry, program organizational structure (i.e., cohort structure), and leadership preparation program features consisting of curriculum focus and use of active learning strategies (i.e., internship and coaching).

Graduates’ characteristics at program entry. Information on nine participant characteristics was collected: (a) gender, (b) minority (ethnicity), (c) age, (d) highest degree, (e) principal certification, (f) years of teaching experience, (g) administrative positions held, (h) other professional certifications, and (h) other professional development activities. All nine items were single-item measures.

Program organizational structure. Program organizational structure was a single-item measure, assessing the participants’ perception of support from their cohort colleagues using a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating not useful at all and 5 very useful.

Leadership preparation program features. Based on ELCC standards and Stanford study (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), we constructed six measures that assessed the program content foci. Specifically, we asked participants, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 not at all and 5 very useful) to rate the extent to which the program was useful in addressing the following six domains of principal work: (a) leading with vision and ethics, (b) leading instruction, (c) leading a learning organization, (d) leading management and operations, (e) leading parent and community involvement, and (f) leading to influence the larger context. Leading with vision and ethics scale consisted of four items that measured the extent to which the program emphasized creating a learning-centered vision, thinking strategically, and leading in an
equitable manner and honoring diversity; leading instruction scale consisted of four items measuring the extent to which the program emphasized creating a culture of learning, using data to assess school programs, and helping leaders to confront and remedy inadequate practices; leading organizational learning scale included seven items that measured the program’s emphasis on leading change, creating a collaborative culture and facilitating school wide team planning, using data to inform decision making and initiate change, coaching faculty and staff at various development levels; using two items, leading management and operations scale assessed the program’s emphasis on school resource management and operational matters; leading parent and community involvement was a single item measure that assessed the program emphasis on how to build a beneficial, respectful and collaborative relationships with parents and community members; finally, leading to influence the larger context scale used one item to measure the program’s emphasis on developing leadership capacity in advocating for children and public education in the larger context.

Other program attributes such as internship and mentoring and coaching were measured using two items in terms of participants’ perceived general support from host principals and mentors. Considering the two items could only paint a broad stroke of the internship experience and the quality of mentoring and coaching, qualitative data from in-depth interviews with participants and the host principals and mentors were rigorously analyzed to assess program effectiveness.

**Sample.** A total of 19 program graduates from two cohorts and a sample of their mentors and host principals participated in the study. Return rate for surveys that measured program experiences and participant learning approached 95 percent.

**Data collection.** Participants from each cohort were asked to complete the survey upon their exit of the program. Observations of the program participants in class and at internship sites were conducted frequently in the first year of the program and at least three to four times in the following years of the program. Interviews with host principals and mentors were carried out simultaneously with the survey administration. The external evaluators, a team of researchers from the Institute for Schools and Society (ISS) at Temple University collected all the data. The standard-based candidates’ performance score in the 10 leadership skill dimensions was generated from the NASSP’s Assessment Center.

**Data analysis.** The survey data were analyzed using SPSS to generate descriptive measures (means, standard deviations, and percentage distributions). Additionally correctional analyses were conducted to gauge how much participants’ satisfaction, leadership learning including both self-reported and the NASSP’s Assessment Center data, and sense of preparedness were related to program curriculum foci and other program features such as cohort structure and support from principal mentors. The the-
matic analysis and the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978) were used to analyze qualitative data.

**Quantitative Results**

**Participant Characteristics at the Program Entry**

PHSLP program participants reflected diversity in terms of both gender and racial distributions. Seventy-five percent of the participants in the program were females. Sixty percent of them were African American, five percent Asian, five percent multiethnic, and 40 percent Caucasian. The group also featured rich teaching experience with an average of 15 years. All participants had multiple prior leadership experiences ranging from roster chair and literacy coach to department chair and academy leader. All these participant characteristics compare favorably with regular university-based leadership preparation programs. For example, in her study of 17 university-based leadership preparation programs in 13 institutions, Orr (2011) found that females represented 75% and minority candidates 33% in five programs. Four other programs were represented by no diverse graduate respondents at all and another five programs had fewer than 10% of their graduates self-identified as either African American or Hispanic. The predominant representation of minority candidates, African American candidates in particular, in PHSLP carries potential long-term benefits to students. As representative bureaucracy theory projects, empirical evidence has emerged showing that the presence of African American principals in a predominant Black community is more likely to generate higher teacher job satisfaction and prevent turnover among African American teachers (Grissom & Keiser, 2011). Further, other evidence demonstrates that random assignment to an own-race teacher significantly increased the math and reading achievement of African American students (Dee, 2004). These finding are particularly relevant to the context of the School District of Philadelphia which is challenged with high teacher turnover and a large disadvantaged African American student population. The rich diversity of the program candidates will potentially add value to the equation of improved student achievement in the long run.

**Quality Program Features**

PHSLP program design seems to reflect almost all of the effective program features highlighted in the literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005). The authentic partnership leverages the strength of a research university as the knowledge base and the advantage of the school district as dependable coordinating source of talent pool, the site for field practice, and the ultimate link to graduate placement. Adding to the solid link between theory and practice is the expertise of a national profes-
sional association (NASSP) in the professional development of mentors and coaches and objective evaluation of program participants’ learning. Further, the critical insights provided by the external evaluator make possible the rigorous self-reflection of program staff and ongoing program adjustment.

The cohort-based structure, defined as a group of individuals who began the program together and stayed together throughout their courses (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), has also been rated as very useful. On average, program participants rated the usefulness of support from their cohort colleagues at 4.47 out of 5. The quality of the cohort has a lot to do with the program’s rigorous selection process. Aiming to identify candidates with strong instructional competence and a deep understanding of the unique challenges present in urban public high schools, the program required applicants to undergo a rigorous written application, oral interview, and instructional observation by a panel consisting of university program staff, district central office administrators, and retired principal mentors. Admission decisions were jointly made among the panel members.

In addition to laying a solid infrastructure for the program through authentic partnership and getting the right people on the bus through a rigorous selection process, the curriculum content seemed to reflect the majority of content dimensions considered key to effective principal practices. On average, the program participants perceived that the program content emphasized: how to lead instruction ($M = 4.22$ out of 5), how to lead with vision and ethics ($M = 4.39$), how to lead organizational learning ($M = 4.27$), how to lead management and operations ($M = 4.18$), how to engage parents and community ($M = 4.39$), and how to advocate for children and public education in the larger political and social context ($M = 4.37$). The average ratings of all of the core program features are comparable to the highly rated programs identified by Orr (2011) who used a benchmark of 4.26 or higher on a 5-point scale in evaluating similar core program features. However, when compared to graduates’ ratings from the nation’s exemplary preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), the rating of curriculum emphasis on instructional leadership is slightly lower. However, the program fares better on measures of management and operations and leadership advocacy role in the larger social context.

Similarly, host principals ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.05$), and mentors ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.03$) also contributed to participants’ positive learning experience. However, this support did not seem to be evenly distributed among all program participants as demonstrated by the comparatively large values of standard deviations for both ratings of the host principal and the mentor.

**Graduate Outcomes**

Program graduates felt fairly well prepared for virtually every aspect of effective principal practice, ranging from readiness to lead with vision and ethics ($M = 4.12$), readiness to lead instruction ($M = 3.91$) and or-
ganizational learning \((M = 4.05)\) to engaging parents and community \((M = 3.87)\), and managing school operations \((M = 3.68)\). Overall these ratings of PHSLP program were comparable to the exemplary programs and surpassed regular traditional university-based preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). It is noticeable that all of these core areas measured in our program represent leadership practices empirically demonstrated critical to school effectiveness and improved student achievement.

Although graduates generally felt well prepared for the various key aspects of leadership work, their performance in NASSP’s Assessment Center did not seem to validate their self-perception. Except for oral communication \((M = 20.03)\), participants were in need of great improvement in almost all the other areas. Two skill areas that warranted greatest attention were setting instructional direction \((M = 11.63)\) and the development of others \((M = 10.25)\). Also noticeable was the great difference present across the participants. For example, in the area of written communication, the gap between the highest \((\text{Max} = 24.50)\) and lowest score \((\text{Min} = 8.00)\) was as high as 16.50. The large variation of performance among the graduates was present across all skill areas and greatest in areas of written communication \((SD = 5.32)\).

**Table 2**

Graduates’ Performance at NASSP’s Assessment Center \((N = 16)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting instructional direction</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>12.69</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results orientation</td>
<td>13.88</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational ability</td>
<td>14.25</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>20.03</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>9.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>13.47</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>16.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of others</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>13.19</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The highest score for each skill dimension is 30. The lowest possible score for each is 6.

Although the NASSP’s Assessment Center data made them more aware of their need for improvement, the graduates expressed their general satisfaction with the overall program. When asked whether they would choose the same program given the opportunity, the majority responded they probably would \((M = 3.74)\). Similarly, they expressed their confi-
dence in securing a principal position \((M = 3.58)\) and performing well if hired \((M = 3.84)\). Although graduates tended to have positive views on their ability in securing principalship \((M = 3.58)\) and leading competently \((M = 3.84)\), an apparent reservation was present as demonstrated by the rating. Compared to their ratings on other aspects of the program, the ratings on these measures reflect a rather hesitant optimism. The program staff from SDP suggested that the hesitation might have more to do with the District’s hiring process than the graduates’ self-efficacy.

**Link Between Program Features & Graduates’ Sense of Preparedness**

Bivariate correlations were conducted to test the relationships between program content emphases, usefulness of cohort structure, usefulness of support from host principals and mentors, and the dependent measures: graduate sense of preparedness in core leadership dimensions, graduates’ performance in the NASSP’s Assessment Center, and their level of satisfaction with the program and their confidence in job placement and work performance.

As Table 3 indicated, with the exception of cohort structure, none of the program features was consistently associated with participants’ sense of preparedness in the core leadership areas, or confidence in placement and performance. Cohort structures stood out as the most appreciated program feature in relation to program outcome features. For example, whether a participant felt confident that he/she could perform well as a principal was significantly related to how useful this participant perceived peer support from the cohort \((r = .42, p < .05)\). A similar pattern of relationship exists between cohort structure and participants’ satisfaction measured by the likelihood a participant would choose the same program if given the opportunity \((r = .43, p < .05)\). In addition, a much stronger relationship emerged between cohort and participants’ sense of preparedness in core leadership dimensions: lead with vision and ethics \((r = .63, p < .01)\), lead instruction \((r = .62, p < .01)\), lead organizational learning \((r = .53, p < .01)\), and lead management \((r = .55, p < .01)\). This cohort effect on positive learning outcome is consistent with previous empirical evidence that cohorts can foster improved academic learning and program completion rates among administrative credential candidates (Davis et al., 2005). Further, the positive effect of cohort on participant program satisfaction may have much to do with the fact that cohort structure enhances feelings of group affiliation and acceptance, social and emotional support, motivation, persistence, group learning, and mutual assistance (Davis et al., 2005). Because teachers tend to give higher ratings to the leadership practices of principals who participated in cohort training structures, it is quite likely that cohorts will not only benefit aspiring principals, but the faculty and students in the schools they ultimately lead (Leithwood et al., 1996).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported learning outcome</th>
<th>Curriculum emphasis on how to lead</th>
<th>Cohort support</th>
<th>Host principal support</th>
<th>Mentor support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>With vision &amp; ethics</td>
<td>Organizational learning</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Learned to lead with vision &amp; ethics</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learned to lead instruction</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.45*</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learned to lead organizational learning</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learned to lead management</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Learned to lead parent and community</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.46*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Confidence in placement</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Confidence in performance</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05. **p < .01.
In terms of the effect of the content foci, the emphasis on how to lead management had a moderate association ($r = .46, p < .05$) with how well graduates felt prepared to lead parent and community engagement. Similar magnitude of association was also found between the content focus on organizational learning and participants’ self-perceived preparedness in leading instruction ($r = .45, p < .05$). Also two negative correlations emerged between how useful the graduates viewed the support from their host principals and how confident they felt about their own replacement and future performance as a principal. These negative relationships were interesting and could probably be attributed to the fact that the gap that the graduates observed between their host principals and themselves. The comparison made more salient the self-perceived needs for improvement. They became more reflective learners and were aware more clearly of their own strengths and weaknesses.

The bivariate analysis between curriculum content and other program features (e.g., cohort structure, support from mentors and host principals), and graduate performance at the NASSP’s assessment center revealed only three significant relationships. First, there was a significant relationship between the support from mentors and how well the graduate felt prepared to set instructional direction ($r = .52, p < .05$). This significant relationship suggested that there was a positive relationship between mentors’ work and mentees’ abilities in developing a vision and establishing clear goals, providing direction in achieving stated goals, encouraging others to contribute to goal achievement, and securing commitment from stakeholders. This is a critical finding considering “establishing goals and expectations” (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, 2008, p. 656) is one of the most effective leadership strategies that leaders can employ to bring student improved learning to fruition. With an effect size of 0.42 as shown in the meta-analysis of Robinson et al., the impact of setting instructional direction was considered moderately large and educationally significant. A positive relationship also emerged between mentor support and graduates’ level of judgment ($r = .61, p < .05$). This positive relationship indicated that the more supportive the mentors were perceived, the more likely the mentees were able to seek out relevant data, analyze and interpret complex information, and reach logical and high-quality decisions. Third, a spurious negative relationship emerged between the usefulness of cohort support and how well the participant understood his/her own strengths and weaknesses ($r = -.64, p < .01$). Currently, we do not find any rational explanations for this spurious relationship.

**Qualitative Evidences: A Thematic Analysis**

The thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews with principal interns (5), host principals (3), home principals (2), and mentors (5) revealed two main themes; the first is related to program strengths, the second to
suggestions for program improvement in issues related to time, internship, and communication. The resulting data was analyzed by utilization of the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978).

This procedure calls for coding data from interviews, observations, or documents under headings that appear to capture the theoretical properties of that category. Each coded category is then described as succinctly as possible to capture the meanings inherent in it. Then, using that category, all new and existing data are constantly compared to determine the descriptive adequacy of the category. (Haller & Kleine, 2001, p. 201)

Program Strengths and Successes

Features of exemplary principal preparation programs include a cohort structure, access to mentoring from experienced practitioners, sustained internship time in schools, active learning, coherent and aligned curriculum, standards-based assessment, ample time for reflection, and a program defined around leadership for school improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Participants noted a variety of program strengths consistent with the aforementioned features: the cohesiveness of the cohort; the practical experience provided by the internship; access to experienced mentors; program emphasis on vision and teacher supervision; hands-on tasks assigned (such as planning a three day orientation for over 100 students); class activities such as instructional rounds; experienced principals who visited the class throughout the year to offer practical advice; and the reflective nature of the program.

Systematic analysis of home, host, and mentor principal qualitative data using Kirkpatrick’s (1998) first two levels of outcomes (reaction and learning) revealed an overall positive reaction to participating in the program. All reported enjoying the role and the opportunity to build trust and supportive relationships with interns. One mentor reported “… I enjoy mentoring to begin with, that’s probably the thing I enjoy the most.” Several principals appreciated the chance to give back to the profession. One home/host principal noted “… I really, truly enjoy it because I wouldn’t be where I am now if people hadn’t mentored me, so I really take it seriously.” Another principal said “… It’s something that I feel really is my reasonable service as an administrator. It’s something I would do gladly anyway in the absence of this program.” Several principals commented positively on their own learning as afforded by mentor training provided by NASSP and praised the NASSP self-evaluation tool used by interns.

In addition, participants elaborated on specific examples of program success (interns’ behavior—Kirkpatrick’s third level of evaluation) that ranged from changes in mentality to cohesiveness of the cohort. One home principal remarked (referring to a participant):
Well, he’s stepped up, so to speak, administratively. He’s always available. I think his mindset is changing. I can see his mindset changing from a teacher’s mindset to an administrator’s mindset. And that’s a process. It’s all those little details that a teacher doesn’t have to bother with so, as an administrator, you have to think of all those details in order for something to run smoothly. So that’s a change in mindset.

In reference to the cohort, a participant noted, “One success with this particular cohort I think is the cohesiveness of the cohort group.” These reflections are important with regard to morale and positive feedback needed for program improvement. In addition, these comments represent small wins (Kotter, 1999), which will subsequently generate excitement, energy and commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Finally, home, host and mentor principals commented on Kirkpatrick’s fourth level of program evaluation, results, in noting the extent to which the program prepared interns to take on administrative positions and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Commenting with pride on two interns who had been placed, one principal said “They’ve established themselves as instructional leaders in the building.”

**Suggestions for Program Improvement**

At the same time, participants offered a number of ways in which they thought the program could be improved, most notably in the structuring of the internship, the way in which lack of time impacted the program quality, and the need for clear communication among stakeholders.

**Time.** To varying degrees, all participants noted that time was an issue: the demands of working full time while participating in the program; the timing of meetings with mentors and course assignments; the reduced amount of time spent in host schools from the first to second year of the program; and the fragmented structure of the time spent in host schools due to the District’s budgetary concerns. Many expressed frustration with the structure and configuration of the internship, noting that the amount of time spent in host schools was not enough to allow for sufficient leadership skill development. Many noted that interns experienced competing demands on their time: a full time teaching position, fall and winter classes and assignments, as well as meetings with host principals and mentors. The use/mis-use of time seemed to be a common issue across participants. According to one host principal, “I just wish I could have more time with them, more of a free, the way I was freed up to be a quasi-administrator in a school.” This administrator was referring to their full-time internship experience. Another host principal remarked, “You know, you had several weeks here, several weeks there and whatever they say the time should be, you need to give us that time all up front. So that it can be more meaningful, both for
We see the reiteration of time and especially time dedicated to the experience of building leadership. Time is an incredibly important factor in modern organizational life (Cox, 2001). It is also one that leaders must structure and manage properly to optimize effectiveness (Covey, 1989).

**Internship.** Ideally, internships allow aspiring leaders to experience “in situ” the real life day-to-day demands of school administration, admittedly an often frustrating blend of managerial and leadership responsibilities. It is by being in the schools and working through the myriad of situations that characterize school life that candidates integrate the theory learned in class with the often messy practice experienced in school. It is by being placed in the kinds of complex situations that characterize school interactions that aspiring leaders begin to develop the skills they will need to assume full responsibility for leading a school.

It is important to note that the structure of the internship changed over the course of the program. The internship was originally conceived to include four ten-day work periods in host schools: at the beginning of the school year, the middle of the fall term, the middle of the winter term, and the end of the school year. The rationale for this internship structure was that interns would experience the planning and preparation involved in beginning and ending the school year, as well as observing and working in the school administratively during normal periods of operation. In the first year of the program, the internship operated as originally conceived. Despite some drawbacks, participants expressed satisfaction with having this opportunity to work closely with host principals and work full-time in the host schools.

However, district directives called for changes in the internship structure in the second year of the program. The work periods in host schools were reduced from four to two. Interns were still in host schools at the beginning and end of the school year; however, the mid-term work periods were eliminated and replaced by interning in a month-long summer program at host sites. To compensate for the reduction in direct-contact time in schools, interns were given tasks/assignments which required them to meet with their host principals and mentors in order to talk through situations or dilemmas. However, internship design changes made to accommodate district directives appeared to have negatively affected intern morale, recruitment to the program, internship quality, placement outcomes, perceptions about the program, and support for the program.

The changed internship model during the school year was frustrating for all participants. One host principal commented that the reduced contact meant that he was unable to provide the direct experience in a variety of situations, such as principal meetings, hearings, and mandatory conferences that he was accustomed to giving his interns. “So they [my interns] really had a broad experience of leadership last year and because of the constraints this year, I’m not able to provide that for my in-
terns this year.” Another expressed concern that the interns were not being adequately prepared given the reduced amount of time spent in the host schools. “I’m not able to give them the type of experiences that I know they need in order to grow.”

From the interns’ perspective, the newly configured internship meant that they were not able to experience directly the types of situations that would prepare them to manage the day-to-day operations of school life. Many interns expressed frustration over the demands of full-time teaching combined with the demands of the program. One intern commented that “… during the school year, between the [evening] courses, all the other things that are going on and being expected of us, the work from the courses becomes a little bit overwhelming in terms of trying to put in real, good quality work together.”

The complexity of the principal’s job formed a common thread in the home/host/mentor principal qualitative data. All expressed concern that interns would not be on site often enough to experience the full array of responsibilities that comprise the role of the principal. From working with an employee to negotiating Family Medical Leave to building relationships with maintenance staff to working with teachers to improve instruction, principals perform a myriad of duties not often visible in the short amounts of time given to interns.

**Communication.** A variety of suggestions for improvement centered on improved communication about the goals and activities of the program among all stakeholders: clear support of the program from the school district; invitations to mentors, home and host principals to all program activities; and access to descriptions of the program’s curriculum to allow for better integration of theory and practice. In large urban school districts, change can be quick, random, and/or episodic (Payzant, 2011; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). A host principal noted, “Well, right now, the concern about the program is that the district seems to be moving in another direction …” Unfortunately, this direction is not always well communicated and shared throughout the organization, especially with a change in leadership at the top. A mentor stated that there needed to be better information sharing between partners in the program. Communication is an important component for success in schools (Fullan, 2004). Beachum, McCray, and Huang (2010) agreed, “Without credible communication, the hearts and minds of people are never won” (p. 58). Unfortunately, the sheer size and complexity of schooling in some of America’s largest cities poses some serious challenges to effective communication strategies.

**Conclusions**

The socioeconomic adversities present at large urban school communities are likely to have thwarted many potential candidates’ pursuit of serving as a school leader. The PHSLP program employed multiple meth-
Methods to reach the most capable and eligible candidates. The final candidates in the first two cohorts were rich in diversity with 75% female and 60% of minority candidates. Additionally, these aspiring leaders had exemplary teaching and quasi-administrative experience.

The program also reflected multiple innovative features, such as university-district partnership, cohort structure, research-based content, structured internship augmented by quality mentoring and coaching. Among them, cohort structure was viewed as the most supportive program feature. It was associated with all aspects of leadership learning among the graduates. However, these exemplary features in a single program did not seem to produce consistent singular learning outcome among all candidates. In general, program participants expressed great satisfaction with the program and perceived themselves well prepared in all areas of effective leadership (e.g., lead with vision and ethics, lead instruction, lead organizational learning). However, this self-perception did not seem to be in line with their actual performance in NASSP’s Assessment Center, a more objective form of performance evaluation. Overall, program participants had the greatest needs for improvement in the areas of setting instructional direction and the development of others, two of the most effective domains of leadership that showed greatest impact on student achievement with an effect size of 0.42 and 0.84 respectively (Robinson et al., 2008). It is also of note that great variations existed across all 10 dimensions of leadership skills among all candidates. This variation in performance suggested not only that every candidate experienced the learning curve differently, but also that each of them might have gained different levels of support through their internship and coaching experience. This has great implications for program implementations. A well-designed program infrastructure (e.g., cohort, teaming of interns with high-performing host principals and mentors) is not enough to guarantee seamless quality execution. Some measures have to be taken at the program level to ensure every participant gains quality learning experience. Future research pertaining to consistent quality experience across all principal interns will help solve this challenge.

Themes emerged from qualitative data analysis that suggested the challenges associated with quick, random, and episodic changes often taking place in large urban school districts (Payzant, 2011; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). The sudden change in internship model, one of the most important learning blocks in leadership learning, had necessarily brought about great frustrations in both the interns and the host principals. Leadership matters and it matters most in places that need it most, the majority of urban school districts (Leithwood et al., 2004). Unless urban school districts demonstrate consistent and unconditional system support to leadership development programs, the quality of leadership learning will be likely compromised.
Limitations and Recommendations

Caution has to be taken when interpreting the quantitative relationship between program input variables and program outcome variables considering the sample size ($N = 19$). The connection of program features with program outcomes was further challenged by the use of a single program. Future research can expand the investigation by comparison across multiple programs. Utilization of multiple programs will not only eliminate the challenges associated with sample size but also afford scholars more powerful statistical methods to detect the within- and between-program differences and the use of techniques such as multiple regression to determine how much leadership learning can be attributed to various program features. Additionally, the scales used to measure curriculum foci and participants’ sense of preparedness warrant further factor analyses to test their validity and reliability. However, due to our small sample size, such analyses were not feasible in this study. Finally, our current qualitative data did not provide sufficient evidence in assessing how effectively the off-campus activities (e.g., the art of observation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art) developed participants’ capacities for imaginative thinking. Similarly, we were short on evidence in assessing the value of the culminating restructuring project. A revision of our research protocols to be used for the third cohort is underway. Follow-up studies will focus more on the uniqueness of our program in addition to exemplary program features highlighted in extant literature.

Author Note

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References


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Despite the dramatic shift in demographics occurring within public schools, there is still a dismal amount of research connecting issues of diversity and race with the curricula guiding educational leadership preparation programs. In the field of leadership preparation, little information has been offered as to how professors facilitate social justice oriented conversations within their classrooms, particularly conversations focused specifically on race-related issues. In this article, we consider concepts we believe should be included in leadership preparation programs seeking to develop leaders for diverse settings. We conclude the article by discussing suggestions that could help contribute to the development of a transformative curriculum for leadership preparation programs.

Over the course of the past several years, the United States federal government has become more assertive in its policy efforts to “turn around” the nation’s persistently lowest performing public schools. As a result, the importance of preparing socially-just leaders has become even more paramount, as the great majority of schools labeled as low-performing are located in metropolitan areas where poverty is concentrated and students of color are the primary population (Noguera & Wells, 2011). Principals in such settings must confront a number of unique challenges when working with a student population where the majority of students are considered to be at-risk for school failure (Aud et al., 2011), and thus the principals must have the capacity to engage in, and facilitate, social justice oriented conversations with students, parents, and community stakeholders. Consequently, leadership preparation programs have a responsibility to more purposefully address issues of diversity and social justice, ensuring these issues are woven throughout the written curricula upon which these programs are founded.

In a recent survey conducted by Hawley & James (2010), 62 institutions affiliated with the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) were asked to describe how their courses, resources, and strategies prepare leaders to address the needs of diverse learners. While the survey yielded a 30% response rate, thus failing to represent all leadership programs, the responses should cause alarm for all colleges of education. Among the findings, the majority of the universities reported that issues of diversity were only taught in one course throughout the duration of their leadership preparation programs. Additionally, those courses targeting issues of diversity focused primarily on macro-political themes, such as the historical, sociological, and political context of discrimination.
and inequities in education faced by students of color. While such topics are certainly important to include in the preparation of educational leaders, Hawley & James (2010) found programs frequently failed to address a number of the micro-political diversity issues school leaders face on a daily basis. Thus, the offering of a curriculum failing to address how leaders should navigate “day-to-day” issues pertaining to diversity leaves future leaders without the strategies necessary to lead within the current context of diverse schools (Hawley & James, 2010).

Unfortunately, for those in the educational leadership field, the findings from Hawley & James’ (2010) research are not surprising. While educational leadership preparation programs have evolved to better address issues of social justice (Blackmore, 2009; Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008), the educational leadership literature is still insufficient when it comes to providing actions and concrete strategies such programs can implement into their curricula.

In this article, we discuss several theoretical concepts we believe should be included in the curriculum of leadership preparation programs seeking to develop leaders for diverse settings. While the terms diversity and social justice encapsulate a number of different meanings, for the purposes of this article we chose to focus specifically on issues pertaining to race and racism. The choice to focus on race specifically was brought about by the results of our textual examination of the most frequently read journals by educational leadership professors, as we illustrate how the leadership preparation field overwhelmingly neglects research that ties together issues of race with educational leadership and leadership preparation.

The preparation of today’s school leaders must include a more purposeful focus on building the conversational skills necessary to facilitate social justice oriented conversations within their schools, particularly conversations about the variety of complex issues pertaining to race and racism. We believe education leaders must be provided with a rigorous and critically oriented curriculum, one that offers multiple opportunities to participate in the reflective examination of the ideologies/concepts that often limit and/or block discussions focused on race from occurring. We conclude the article by offering several normative suggestions for the development of a transformative curriculum for leadership preparation programs.

Theoretical Considerations

Today’s school leaders face a myriad of complex issues. How these leaders are prepared (or not) to address the critical issues facing diverse student populations today is cause for concern. Research has shown that while school leaders are called upon to change many of the inequities institutionalized within schools’ culture (Dantley & Tillman, 2009), traditional leadership preparation programs only skim the surface when ad-
dressing issues of social justice (Marshall, 2004). This is not to say that scholars within the field of educational leadership have not been challenging preparation programs to incorporate social justice issues within their curricula (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Dantley, 2002; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hawley & James, 2010; Jean-Marie, 2010; López, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Tillman, 2004). However, after examining the educational leadership literature for actual strategies incorporated into preparation programs to assist future leaders in the areas of diversity and social justice, we discovered a dismal amount of research connecting pedagogical strategies intended to address issues surrounding race with educational leadership and leadership preparation. McKenzie et al. (2008) articulated this point, suggesting that the field is still stuck in the “calling for action” stage rather than actually acting upon such requests.

Thus, we turned our focus to the teacher preparation literature, as a number of scholars (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007; Milner, 2010; Pollock, 2004, 2010; Schultz, 2003) have been examining these issues for quite some time. We particularly found Milner’s (2010) conceptual detailing of the “repertoires of diversity”—elements that should be embedded within any curriculum guiding a teacher preparatory program—intriguing. We felt as if the conceptual and pragmatic ideas presented by Milner (2010) were exactly what had been missing from the field of educational leadership. With this in mind, we began our own effort to develop a list of critical concepts we believe must be woven into the curricula and pedagogical practices of programs seeking to prepare educational leaders for diverse settings. After an extensive review of the literature we concluded that leadership preparatory programs must carefully examine five key issues/concepts pertaining to: (a) color-blind ideology, (b) misconceptions of human difference, (c) merit-based achievement, (d) critical self-reflection, and (e) the interrogation of race-related silences in the classroom. Just as Milner (2010) warns when outlining his repertoires of diversity, the five issues/concepts highlighted in this article do not represent an all-inclusive listing of the issues pertaining to the preparation of educational leaders for diverse school communities. Rather, the five topics were decided upon after the reflexive examination of findings and feedback revealed during our previous research efforts, and by an extensive reading of the literature focused on both the preparation of educational leaders for social justice/equity and the exploration of race-related silences in the classroom. Additionally, unlike Milner’s five conceptual repertoires of diversity, two of the five issues we examined—critical self-reflection and the interrogation of silenced voices—are practice-oriented concepts that if acted upon, can help preparation programs develop transformative curricula and pedagogical experiences for educational leaders.
Methods & Data Sources

Because the purpose of this article is to examine the critical concepts we believe contribute to the silencing of race-related conversations, and thus prevent educational leadership programs from preparing the social justice-oriented leaders required for today’s public schools, it was necessary to examine how the field of leadership preparation has examined the possible contributors to race-related silences within the classroom. Through an extensive review of what Mayo, Zirkel, & Finger (2006) identified as the top five journals most frequently read by educational leadership professors: *Educational Leadership, Phi Delta Kappan, American Educational Research Journal, Educational Administration Quarterly, and Educational Researcher* (see Table 1), we attempted to locate articles that addressed the five critical concepts as they relate to the preparation of education leaders.

Table 1

**Most Frequently Read Journals by Educational Leadership Professors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical within field:</th>
<th>Frequency (and percentage) of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
<td>125 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phi Delta Kappan</td>
<td>124 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Educational Research Journal</td>
<td>119 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Administration Quarterly</td>
<td>119 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Researcher</td>
<td>88  (37%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Table 1 presents the “distribution of responses concerning the actual usage (i.e., regular reading) of the same specialized periodicals plus periodicals outside education, labeled as ‘in field’ and ‘outside field,’ respectively” (Mayo, Zirkel, & Finger, 2006). The results of this survey are based upon feedback received from a random sample of 800 professors located within UCEA member institutions.*

In our efforts to examine the five most frequently read publications by educational leadership professors (see Table 1), we conducted the following searches, at times varying the ways in which Boolean operators were employed, based on the constructs of individual databases:

a) education leadership AND race;

b) education leadership AND race AND color-blind;

c) education leadership AND race AND difference;

d) education leadership AND race AND meritocracy;

e) education leadership AND critical reflection AND silences;

f) leadership preparation AND race;

g) leadership preparation AND race AND color-blind;

h) leadership preparation AND race AND difference;
i) leadership preparation AND race AND meritocracy;

j) leadership preparation AND critical reflection AND silences.

We chose to narrow our search to a specific time frame, 2006 through 2011, as this designation of time is congruent with our own entrance into, and graduation from, an educational leadership Ph.D. program, as well as our continued investigation of issues pertaining to race and the preparation of educational leaders.

**Initiating a More Purposeful Focus on Racially Oriented Social Justice Conversations**

While educational researchers have been calling for preparation programs to ensure that school leaders have the capacity to address issues of social justice for over a decade (Brown, 2004; Bush & Molo, 2008; Lomotey, 1995; Lumby, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Rusch & Horsford, 2009; Scheurich & Laible, 1995), and while the recent movement within educational leadership programs to address issues of social justice (Blackmore, 2009; Jean-Marie, 2010; Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007, 2009, 2010) may provide educational leaders with a number of the skills necessary to achieve success in schools labeled as at-risk for failure, the field of leadership preparation has provided little information as to how professors facilitate racially-oriented social justice conversations within their classrooms. The stunning lack of racially-oriented social justice literature in the field of educational leadership was brought to light in our examination of the most frequently read journals by educational leadership professors (see Table 2). As noted in Table 2, while *Educational Administration Quarterly* and *Educational Researcher* certainly lead their contemporaries, each of the five most read journals in the field of education leadership have failed to adequately address racially-oriented social justice themes over the course of the past five years. This is simply unacceptable when considering the federal government’s current efforts to dramatically improve the learning communities at historically low-performing schools, the great majority of which are populated by students of color (Noguera & Wells, 2011).

Consequently, based upon what we were able to find among the literature available in the field of educational leadership, we bring forward five theoretical concepts we believe deserve more attention within the field of education, both in research/publication venues and within leadership preparation program curricula. As we illustrate below, the preparation of today’s school leaders must include a purposeful focus on building the critical dialogical skills necessary to facilitate anti-racist conversations, which includes carefully examining issues/concepts pertaining to color-blind ideology, misconceptions of human difference, merit-based achievement, critical self-reflection, and the interrogation of race-related silences in the classroom.
## Table 2

*Review of Literature Connecting Race with Educational Leadership & Leadership Preparation, 2006–2011*

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Refuting Color-Blind Ideologies

Contemporary society has shown that engaging in conversations about race and racism is typically difficult and often met with great apprehension. Indeed, many people would rather not talk about issues of race and racism, refuse to acknowledge that racism is salient and racial differences exist, and believe that the color of one’s skin has nothing to do with the opportunities available in society.

Following the civil rights era, the myth perpetuated among many Whites included the notion that race was no longer a contributing factor in determining life chances. This myth only became reified through the media and political pundits with the election of President Barack Obama (Alemán, Salazar, Rorrer, & Parker, 2011; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Although racial oppression still exists throughout the fabric of our society, albeit in much a different, covert form, it manifests itself through a new form of racism, which Bonilla-Silva (2010) has labeled “colorblind racism.” Colorblind racism essentially allows Whites to “blind” themselves when attempting to make meaning about race, interpreting racial phenomena through dominant frames that allow them to: (a) appear “reasonable” or “moral” while opposing policies that work to alleviate racial inequality (abstract liberalism); (b) use culturally-based arguments to blame minorities for their place in society (cultural racism); (c) claim that racial phenomena are natural occurrences in society (naturalization); and (d) argue that racism and discrimination are a “thing of the past” and no longer play a contributing role in minorities’ life chances (minimization of racism) (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011).

The frames of colorblind racism help to maintain the racial order (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) and provide an appearance of formal equality among individuals without paying much attention to the inequities and inequalities existent within our daily lives (Guinier & Torres, 2002). However, the acceptance of the colorblind frames and a broader colorblind agenda can have serious societal ramifications, particularly in the field of education, as they can inhibit the purposeful confrontation of critical issues concerning race and racism (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Indeed, in the 2007 Supreme Court case that struck down two school districts’ ability to use race to achieve diversity through their student assignment plans (Parents Involved in Community Schools vs. Seattle School District No. 1), Chief Justice Roberts epitomized the essence of colorblind ideology in his opinion, stating that “the way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race” (p. 2768). Although colorblind policies such as those handed down by the Supreme Court claim to negate race as a consideration, in reality, colorblind structures enable racism, facilitating its persistence in more subtle ways (Bergerson, 2003). In a society that operates from a highly racialized framework, categorizing groups of people by their race to explain differences such as education, health, eco-
nomics, and employment, operating from a colorblind ideology is simply unrealistic (Pollock, 2004).

Educational research has shown that operating from a colorblind ideology can assist in misrepresenting the realities of race and racism and promote acts of prejudice and discrimination toward persons of color (Schofield, 2010). Further, using a colorblind discourse in educational settings not only allows whiteness to remain invisible as the measure of comparison to other racial groups, it also disavows the importance of the histories and cultures of underrepresented groups (Applebaum, 2006). Moreover, as our schools continue to operate from a Eurocentric, middle-class framework, colorblindness requires students of color to act upon the ideals of whiteness while simultaneously allowing Whites to maintain their privilege (Bergerson, 2003; Guinier & Torres, 2002).

Educational leaders, and the programs that prepare them, must be familiar with and refute the theoretical constructs of colorblind ideologies that infiltrate the educational system. Further, preparation programs should provide educational leaders with a pragmatic guide on how to confront issues informed by colorblind ideology.

**Counteracting the Misconceptions of Human Difference**

Confronting stereotypes and the misconceptions of human difference is another concept of diversity educators should integrate into leadership preparation program curricula. The false notions constructed by scientists for many centuries that Whites are more intellectually competent than non-Whites continue to pervade the education system (Pollock, 2008). The myth of intellectual capability is ever present in contemporary society, from suggesting that IQ is genetic and a correlation between race and intelligence exists (Hernstein & Murray, 1996), to blaming the family structure and background of students, predominately low students of color on their inability to succeed in school (deficit thinking) (Valencia, 1997), to asserting that children who grow up in a culture of poverty do not succeed in life because they have been taught the “hidden rules of poverty” as opposed to the hidden rules of being middle class (Payne, 2005).

In reality, the differences that exist among the socially constructed categories of people we label as “races,” from education to wealth to health, have nothing to do with biology but rather with history and our social lives (Goodman, 2008; Haney Lopez, 1994; Pollock, 2008). Indeed when the social construction of race was first employed, a racialized social structure was created to provide Europeans (Whites) with systemic privileges over non-Europeans (non-Whites). Today, the reproduction of White privilege and racial structures continues to exist. Consequently, those in power are able to maintain their privilege and benefit from a position of dominance. Britzman (1998) claims that if “anti-racist pedagogy is to be more than a consolation, it must make itself inconsolable by engaging with what it excludes, namely
the complex and contradictory debates within communities over how communities are imagined and made subject to their own persistent questions” (p. 111). This challenge to anti-racist pedagogy must be acknowledged in the preparation of educational leaders. As leaders grapple with the differences in community, their own and others, it is important that they “incite identifications and enlarge the geography of memory” so they are better able to create environments that seek to address the exclusivities created through what Freud (1962) called the “narcissisms of minor difference.”

**Recognizing Student Achievement is not Always Based on Merit**

The idea that achievement is based solely upon the merit of individuals, also referred to as meritocracy, is another concept we believe should be interrogated within the curriculum of educational leadership preparation programs. Education-based meritocracy examines the relationship between the origin of individuals’ socioeconomic status, their educational attainment levels, and their socioeconomic status in society and claims that as individuals attain ideal education-based meritocracy, social mobility gradually increases (Goldthorpe, 2003). However, what is not taken into consideration in this theory is the realization that not every individual is afforded the same economic, educational, and social opportunities (Milner, 2010). Additionally, meritocracy ignores the ways in which discriminatory practices continue to shape institutions within our society. Yet, in the field of education, many still believe that success is based on merit, and thus consider the inability of those striving to succeed to be a direct consequence of the choices they make and the lack of effort they put forward.

School leaders oftentimes fail to recognize how race has been institutionalized within the education system, allowing the dominant race (Whites) to maintain their privileges in society. Riehl (2000) found administrators to be “steeped in a structural-functionalist perspective that tends to view the existing social order as legitimate, that espouses the values of democracy and meritocracy, and that adopts a managerial orientation instead of a socially transformative one” (p. 58). Further, Maher and Tetreault (1998) illustrate the inability of educational leaders to understand the impact of White privilege and whiteness within the classroom, particularly how it can limit discourse, to be a powerful framework for reifying the superiority of the dominant race (White). Further, even when administrators personally recognize the existence of race-related issues within their schools, they publicly avoid them, failing to create inclusive settings for diverse students (Riehl, 2000).

Educational opportunities for children across different racial and socioeconomic groups continue to be unequal. Schools serving low-income students and students of color receive fewer resources, have a more difficult time attracting highly qualified teachers, and face more challenges in addressing students’ needs (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Thus, no matter
how hard a student works toward achieving his/her goals, the systemic barriers existent within the educational system actually work to perpetuate inequalities within schools. Indeed, it would be both false and detrimental on the part of school leaders to subscribe to a discourse promoting merit-based achievement as it fails to recognize the many complexities undergirding the ability for students to succeed in school and beyond.

Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection

The field of adult learning has long addressed the importance of critical self-reflection in the education of democratic citizens (see Brookfield, 1991, 1995; Mezirow, 1985, 1990; Taylor, 1993, 1998). Mezirow (2003) suggests the mere possibility of critically oriented discourse is dependent upon two learning capabilities specific to adults: critical self-reflection (Kegan, 2000) and reflective judgment (King & Kitchner, 1994). It is the nurturing of each of these cognitive exercises that leads to “transformative” learning experiences, learning that allows for the development of adult educators and activists able to foster the “social, economic, and political conditions required for fuller, freer participation in critical reflection and discourse by all adults in a democratic society” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 63).

The valued role of critical self-reflection in the development of socially conscious educators and activists has also been an important topic within the field of educational leadership. Dantley (2008), in a speech challenging the traditional paradigms that have historically structured leadership preparation programs, suggested that principled leadership cannot exist without the presence of its most essential ingredient, critical self-reflection. For Dantley, critical self-reflection is viewed as a specific type of cognitive exercise that “questions the democracy of decisions and administrative practices” in ways that trouble the “perpetuation of classism, racism, homophobia, ageism, ableism, and other markers of individual or collective identity” (p. 456). However, if preparation programs expect to facilitate the development of what Dantley considers to be a socially just leader, professors within such programs must learn how to facilitate conversations that encourage the persistent exercise of critical self-reflection.

While the field of educational leadership has often addressed the importance of why a socially conscious and critically reflective pedagogy is important, there must be a more concerted effort to examine how this type of pedagogy can be developed and implemented within leadership preparation programs. Freire (2000) argues that a student’s “critical consciousness” is unable to develop appropriately in an educative setting where she/he is simply considered to be the objective recipient of a teacher’s deposited knowledge. He goes on to suggest the possibilities of a problem-posing pedagogy that facilitates the collaborative development of the critically cognitive conscious. Within this model, students/teachers must realize their roles as “critical co-investigators” in a reflexive dialogue founded upon the per-
sistent questioning of social realities. A problem-posing pedagogy replaces the traditional authoritative dichotomy between teacher/student with a collaborative model where both students and teachers cooperate in the critical intervention of social injustices. As leadership preparation programs seek to develop critically conscious and self-reflective practitioners the professors involved must recognize and understand how to navigate the ways in which race-related silences can stymie such efforts.

Examining the Silencing of Voices

There are many issues that contribute to the existence of silences in conversations concerning race: feelings of oppression or fear (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007), desires to resist (Ladson-Billings, 1996), maintenance of privilege (Mazzei, 2007, 2011), and feelings of guilt (Giroux, 1997). Yet, too often qualitative researchers fail to examine the purposes and intent of silences that shape the ways in which students and professors attempt to grapple with issues of race (Mazzei, 2007). As a result, rather than examining the silences that occur within the educational setting, educational researchers often overlook the intentional withdrawal of participants, simply considering their silence as an omission of data.

Despite the traditional neglect of race-related silences, there are a number of scholars, who in their attempt to acknowledge the consequences of silenced voices in educational settings are addressing the importance of enacting pedagogical practices that encourage practitioners to explore the reason race-related silences occur (see Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007; Schultz, 2003). Yet, while helping to bring attention to issues of race, such practices must be enacted with a sense of caution. When examining race-related silences, it should be noted that not all such pauses in reflection should be construed as negative occurrences. Though teachers must probe the race-related silences of students, they also must seek to understand how they personally contribute to the existence of such silences (Ladson-Billings, 1996).

If educational leaders in diverse communities are to be expected to successfully communicate with their diverse communities (Tatum, 2007), leadership preparation programs must seek to provide students with the dialogically reflexive skills necessary to forthrightly address the racial biases that continue to hinder the procurement of equity within many school communities (Singleton & Linton, 2005). Not only must researchers in the field of educational leadership examine the meaningfulness of silences, preparatory instructors must embrace pedagogical strategies that surface issues of race and racism, while at the same time carefully exploring the existence of the silences that often occur.
Discussion

As stated previously, despite the rapidly shifting demographics taking place within America’s public schools there is still a scarce amount of research connecting issues of diversity and race with the developing of curricula that guide educational leadership preparation programs. This scarcity was surfaced by our highlighting the unfortunate exclusion of racially-oriented social justice literature being published in the journals most frequently read by professors in the field of educational leadership. This exclusion serves as the impetus for two primary suggestions that could help contribute to the development of a transformative curriculum for leadership preparation programs.

First, even though there is a relatively large body of literature in educational leadership calling attention to the need for today’s educational leaders to be adequately equipped for diverse settings (Brown, 2004; Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Dantley, 2002; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hawley & James, 2010; Jean-Marie, 2010; López, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Tillman, 2004), those persons responsible for guiding the curricular development of leadership preparation programs must demand a more intensive examination of literature pertaining to the five critical components highlighted: color-blind ideologies, misconceptions of human difference, merit-based achievement, critical self-reflection, and issues of silence. If not reflexively explored by those responsible for the transformation of leadership preparation programs, each of these five issues can serve to stymie the further development of a curriculum that allows both professors and students to navigate the race-related blockages of meaningful conversations.

Second, much like Milner’s (2010) challenge to the field of teacher preparation, we believe these five elements must be woven throughout any curriculum chosen to guide a leadership preparation program. Rather than marginalizing issues of diversity and race to a singular preparatory course, these concepts must be reflexively examined during each stage of a future leader’s education. Subsequently, whereas the marginalization of such concepts have allowed professors to avoid the critical examination of such issues, those responsible for leadership preparation programs must challenge professors within the program to explore such issues in depth, opening themselves to the unease of critical reflexive dialogue with their students.

Although challenging at times, conversations confronting the dilemmas of race, culture, and diversity in education must be focal points in leadership preparation programs if we are truly committed to equity and equality for all students. Persons responsible for the further development of educational leadership preparation programs must recognize the cultural, ethnic, and racial disconnect that exists between the populations of students being served and the population of leaders being prepared. Identifying the five concepts we have explored in this article can serve as a good first step.
in guiding faculty seeking to develop an anti-racist curriculum for leadership preparation programs able to address issues germane to the changing landscape of today’s public schools. Perhaps when more faculty demand and expect that a more transformative, social justice-oriented curriculum be included in their preparation programs, future school leaders will engage in more critical analyses and activism for education and social change.

References


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LEADING, LEADERSHIP, AND LEARNING: EXPLORING NEW CONTEXTS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN EMERGING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Within the context of a pilot leadership seminar, this participatory action research project explores how to effectively lead in turbulent learning environments regulated by federal policy that mandates high levels of student achievement coupled with a rigorous standards-based reform movement. Our analysis indicates: (a) adult development is a highly complex process requiring specific learning conditions; (b) the alternative seminar provided a better context for facilitating adult leadership development than our traditional university classes or other professional development options; (c) adult developmental theory may not be an appropriate model for designing programs to support leaders who lead in turbulent environments.

It is widely understood that leading in today’s school environment is not for the weak in heart or mind. The demand for such leadership requires a complex integration of skills and knowledge, enacted through the contextual adaptation of distinctive styles. Although leadership development programs can provide leaders with the technical skills from a rich foundational knowledge base, learning how to lead others involves nuanced understandings of overlapping, often conflicting systems that impact individual decision-making, calling into question perspectives and one’s sense of purpose as a leader.

Learning in this instance is often an isolating and painful process that challenges one’s assumptions about practices that benefit students most, how to engage in the development, management, and supervision of others, and how to create an inclusive learning community for all students, staff, and families. As if these challenges aren’t enough, leaders are also expected to navigate and establish their positions with other district and community leaders within the framework of national and state educational agendas calling for higher levels of achievement by every student.

Over the past two decades, federal policy has aggressively pursued what is billed as a rigorous standards-based reform agenda. This national reform movement led to a renewed focus on instructional improvement and the leadership that fosters it. Designing and facilitating learning experiences for current and prospective leaders for such school environments necessitates innovative collaboration that is contextually-situated, personally relevant, and informed by authentic issues and experiences of leadership practice. The purpose of this participatory action research project was to explore how to effectively lead in rapidly changing school environments with an eye toward designing an empirically-based program for leadership preparation.
and development that better prepares leaders for educational systems that look and function very differently from those of the past.

This research report shares initial findings from a three year examination of the work of three overlapping learning communities: a university team of four faculty members (two from the teacher education department and two from the department of educational leadership), the university team and several leaders from a county-level educational service agency, and the university team and eight school principals from three unique districts. Applying Heifetz’s (1994) notion that some presenting problems for leaders exceed the limits of current technical knowledge and thus require individuals and social systems to “learn their way forward,” we set out to discover the processes and practices associated with adaptive learning by education leaders as it played out in actual school settings. Our research was guided by the following questions: (a) what are the skills and capacities that current and future leaders need in order to become effective leaders, when the goal is to have every student master challenging material at high levels? (b) how is our own professional practice, working to prepare school leaders, influenced by our learning community conversations and collaboration?

**Expanding the Definition of “Leadership”**

Current school reform literature increasingly involves some conceptualization of teacher leadership as a means to increase student learning outcomes. Moreover, the integration of learning community models with this focus on teacher leadership has resulted in the recognition that learning to effectively lead in rapidly changing environments will require new knowledge and skills (Burke & Marx, 2011; Senge, Linchtenstein, Kaeufer, Bradbury & Carroll, 2007). It is the authors’ working assumption that such knowledge and skills are deeply connected to an adult learning framework that is personally constructed by the leader. Grounded in Drago-Severson’s (2009) framework on adult learning and Cuban’s (2001) framework for problem-solving, we explore the contexts and processes of transformational learning, the ways in which it is understood by various actors, and those experiences that foster transformational learning for leaders in emerging school contexts. Further, this exploratory investigation is rooted in our own strongly held belief that leaders who understand their own development as learners, acting in social organizational systems, will recognize each participant as a learner whose individual development can be a key component to building the leadership capacity of the larger system.

Based on their review of the literature, York-Barr and Duke (2004) found that teacher leadership is an umbrella term that has different connotations for different stakeholders. For some, it carries forward ideas from the mid-1990s about site-based management and participatory leadership, which modify or expand existing hierarchical relationships in school settings. For others, teacher leadership is a term used to denote the specific
types of pedagogical decision-making that teachers alone engage in during the process of leading in their classrooms and in their roles within collegial school improvement efforts (Lieberman, 1995; Little, 2003). As a result, use of the term “teacher leadership” often muddies the waters when trying to envision new relationships and new ways of addressing the challenges associated with having all students achieve at high levels. Thus, in this study, we decided to disassociate the discourse regarding the leadership work that is required to increase student learning from the conventional roles in schools (teachers and administrators), and focus instead on clarifying the nature of the work itself. After articulating a clearer understanding of this form of leadership, we could better determine how to best allocate the functional responsibilities, and determine whether the work requires a re-examination of conventional roles.

For us, leadership with a focus on increased student learning involves processes and behaviors by which individuals influence other members of the professional community to improve teaching practices with the aim of increased learning and achievement for every student. We consider leadership focused on learning as joint work, to be performed collaboratively by all members of the professional community. This perspective is inclusive of both formal and informal leaders and is consistent with instructional (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2009; Blasé & Blasé, 2004), distributed (Spillane, 2006), and constructivist (Lambert et al. 2002) theories of school leadership. In addition to these more recent conceptualizations of leadership, we adopted Drago-Severson’s (2009) model of adult learning and Cuban’s (2001) distinction between dilemmas and technical problems as components for a loosely structured conceptual framework to guide our work. Using these cognitive tools, we explored the contexts and processes of adaptive learning, the ways in which it is understood by all members of the learning communities, and those learning experiences that foster adaptive learning for leaders in changing school contexts.

Establishing a Collaborative Research Study

This collaborative inquiry project is grounded in participatory action research methodology, which provided a framework that engaged both researchers and learning community participants in an active, democratic process of discourse and co-constructing knowledge. The primary goal of this forum was to facilitate every participant’s understanding of the characteristics of effective leadership in changing school environments and then using that knowledge to direct future action (McIntyre, 2008; McTaggert, 1991). Discourse within the communities was characterized by collaborative inquiry and open critical reflection about individual and group thinking related to leadership preparation and development. Participants and researchers actively and consciously create a learning community in order to become collaborators with the goal of creating new
knowledge based on the professional dialogue that emerges from the collaborative inquiry process.

This research project traces three learning communities whose members share multiple personal and professional connections: the university team of four faculty members from two departments, the university team and several leaders from the school district, and the university team and eight participating principals. The university team met at least once a month for three years from 2008–2011. The university team and Educational Service Agency personnel met once a month in 2009–2010. The university team and principals met once a month in 2010–2011. Field notes were actively maintained for each of the three learning communities. The university team met the most regularly in order to share and analyze these field notes, determine next steps and the agenda for the other two learning community meetings, and to engage in critical reflection about individual roles, contributions, understandings, and the direction, goals, and progress of the research project itself. These reflections soon became discussed in light of Drago-Severson’s (2009) adult learning framework that identifies stages of adult learning in what she refers to as five levels of knowers: the instrumental knower, the socializing knower, the self-authoring knower, the early-self transforming knower, and the later self-transforming knower. According to Drago-Severson, these ways of knowing influence a leader’s orientation to his or her role, the necessary supports for growth, and the challenges for his or her leadership. Our heightened self-reflective inquiry has been influenced by a shared desire to understand and improve upon the practices in which we participate and the situations in which we can influence others. In this way, we assumed learning and leading roles within our university team and engaged in multiple levels of participatory action research as it informed our thinking about preparing leaders for changing school environments.

An initial framing of tasks included identifying the responsibilities, processes, and practices required by pre-service and practicing teachers and school administrators to effectively lead for learning. The second task was to design a programmatic instructional preparation framework that incorporates the identified leadership knowledge domains, skills and practices. The final task was to develop a recommended structure and delivery system for the program that responds to the changing leadership needs in the field. As stated previously, our primary goal was to design an empirically sound program for developing future leaders. The second learning community emerged when university faculty and ESA leaders met to discuss and eventually propose a pilot seminar with current leaders in the field. In the spring of 2010, the university and ESA team decided to conduct a focus group to test the need for a different kind of seminar/program for leadership development. The focus group consisted of a representative group of principals and other school leaders from the county, and addressed the following questions:
1) What are the greatest challenges or problems you are currently dealing with in your school or district—the things you are confronting that don’t seem to have any easy answers?

2) Is there a need for a group that meets once a month to think about and discuss how one might address these difficult problems that you are expected to solve—sort of a think tank for school leaders?

3) Would you be interested in being part of such a group? Would you have concerns about participating in such a group? Please describe.

4) What format would best fit the demands and schedule for a person in your role?

5) Would you need or desire some type of compensation for your participation? Would earning graduate credit or CEU’s serve as an attractive option? If the ESA and/or university attached some high status designation to group membership, would that serve as an attractive option?

Based on the overwhelmingly positive responses to the proposal to create an alternative leadership seminar for current and prospective leaders and the specific concerns and issues shared by focus group participants, a pilot third learning community, the Leading for Learning Seminar, was created. The proposed purpose statement read:

This leadership seminar explores how to effectively lead adaptive work in educational environments. Adaptive work requires individuals and social systems to learn their way forward because resolution of a presenting problem is so complex or unique that it exceeds the limits of current technical knowledge.

After invitations were sent out to all of the 11 school districts that comprise the region served by the ESA and to the doctoral students at the university, eight building principals expressed interest in participating. Although the university team was open to the participation of leaders in any capacity, we later determined that holding the four-hour seminars on Friday mornings as recommended by the focus group made it difficult for those who did not have flexibility or control over their work schedules to participate.

A team comprised of the eight principals and four Eastern Michigan University faculty from the departments of Teacher Education and Educational Leadership created a professional learning community that met once a month for four hours, in order to:

- Identify and work to resolve vexing educational problems that practitioners confront in their schools or district.
- Engage in collaborate inquiry, and serve in reciprocal roles as consultants, mentors, and problem-solvers.
- Alternately work to solve an identified problem and then reflect on and unpack the work with their colleagues in the seminar.
• Increase capacity to utilize inquiry and reflection as tools for creative problem solving, which includes the ability to use boundary spanning and multiple perspectives to frame problematic situations and generate potential solutions.

We considered the pilot program as an excellent opportunity to test our developing theory of change related to leadership development and to better understand how practicing school principals engaged in adaptive learning through a dialogic and emergent learning environment as designed and modified by the university team. Rather than deliver a pre-established curriculum, we set out to co-create curriculum with educators in the field. Our goal was to discover the processes and practices associated with adaptive learning as it played out in actual schools and classrooms. The seminar was designed to study how school leaders deal with the toughest issues they faced, with an eye toward learning how they dealt with problems that seemed to defy technical solutions, and ultimately, to identify how to best prepare others to do this type of work. The context of how this seminar emerged became an important dimension for further understanding and analyzing the impact and outcomes of the year-long program.

Data analysis utilized pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994), as well as the creation of concept maps, to capture the relationships among the key components under investigation. Our analysis leveraged the make-up of the research team by drawing on interdisciplinary constructs and theories to explain phenomena, with an eye toward improving practice. Our conclusions were validated by triangulating between data sources, by “member checking” conversations with various members of the learning communities, and by conducting an informal presentation of preliminary findings to a representative group of participating principals to confirm our understanding of phenomena and obtain feedback.

Data sources for this inquiry include field notes and artifacts related to each meeting of the learning communities and the pilot leadership seminar. Members of the research team recorded their own observations and reflections and these individual notes were then shared among team members for analysis. Data also include audio recordings of the final sessions of the university team meetings and the principal leadership seminar, and field notes from in-depth semi-structured interviews with five of the eight principals who participated in the pilot leadership seminar.

**Learning Within Our Monthly Seminars**

The seminar group was comprised of principals with a range of leadership experiences from three districts. Two members had been in their principal roles for seven years, and three had recently stepped into the principalship in their current schools but had some level of leadership experience in prior positions. Three others were new to leading as a principal but had some experience as teacher leaders. One district is located in
a predominately white, homogeneous community that has a reputation as a safe, small town located outside of a “liberal university” community. The other two teams of leaders represented Title I districts whose population is shrinking, with a majority of students and families of color facing many challenges because of limited employment opportunities and community resource availability, and high family mobility. Four principals were white females, two were white males, one was an Asian male, and one was an African-American female. Among our university team, three members were white males and one was a white female. The two faculty members from the leadership department had many experiences as district and school administrators. The two teacher education faculty members had both been high school teachers, and now were assuming other leadership positions within the university setting.

Planning Together

Prior to each monthly seminar, the university team met to discuss the goals and plan the agenda in order to design each session with enough direction and flow coupled with room for input and co-construction by all participants. Working without either a pre-set curriculum or an a priori agenda was a point of regular negotiation among our university team, and challenged our assumptions about the technical aspects of creating a constructivist, emergent learning environment for the seminar. In addition, because we were each committed to understanding our own learning and development and consciously adapting Drago-Severson’s (2009) adult learning framework in our dialogue, our discourse patterns were openly self-reflective and critical about the ways that we typically would approach planning for instruction, leading others in professional learning and dialogue, and how we operated as a learning group. This discourse pattern is significant to note, as it created an active learning community among the university team that provided the stage for operationalizing similar communication patterns and expectations within the leadership seminar. Said more plainly, the faculty was learning together about how to collectively facilitate as a team, while modeling an open style of self-reflection, decision-making, and critical thinking. As a group of faculty, none of us had ever experienced such extensive teaching and leadership moments with an active peer and mentoring group.

As we worked to include the principals in helping us to plan the agendas, we were reminded of the very limited time available to leaders in school contexts for such thinking and feedback. The university team often did send out the rough agenda in advance of each seminar meeting; we made only a few modifications upon reviewing it during the opening of each session. Given that our seminar was both voluntary and not connected to any specific coursework or degree program, principals may not have considered the request for feedback or input as a high priority.

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Learning Together

During the first meeting in September 2010, we opened the seminar by engaging principals in a text-based discussion about Cuban’s (2001) monograph, “How Can I Fix It?” to explore the distinction between a problem and a dilemma. After providing some concrete scenarios and asking participants to categorize them as problems or dilemmas, we then presented Cuban’s criteria for identifying a dilemma: (a) The situation should be important enough to devote a significant amount of time to it; (b) The situation should be complex enough to require fairly intense analysis to figure out what is going on; and (c) The situation should involve questions or decisions for which there are no easy answers or solutions.

Finally, after sharing an adaptation of Choo’s (2006) matrix for analyzing modes of decision-making, participants were asked to locate our scenario examples in terms of their degree of goal ambiguity and technical uncertainty. We then connected this exploration to issues of the leaders’ practice within their school environments, first with some journal writing and then with open sharing of very accessible examples. At the closing of this session, we asked participants to continue writing about a problematic situation they had identified and would be willing to share with others in the seminar. Principals often experienced some level of disagreement or cognitive dissonance when trying to define situations as technical problems or dilemmas of practice. In our university team’s attempts to further push the discourse through an inquiry process, it became evident that while leaders’ contexts for leading had some distinctive dimensions, their own learning journeys were intimately connected to their ability to critically reflect on their personal goals, aims, motivations, experiences, assumptions about others, systems, and change. Where we initially thought the demographics of the schools and districts might be the salient variable influencing one’s approach to leadership, it soon became apparent that the problematic situations the principals identified in these different contexts shared many similarities and provided common ground for dialogue among participants.

At the start of the second session, one faculty member shared what he had identified as a personal and professional dilemma in order to model the process of critical self-reflection, learning, and analysis while building a deeper understanding of the distinction between technical problems and dilemmas. Gary shared an in-depth written critical reflection that captured a dilemma and asked participants to discuss the related issues and how they might react. When concluding his self-reflection on his own actions, he stated, “I didn’t realize how much my own beliefs entered into my decision-making until much later.” In this way, Gary established a stage of vulnerability about his learning to lead with the seminar group. During the next several seminars, participants were asked to identify and share their own dilemmas of practice with the group with some significant level
of depth and detail. We encouraged each principal to construct a coherent narrative that would capture what was problematic and how he or she was attempting to resolve the situation.

During the October and November seminars, individual principals shared their dilemmas and then each participant privately considered two questions: What is it that I don’t know about the situation? What perspectives could give me a deeper understanding of the situation? Following this period of reflection, participants were asked to pose 2-3 questions to the presenter. In this way, the university team was encouraging an open but critical collaborative inquiry process for thinking about one’s current understandings and assumptions while actively working to adapt a constructivist framework for knowledge-building. Several principals’ dilemmas related to learning how best to communicate with individuals and the larger staff in their buildings while adhering to policies and personal beliefs about the need to disclose and share information. Other principals were struggling with issues like how best to communicate with families during crisis situations that emerged and escalated quickly, how to avoid being overly maternal/paternal or dogmatic, how to negotiate with union representatives while implementing a district mandate, how to acknowledge the history of a building and staff without being paralyzed by prior dysfunctional patterns of behavior or personality roadblocks, how to handle lowering student enrollments and maintain high expectations for student behavior, and how to create an environment that is psychologically safe for everyone in the school. Further, some principals raised questions, including, “How do I know if I am competent? What is my role as the leader of this school? How much of this leading is about my own personal journey as a learner?” As a group, participants’ discussion of their leadership dilemmas disclosed a tension between the need to manage and a desire to lead. While participants often shared instances of their own learning trajectories as leaders, little was shared about teachers’ or students’ learning or achievement.

During the seminars, principals noted influential texts and workshop experiences in the spirit of mentoring and supporting other participants. As a result, the university team had access to those emergent knowledge and skills principals cited as most likely to support and improve their performance. Participants shared readings of such texts as Pink’s (1995) *A Whole New Mind* and (2005) *Drive*, Connelly’s *Peak: How Great Companies get Their Mojo from Maslow* (2007) and Danielson’s (1996) *Framework for Excellence in Teaching*. They discussed wanting to progress in their skills in communicating with diverse stakeholders, citing families and teachers most often. They also wanted further support and mentoring in navigating personally held values and principals while leading in dynamic, social organizations. Leaders noted that these kinds of texts and skills were not like those about which they learned during any leadership preparation course, but were useful since they captured some familiar dilemmas and prompted participants to think creatively about them.
As principals shared their dilemmas, the differences that emerged between men and women became a point for critical self-reflection. The influence of gendered ways of knowing and being (Belenky & Goldberger, 1987) became evident in the emergent issues as well as in the ways that individuals understood both their and others’ dilemmas. A few female leaders introduced the use of “True Colors” as a means for identifying personality constructs and used this as a tool for personalizing connecting with other women in the group and the female university faculty member. The use of this personality matrix was then referred to when dilemmas were introduced and reflected upon. Several of the male and female leaders introduced the challenges of leading others who were mostly female and actively working against assuming a dysfunctional matriarchal or patriarchal relationship in the process. Differences in race were noted among the student populations but did not become a point of examination and reflection among the participant leaders. Race and gender were regularly discussed among the university team during planning and reflection sessions that occurred prior to each seminar.

During the December and January sessions, we began introducing Drago-Severson’s (2009) work and assigned some reading that provided an overview of the adult learning framework. In January, Jim provided a PowerPoint presentation about professional growth that explained Walter and Marks’ (1981) experiential learning cycle. This move was the university team’s attempt to provide additional curriculum to our seminar in order to frame previous discussions and locate individual professional growth on a continuum that grounds other thinking about leadership preparation. These two sessions led to principals further reflecting on their dilemmas in terms of their own development as learners.

Because of challenges with negotiating four distinctive Winter Break schedules, we were unable to meet in February. By March, the university team explored how the principals envisioned leading professional development in each respective school, given their own learning trajectory and in light of our discussions about adult learning and the experiential learning cycle. The university team conducted semi-structured interviews with the principals to inquire about how their participation in the seminar supported current ways of knowing, and challenged them to continue development toward a reflectively transformative state. We also asked principals to estimate what percentage of their staff were instrumental, socializing, self-authoring, and self-transforming knowers and explore the degree to which the professional learning plan for the school provided developmentally appropriate supports and challenges that were the different ways of knowing that were represented among the teaching staff. Principals were asked for suggestions for making changes that were university-based and school-based. Finally, principals were asked about recommendations for changes to make professional learning and leadership development more consistent with adult growth and developmental theory.
Reflecting Together

During our last seminar in April, we shared our analytical synthesis of what we had learned as a result of our seminars and interviews with the principals and asked for feedback, verification, and additional commentary about what was learned by members of the group.

What was Learned about Leading for Learning

Our analysis disclosed that the Leading for Learning seminar design successfully created a structured interpretive community for participants with these enabling characteristics: a safe environment, participant connectedness and mutual trust, commonalities of concerns with similar issues in varied contexts, and an emphasis on practical application and “owned” problems or dilemmas of professional practice. We noted that the interpretive process used by principals to address these dilemmas involved information gathering and problem-solving through the sharing of craft knowledge about what worked for them as leaders in similar situations. The seminar created a space for perspective-taking and challenging assumptions about leadership practice using a highly critical reflective inquiry process. Principals reported affirmation of their leadership practice as a significant outcome associated with participation in the seminar. They also indicated that the seminar enabled them to learn how to be a better leader while struggling to deal with responsibilities and expectations of the job.

In our efforts to maintain a co-constructed learning community, the university team did not intentionally introduce “leading for learning” as a focus for any particular seminar session. It was the shared belief of the university team that we should allow each principal to present what he or she identified as a dilemma of leadership practice for consideration by the group and allow issues related to learning to emerge naturally. It was noteworthy that issues relevant to student learning were not presenting problems for these principals. Instead, the dilemmas they shared were generally concerned with how to balance their personal leadership vision with expectations of others (both superiors and subordinates), given the reality of what was plausible in the political and social context of their own school or district. Therefore, political or socio-psychological frameworks were more helpful in guiding an adaptive learning process for these principals than the Drago-Severson developmental learning model that was adopted by the university team as a theoretical basis for our discourse and ultimate design of the seminar. At the end of the seminar, it became clear to the university team that although we had successfully created a safe, coveted space for critical reflection by participants, interactions within the learning community over one academic year had not been sufficient to fully move principals from one adult developmental stage to the next.

Our analysis of the pilot leadership seminar experience support-
ed three major conclusions. First was the fact that adult development is a complex process that takes time; it took longer to develop the enabling conditions for meaningful discourse in the seminar than we had anticipated. Second, the seminar setting and design provided a better context for facilitating adult leadership development than our traditional university classes or other professional development opportunities offered by the ESA. Third, adult developmental theory may not be an appropriate model for designing programs to support leaders who work in turbulent or catastrophic environments.

Contributions to the Field and Our Next Steps

This ongoing research project contributes to a better understanding of the nature of leadership required to effectively prepare and support leaders to adapt and learn in the frame of emerging school contexts. A proposed conjecture is that the current developmental stage of the adult leader has a tremendous influence on how he or she defines challenges and engages in adaptive learning, and affects his and her ability to help other adults develop as leaders. This study has identified the following key areas for further research:

1) How do formal and informal leaders at different developmental levels identify, make sense of, and respond to adaptive challenges associated with the press for school reform?

2) Does ensuring every student learns at high levels ever emerge as an issue?

3) How and to what degree does the environmental context affect these leaders’ perceptions of adaptive challenges?

4) Given the complexity and uncertainty of leading in rapidly changing school environments, how do university faculty and ESA providers modify their leadership professional development designs to increase capacity for adaptive learning?

Because of the very positive feedback and evaluations we received about the value of this pilot seminar, we have been invited to work with another group of leaders within a collaborative partnership with the county-wide educational service agency and will focus on those emergent questions and issues.

References


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**Ethan Lowenstein** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Leadership and Counseling at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti.
This article describes the process of replacing a modest Master's level school leader preparation program with an innovative Ed.D. program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The new doctoral program is intensive, highly selective, intellectually rigorous, and field-based. The authors provide side-by-side comparisons of the difference of each inquiry cycle which identified both problems and opportunities that led to the changes in the old program. The results, the characteristics of the doctoral program are shown by the authors to have addressed weaknesses of such leader preparation programs as identified in the research literature. Finally, the authors provide examples of specific data, such as student achievement data in schools led by UIC graduates, used in continually improving the program.

In 2001, a small group of faculty members in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) challenged themselves by asking, “What would it take to consistently prepare urban school leaders to measurably improve student learning in high-need schools?” To answer this question and pursue the goal contained therein, we embarked on a decade-long journey to improve the way we prepare school leaders at UIC.

This article presents the story of the journey that has taken us from a modest Master’s-level school leader preparation program to an intensive, highly selective, intellectually rigorous, field-based doctoral-level program—the Ed.D. Program in Urban Educational Leadership. As we made this journey, we gradually moved away from radical, episodic, albeit collaborative approaches to program reform that have long been advocated in the literature (Clark & Clark, 1997). Instead, we moved toward the regular use of data and cycles of inquiry to promote continuous improvement, an alternative approach more recently advocated for the improvement of leadership preparation (e.g., Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003; Cheney & Davis, 2011; Orr, 2006). This move has proven crucial for us to engage in sustained program development and make notable progress toward the goal of consistently preparing urban school leaders to improve student learning in high-need schools.

The story of the Ed.D. Program at UIC is of particular importance in light of public and scholarly attention to issues of school leadership preparation. This attention has spurred numerous critiques of leadership preparation (Barnett, 2004; Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Cheney & Davis,
Cibulka, 2009; Finn & Broad, 2003; Fry, O’Neill, & Bottoms, 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005; Murphy 2006; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). Critiques of university-based leadership preparation programs have been particularly negative (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Cheney & Davis, 2011; Cibulka, 2009; Fry et al., 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005). Beyond general criticisms of program quality, specific concerns have focused on lack of rigorous candidate selection processes; lack of program purpose, coherence, and rigor; antiquated program content; inappropriate pedagogical strategies; insufficient or poor quality field-based experiences; lack of quality university-district partnerships; and lack of quality program evaluation (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Bredeson, 1996; Bridges & Hallinger, 1997; Fry et al., 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2007).

From these criticisms has come a press for radically improving higher education school leader preparation programs. Complete program overhauls and new metrics for assessing program effectiveness have become prevalent in calls for reform (Björk & Ginsberg, 1995; Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Bottoms et al., 2003; Cheney & Davis, 2011; Goldring & Schuermann, 2009; Norton, 2002). For example, Fry and her colleagues (2006) urged university departments of educational leadership

… to awaken from their complacency, reject the status quo, and respond to appeals and criticisms from the field by identifying new content that addresses what principals need to know in order to do their jobs and by devising instructional processes that ensure principals master essential knowledge and skills. (p. 11)

New perspectives on standards for assessing the quality and effectiveness of leadership preparation programs are also emerging and these standards are likely to drive reform. The Southern Regional Education Board (2002) articulates one such standard: that “every school has leadership that results in improved student performance” (p. 3).

The bulk of existing literature on the reform of university-based school leadership preparation programs is wanting in several respects. Although the literature tracks steps that are being taken to reform school leadership preparation (Fry et al., 2006) and is replete with descriptions of innovative and exemplary leadership preparation programs, very little explicit attention has been paid to program impact and means to assess it (e.g., Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007; Jean-Marie, Adams, & Garn, 2010; Jackson & Kelley, 2002: Loss, 2009; Marsh & Dembo, 2009; Orr, 2006; Storey & Hartwick, 2009; Toft-Everson, 2009). That is, there is virtually no empirical evidence that redesigned university programs, even those deemed innovative and exemplary, are making progress toward preparing school leaders to improve student learning. Also missing from existing literature are descriptions of the work that is required to dramatically improve school leader preparation programs as well as examples of
robust student and program outcome data—data that are increasingly expected for program evaluation and that are essential for informed program improvement. These gaps in the literature are concerning, given current expectations for leadership preparation programs to improve and to “evaluate their impact on graduates and the schools their graduates lead” (Orr, 2006 p. 498).

This article begins to address these gaps in several ways, and by doing so aims to support others’ work to improve their programs of school leader preparation. First, this article provides an existence proof that a university-based leadership preparation program can reform itself and develop a record of preparing urban school leaders to improve student learning in high-need schools. Second, this article describes program design features that we have come to understand are necessary if such impact is to be achieved. Third, this article describes the use of data in program development and provides illustrations of program impact data that can be used to inform program improvement and evaluation. Equally important, this article illustrates the efficacy of cycles of inquiry and continuous improvement for sustained program development and effectiveness.

The story of continuous improvement as a mechanism for promoting leadership preparation at UIC unfolds in three acts. In 2001, we engaged in a first formal cycle of inquiry that led to the initial planning and development of the program. Between 2002 and 2008, we launched the program and during this period of initial implementation, we began a process of continuous improvement for sustained program development. And from 2008 to the present, we enhanced our process of continuous improvement as we engaged in a second formal cycle of inquiry. This process allowed us to take stock of challenges and opportunities and led us to make several significant and important revisions to the program that we believe will further improve its effectiveness. Each of these three phases of our ongoing process of continuous improvement is detailed below. We follow these descriptions with a closer look at our data analysis approaches for program improvement and evaluation. We also discuss what we have learned regarding the challenges of a continuous improvement approach to ongoing program development. We end with concluding observations.

Initial Planning and Development: The First Inquiry Cycle

As the 1990s drew to a close, the Department of Educational Policy Studies at UIC conducted a year-long program assessment that generated two key conclusions similar to those later reached by Shulman, Golde, Conklin Bueschel, and Garabedian (2006) regarding education doctorates. First, our Ph.D. Program was not adequately achieving its primary objective of preparing researchers, in large part because it was also trying to serve the professional development needs of practicing educators. We also found that neither the Ph.D. Program nor our M.Ed. Program was proving...
effective in preparing school leaders capable of meaningful urban school improvement except as a rare exception.

Motivated by these findings, we obtained a planning grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in 2001 to begin a formal cycle of inquiry that led to the initial planning and development of the Ed.D. Program. This cycle was driven by the question that we asked ourselves as a faculty: “What would it take to consistently prepare urban school leaders to measurably improve student learning in high-need schools?” Finding little empirical research as guidance, a team of several Department faculty members and interested Ph.D. students turned to three sources of information: (a) an external needs assessment to identify demands and expectations for school leader preparation reform; (b) the literature on exemplary or innovative programs of school leadership preparation; and (c) individual and focus group interviews of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) principals of low-income, racially isolated schools which had produced student learning outcomes that far exceeded expectations. We used the needs assessment to develop justification for a thorough reform of school leadership preparation in our department. We used our review of the literature and our interviews to gain new perspectives on how school leadership preparation might be reformed. Particularly important was gaining successful school leaders’ perspectives on transformational urban leadership practices and on how to help aspiring principals learn to employ them.

This inquiry reinforced our belief that we would be unable to consistently produce new principals capable of transforming low-income urban schools within the confines of an M.Ed. Program. The need for extended academic work and intensive clinical experiences, as part of a continuum of pre-service preparation and early-career support and development, emerged as of paramount importance and could not be supported within our M.Ed. Program. Moreover, our M.Ed. Program attracted large numbers of students with very little teaching or leadership experience. We came to view such experience as an important prerequisite to successful principal preparation and effective leadership to transform low-performing urban schools. With these ideas in mind, the department decided to close the M.Ed. Program and develop an Ed.D. Program as a new, more robust vehicle for initial school leader preparation and certification as well as for advanced professional leadership development.2

This initial inquiry cycle also pointed to a number of design elements that would arguably improve on the design of the M.Ed. Program. We viewed these elements as conducive for making progress towards the Ed.D. Program’s primary objective of developing leaders to consistently improve student learning in high-need K–12 schools. In retrospect, we lacked a well-articulated theory of school leadership development to guide our thinking. Table 1 compares the primary design elements of the M.Ed. Program with those of the Ed.D. Program as launched in 2002–2003. Notable are differences concerning the students we wished to work with; the selectiv-
ity of admissions; the intensity and duration of preparatory work; the strong emphasis on long-term field experiences and coaching; expanded focus on standards, practice-based competencies, and assessments; and the integration of the theoretical with the practical, the academic with the clinical.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UIC’s M.Ed. in educational administration pre–2003</th>
<th>New Ed.D. program design features in 2002–03 startup year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School system as consumer of candidates credentialed by UIC</td>
<td>Close working partnership with public school system for program design, implementation, and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-selective admissions: most applicants to program accepted</td>
<td>Highly selective admissions process requiring master’s degree, extensive documentation, and 2-hour interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC standards as competency framework</td>
<td>ISLLC standards plus 19 specific leadership competencies generated from interviews with urban school leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-strand program of 33 semester hours to credential wide variety of administrative roles, including department head, dean, athletic director; designed exclusively for pre-service training</td>
<td>Three-strand program structure of 88 to 92 semester hours post Master’s degree designed for pre-service preparation and early career support and development of novice principals, advanced principals, and aspiring superintendents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolving admissions spring, summer and fall, with 50–70 students at various stages of program completion; courses un-sequenced and taken full- or part-time as student chooses</td>
<td>Cohort-based with admissions of 15–20 each fall; courses sequenced during year-long pre-service residency with enrollment in 3–4 courses both residency semesters; variable sequencing during post-preparation, novice-leader development phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited clinical/residency experience provided; embedded in one course/one semester and not requiring leave from current position; minimal on-site supervision</td>
<td>Extensive clinical experience through fully-paid, year-long principal residency (funded by CPS); close supervision by mentor principal and UIC coach; internship begins immediately at the start of program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No leadership coaching provided</td>
<td>Three years of site-based leadership coaching (during year-long internship and post-internship for early-career development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No consideration of academic and clinical integration and alignment</td>
<td>Academic and clinical integration and alignment assumed rather than explicitly designed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond course grades, no assessment of candidate performance during program</td>
<td>Beyond course grades, some basic assessment of candidate performance throughout the program, with counsel-out consequences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
New Ed.D. program design features in 2002–03 startup year

| UIC’s M.Ed. in educational administration pre–2003 | New Ed.D. program design features in 2002–03 startup year |
| No capstone exam or demonstration of leadership competence | Comprehensive exam, leadership portfolio, and thesis research focused on problems of leadership practice |
| Staffing of roughly 2.0 FTE academic faculty | Staffing of roughly 3.0 academic FTE during phase-out of Master’s; addition of 2.0 FTE clinical faculty (one internally funded and one externally funded) |

### Launch and Early Implementation: Beginning Continuous Improvement

The new Ed.D. Program for Urban Educational Leadership launched in 2002 with a first cohort of nearly 20 students. Although our internal resources were stretched as we began the transition from the M.Ed. to the new Ed.D. Program, we received substantial support from CPS which funded full-year paid administrative residencies for students in the program. We also began to receive substantial support from philanthropic foundations primarily in Chicago that were interested in funding new approaches to school leadership development.3

Between 2003 and 2005, we spent considerable time performing a broad range of “start-up” tasks. Program faculty developed curricular and instructional materials and began to develop a “conceptual framework for candidate and program evaluation.” This framework mapped program goals, evaluation strategies, and evaluation tools. In 2005, the department hired a new academic faculty member, expanding our capacity to implement the program.

Although the launch and early start up work had generally gone well, we began to experience several problems as implementation progressed and as our enrollment grew.4 Beginning in 2005 and continuing through 2008, we engaged in both regular and more episodic periods of collaborative inquiry to learn more about these problems and to make adjustments to address them. In the process, the faculty grew in its understanding of the importance of continuous improvement for sustained program development.

For example, based on patterns of problems evidenced in student course taking, the internship, and comprehensive exams, we adjusted course sequences and improved horizontal and vertical course alignment. We amended course content and assessments, and we developed and subsequently revised the comprehensive examination and leadership portfolio requirements and procedures. We also adjusted coaching routines. Patterns of problems also offered insights regarding the selection and design of metrics and analytic processes for program improvement and evaluation.
Although our approach during this time frame was non-systemic and did not involve a formal cycle of inquiry, it produced improvement that otherwise could not have been achieved. Moreover, our commitment to program improvement and encouraging early evaluation results began to cultivate state and national attention. For example, an Illinois Board of Higher Education (2006) Commission on Principal Preparation named UIC’s Ed.D. Program as the state’s only “model” university-based principal preparation program. By 2007, program improvement and evaluation data began to reveal success with various candidate placement indicators. For example, in job eligibility and placement we found:

- Within their first three years in the program, 100% of UIC students passed CPS principal eligibility requirements compared to 46% of non-UIC candidates.
- Of 34 UIC students who completed their internships in good standing, 100% found jobs in CPS within three years. Almost two-thirds of these students were hired as principals, about one-quarter as assistant principals, and the remainder as sub-district and district-level administrators.5
- Almost half of the UIC students receiving principalships were hired into high-need high schools. As a group, these students held nearly 10% of all high school principalships in CPS.

As we began to analyze candidate impact data, we also noted that our students were achieving modest success in improving academic achievement in their schools. For example, in 2008 we found that taken collectively, elementary schools led by UIC-trained principals had improved 24.2 percentage points in just four years on the meets/exceeds measures of composite math and reading on the State ISAT achievement test, while CPS schools overall had improved 19.7% in that time. In posting these increases, UIC-led schools had moved from 3.5 points below the district average to surpassing the district average by 1 point: not earth-shaking, but trending positively against district scores that were themselves improving. Moreover, our improvement work and results attracted the attention of The Broad Foundation. In fact, we were selected as the only university-based leadership preparation program to receive a major multi-year Broad grant.

Despite these positive results and events, by the fall of 2008, our reviews of additional program evaluation data coupled with our nagging dissatisfaction with particular program issues, fueled unanimous agreement across the academic and clinical faculty for the need for a second more comprehensive cycle of inquiry to inform ongoing improvement. On the one hand, our data continued to show exceptionally strong rates of job placement after students’ internships. For example, all students in the program’s first seven cohorts who completed internships were hired into administrative posts by CPS within two years of those internships. In fact, ninety-five percent were hired immediately upon internship completion.
Moreover, two-thirds of our students obtained principalships within three years of their internships. On the other hand, our data also showed that 15% of our students did not complete their internships. Further, the vast majority of the students (80%) who completed their internships showed signs of stalling during the post-residency phase of the program as they began their careers as full-time school or system-level leaders.

Taking Stock and Making Larger Adjustments: The Second Cycle of Inquiry

From 2009 to 2011 we engaged in a second formal cycle of inquiry that was supported in part by external funding from Chicago Community Trust, Fry Foundation, and McCormick Foundation. In contrast to the first cycle that involved a small number of individuals, this cycle engaged all Ed.D. academic and clinical faculty, program staff, most Ed.D. students, and several faculty members from other departments within the College of Education. Work teams led by individual faculty members met for periods ranging from 6 to 18 months. Equally important, this inquiry work expanded noticeably in scope as we collected a broad range of data. This process was a major undertaking that involved a substantial and sustained time commitment from academic and clinical program faculty. Our work was consistent with but arguably more multi-faceted than the program evaluation practices and recommendations emerging from the literature (e.g., Clark & Clark, 1997; Educational Development Center, 2009; Fry et al., 2006; Story & Hartwick, 2009; University Council for Educational Administration, 2011).

This second cycle of inquiry focused our attention on strengths and weaknesses of existing program elements. We administered student surveys, conducted faculty interviews and student interviews and focus groups, and analyzed student course evaluations. We examined student course taking patterns, conducted a curriculum audit, and considered pass rates and patterns of problems in student comprehensive exams and in CPS principal eligibility assessments. Importantly, we analyzed a growing assortment of data on candidate entry, progress, placement, and impact.

We also collected and reviewed a broad range of information from outside sources to find points of comparison for further assessing the program’s strengths and weaknesses. For example, we drew from what we learned about exemplary leadership preparation program features through our ongoing participation in the Rainwater Leadership Alliance. We reviewed CPS principal eligibility competencies as well as ISLLC and NT-PBS Standards for School Leaders. We also drew on reviews of literature on leadership preparation and literature describing exemplary school leadership programs. These reviews were complemented with our own in-depth investigations of several innovative programs at other universities. Finally, in anticipation of their inclusion in new state principal licensure...
requirements, we reviewed literature on early childhood education leadership and content-area leadership.

This inquiry cycle revealed a number of challenges and opportunities for ongoing program development. Some of these challenges and opportunities arose from external sources, such as changes in state program accreditation and principal certification requirements and in CPS job eligibility requirements. Others sprung from internal sources, such as growing program size and complexity, limitations in faculty capacity, and underdeveloped administrative support. Some challenges had been identified earlier, such as difficulties students were having making steady progress during the post-residency portion of the program. Beginning in 2010, the program faculty began to respond to these challenges and opportunities by developing a number of changes to the program. These changes build upon the original 2003 program but in their scope and complexity can be seen as adding up to a program “redesign.”

Table 2 recaps the Ed.D. design features at 2002, highlights selected problems and opportunities identified from the second formal cycle of inquiry, and presents Ed.D. design features that we began to phase in 2010.

**Table 2**

*Ed.D. In 2002, Identified Problems and Opportunities, Ed.D in 2010*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ed.D. program design features in 2002–03 startup year</th>
<th>Inquiry cycles identified following (selected) problems and opportunities</th>
<th>Program redesign components introduced or under consideration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State principal license: K–12</td>
<td>State policy changes being introduced related to leadership preparation and principal licensure</td>
<td>New PK–12 principal license beginning 2013; notable changes to the specificity of clinical experiences and outcomes and with expectation for highly selective candidate selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State leadership preparation policy allowed considerable flexibility with preparation program delivery</td>
<td>Frequent changes in district policies create need for program changes but also opportunity to strengthen partnership</td>
<td>New Chicago leadership collaborative now underway; requiring new MOU and new (and likely strengthened) partnership structure with district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close working partnership with public school system for program design, implementation, and assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highly selective admissions process requiring master’s degree, extensive documentation, and 2-hour interview</td>
<td>Quality of candidate pool not up to our aspirations; suggests greater attention to pipeline development and improved selection process</td>
<td>New pipeline strategies enacted and additional strategies to be developed collaboratively with CPS through new leadership collaborative; enhanced highly selective admissions process</td>
</tr>
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(continued)
Table 2 (continued)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ed.D. program design features in 2002–03 startup year</th>
<th>Inquiry cycles identified following (selected) problems and opportunities</th>
<th>Program redesign components introduced or under consideration</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC Standards plus 19 specific leadership competencies generated from interviews with urban school leaders</td>
<td>Insufficient program alignment to CPS principal competencies; opportunity to align with NTPBS arises with recent publication of their accomplished principal standards</td>
<td>CPS competencies, ISLLC standards, NBTS standards for school leaders and ISLLC standards integrated as indicators for pre-service and early-career school leader development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-strand program structure of 88 to 92 semester hours post Master’s degree designed for pre-service preparation and early career support and development of novice principals, advanced principals, and aspiring superintendents; little attention to identification and scaffolding of programmatic content themes</td>
<td>Three-strand structure unwieldy for administering and sustainability; complexity interferes with program content coherence</td>
<td>Single-strand structure of 88 credits post-Master’s degree proposed for all students with options/electives to accommodate specific career goals such as superintendent endorsement; programmatic content-based themes identified and scaffolded across program experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort-based with admissions of 15–20 each fall; courses sequenced during year-long pre-service residency with enrollment in 3–4 courses both residency semesters; variable sequencing during post-preparation, novice-leader development phase</td>
<td>Cohort effect diminishes as students pursue different career stages; academic challenge of program a factor in students stalling and not finishing program in timely manner</td>
<td>Cohort-based with admissions of 15–20 each year moved up to spring providing 18 rather than 12 months of pre-service training; Cohort experience improved through carefully sequenced courses; number of courses per semester in pre-service and development reduced (primarily by use of summer session) to accommodate school leadership demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive clinical experience through fully-paid, year-long principal residency (funded by CPS); close supervision by mentor principal and UIC coach; internship begins immediately at the start of program</td>
<td>Insufficient assessment of readiness and preparation for entry to internship</td>
<td>Fully-paid, year-long principal residency (funded by CPS) begins after first full semester in program and based on assessment of candidate readiness; close supervision by mentor principal and UIC coach</td>
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(continued)
As we begin this new chapter of the Ed.D. Program, our current enrollment stands at approximately 100 students. The demographic diversity of our student population has increased even as our admissions selectivity has increased. Almost 30 percent of our students are African American, 15% are Latino, 42% are white, and 13% are Asian American and other minority. Nearly 60% of students are female. The bulk of our students come to us from CPS and many are teacher leaders or assistant principals. Although the greatest numbers of students seek administrative certification for the principalship, a number are experienced school leaders

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### Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ed.D. program design features in 2002–03 startup year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Three years of site-based leadership coaching (during internship and post-internship for early-career development)</td>
<td>Coaching experience varies widely, suggesting the need for development of more explicit protocols, instruments, and assessments to systematize coaching experience</td>
<td>Three years of site-based leadership coaching maintained, increased design and utilization of protocols, instruments, and assessments for use during experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic and clinical integration and alignment assumed rather than explicitly designed</td>
<td>Weak alignment and integration between academic and clinical experience</td>
<td>Redesign of internship-related courses to align with coaching; Explicit attention provided to alignment and integration between academic and clinical experience for entire program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond course grades, some assessment of candidate performance throughout the program, with counsel-out consequences</td>
<td>Management of assessment process weak due to limited administrative capacity of program</td>
<td>This area continues to need attention due to issues of capacity; recent receipt of additional university funding is likely to support improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive exam, leadership portfolio, and thesis research focused on problems of leadership practice</td>
<td>Faculty and student dissatisfaction with poor student completion rates on original dissertation</td>
<td>Introduction of capstone research project in place of more traditional dissertation; capstone model still under revision for recently-entering cohorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing: Staffing of roughly 3.0 academic FTE during phase-out of Master’s, plus addition of 2.0 FTE clinical faculty (1 internally funded and 1 externally funded)</td>
<td>Academic staff stretched thin due to multiple responsibilities of teaching, research, and program revision in an era of state budget retrenchment</td>
<td>Staffing of roughly 5.0 academic FTE (one line added in 2005 plus parts of other faculty); 6.0 FTE clinical faculty (3 internally funded and 3 externally funded)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
seeking advanced professional studies and several are aspiring or early-career system-level leaders.

We continue to post strong candidate placement data. For example, currently 96 students in eight UIC cohorts have completed the residency year and achieved state certification. Of these 96, 65 became urban school principals within four years or less and nearly all of these posts were in high-needs schools. Of the remaining 31, 30 have become system-level leaders or assistant principals. We also continue to chart progress with our student impact data. Our analysis of student impact data and an illustration of such analysis appears in the following section.

A Closer Look at Data Analysis for Program Improvement and Evaluation

A very important part of our work has been the ongoing development of a system of data collection and analysis for program improvement and evaluation. The objectives of this system have been consistent since the program was first developed. First, data and analysis should allow us to assess whether our program is achieving its overall goal of improving PK–12 learning outcomes in schools led by our students. Second, they should allow us to assess whether program processes are being implemented with fidelity and quality on the way to achieving PK–12 learning outcomes. Third, they should enable us to improve program processes and outcomes through improvements in program design and implementation. The pursuit of these objectives has necessitated sustained work over the entire decade—work that has required a considerable commitment of faculty time and external funds to support additional “hands on” evaluation work of two program staff.

The conceptual framework for candidate and program evaluation, developed shortly after the program launch, served as a foundation for conceptualizing, designing, enacting, and continuously improving a system of data for program improvement and evaluation. As currently enacted, this system assesses the full program trajectory which spans students’ admission to the program to their impact on the schools they serve. Accordingly, we collect data at four key points: (a) student entry; (b) student program progress; (c) student job placement; and (d) student impact on their schools. We have learned that our data not only inform program improvement and evaluation, but they also are an important source of information for students and their leadership work in schools. For example, impact data allow our students to consider whether their schools are closing achievement gaps over time and in comparison to multiple norms.

More than 27 different data collection and analytic tools have been developed or selected from outside sources to assess our students and program. Not all of these tools have been employed and some which have been used have not been employed systematically. We have learned that a fully-developed system for improvement and evaluation requires sub-
stantial organizational capacity, and we have within the last several years been working to build our capacity for this work. Even though our work in this area continues to evolve, our current evaluation tools and strategy are beginning to inform national discussions on the evaluation of leadership preparation programs (Cheney et al., 2010; Cheney & Davis, 2011).

During the past several years we have made the greatest progress collecting and analyzing data on our students’ impact on their schools. Specifically, we have engaged in more systematic annual and longitudinal analysis of several kinds of school-level data: (a) student attendance rates; (b) freshman academic on-track rates; (c) high school graduation rates; and (d) parent, student, and teacher ratings on various school culture and climate, instruction, and leadership indicators. We are also developing the internal capacity to use state databases that contain longitudinal standardized test score data on individual elementary and high school students for more robust analyses of learning in our students’ schools. By using state databases, we are beginning to perform “value-added” analyses and track longitudinal trajectories of student achievement by various subgroups of students (i.e. ethnicity and achievement quartiles) and in comparison to CPS and national trajectories. We are also able to compare the yearly learning gains of schools led by UIC students with district and state gains.

At the end of the 2010–2011 school year, UIC-trained principals led 28 CPS elementary schools. These leaders had at least a full year’s results on state achievement tests (ISAT), because they served in their respective schools for between one and seven years. Of these 28 schools, 21 posted combined grade level 3–8 reading gains that exceeded CPS combined grade level 3–8 gains—some by a little, and some by a lot. Five schools of the 21 gained at least four months’ achievement, a useful benchmark that bodes well for genuinely closing achievement gaps over the course of an elementary school career because it indicates 1.4 years learning for one year’s schooling. Figure 1 is a data display that illustrates this analysis for the 21 UIC-led schools that outpaced CPS average gains. Moreover, our analysis shows that UIC-led elementary schools are twice as likely as CPS elementary schools to hit that benchmark of four months’ achievement gain. In mathematics, UIC-led schools have done even better, with eight of the 28 schools hitting the 1.4 year learning gain mark. Moreover, in the composite analysis that combines reading and math scores, 10 UIC-led schools of the 28 hit that high bar.
Figure 1. Elementary Principal Impact Data/UIC-Led School Compared to CPS Norm
Challenges of a Continuous Improvement Approach to Program Development

Adopting cycles of inquiry and a continuous improvement approach to program development has not been without challenges. Indeed, the challenges we have experienced are consistent with those generally experienced by organizations that move toward continuous improvement (Smylie, 2010). Consistent with the approach itself, these challenges have proven to be sources of learning about how to do the work of school leader preparation more effectively. Here, we describe briefly four challenges that have been particularly relevant to our journey.

Challenge #1. Keeping Eyes on the Prize

Of particular importance to continuous improvement are the articulation, clarity, and consistency of mission and core values. Mission and core values, as well as the process of continuous improvement itself, are crucial “anchors” in organizations where regular changes in policies, programs, and practices are to be expected (Smylie, 2010). However, maintaining the integrity and imperative of mission and core values is not easy. There is potential for goal displacement as organizations may train their focus on the process of change and indeed on change itself to the neglect of the outcomes to be achieved by change. There is also the potential for compromise as an organization engages with and responds to myriad demands and expectations of different external actors upon whom the organization depends for resources and legitimacy.

The mission and core values of the Ed.D. Program is well summarized in the question that has propelled our work since 2001: “What would it take to consistently prepare urban school leaders to measurably improve student learning in high need schools?” This question has served as a mantra to the program. We are fortunate that the primary external actors upon whom the program depends now—CPS, the state, and philanthropic foundation - even our own college and campus—expect and demand from us much of what we expect and demand for ourselves. The greatest challenge to keeping our eyes on the prize is simply the pace and demands of the work itself and the risk that the “doing” and completion of work, or the development and institution of change, displaces attention on the outcomes we wish to achieve. That risk is mitigated but not eliminated by embedding the key elements of the question—“consistently prepare,” “to measurably improve student learning,” “in high need urban schools”—in the program’s design, content, and, importantly, evaluation system.
Challenge #2. Developing Complete Technology for Continuous Improvement

We have learned that data, data systems, and cycles of inquiry are very important to school leader program development. The challenge is to develop and manage a complete and coherent technology for continuous improvement that is anchored in mission and core values. The technology should be an integral, not ancillary or occasional, part of the program. As seen in our story, such a technology is also developmental and dynamic in nature. Moreover, the technology for continuous improvement is itself the subject of continuous improvement. That is, a truly complete technology is one that is turned on itself, is analyzed, and is improved on a continuous basis. It requires invention, continuous examination and development, and tolerance for ambiguity, risk, and occasional failure. However, developing, managing, and improving a complete technology of continuous improvement is especially challenging when there is little precedent for it in school leader preparation, and few resources to guide it.

Of particular importance, our experience suggests that perhaps the greatest challenge to developing a complete technology is not in the development of data and data systems. Although there are substantial difficulties associated with developing data and data systems, these are largely technical matters. Instead, the greatest challenges come in developing the orientations, routines, and working relationships that have us continuously looking at data and linking data to collaborative decision making about our students and program.

Challenge #3. Developing Capacity for Continuous Improvement

One of the most important lessons from the literature on continuous improvement is that it requires particular organizational capacities to be successful (Smylie, 2010). By capacities we mean organizational resources that support the work of continuous improvement. From our experience, we have learned the importance of cultivating the following capacities:

- A culture of inquiry and continuous improvement that anchors firmly on mission, values, and process and makes change an expected element of life.
- A culture of faculty collaboration, organizational citizenship, and distributed leadership
- The knowledge, skills, dispositions, processes, and management systems to engage in cycles of inquiry, to analyze meaningful data, to use data effectively in planning and decision-making, and to use products of that process—the new and improved aspects of school leader preparation produced
- Program leadership that promotes mission, processes of continuous
improvement and processes to monitor, interact with, and manage the external environment

• Organization of work, work roles and relationships, communications systems, and rewards systems to align with and provide support for continuous improvement work

• Relational trust that provides both the “glue and lubricant” of working relationships important for program personnel to deal with the uncertainty, risk, and occasional failure associated with continuous improvement (Tschannen-Moran, 2004)

• Fiscal and physical resources, including time, which make important contributions to the cultivation of several capacities listed above

Our challenge has been to foster sufficient capacity for a complex, intensive, evolving program. Indeed, as shown in our story, a number of the issues we have encountered in developing and implementing the Ed.D. Program can be traced to lack of fiscal resources including time. Funding is scarce and highly competitive. Program personnel, particularly academic faculty, must distribute their time and energy across a range of roles and responsibilities beyond those associated with the Ed.D. Program and its ongoing improvement. The Ed.D. Program has developed much of its “fiscal and time” capacities through external resources and unusually high levels of faculty commitment of time toward program improvement work. Our challenge going forward is to institutionalize the program by shifting its primary sources of financial support from unstable external sources to more sustainable sources within the university. The time commitments of individual faculty members for myriad improvement tasks must also be significantly adjusted in order to be sustainable.

Challenge #4. Managing the Dilemma of Stability and Change

This fourth challenge arises from the simultaneous need for the program to establish sufficient stability, regularity, and predictability to function effectively and the need for the program to continuously adapt and improve. Too much of the former may compromise the ability of the program to respond effectively to problems and changing demands. Too much of the latter may create conditions resembling “permanent white water,” leading to problems of overload and fatigue that impose obstacles to achieving program objectives. Moreover, ongoing continuous improvement builds from periods of stability and “time off” from what otherwise could become a relentless and unforgiving pace of change. This requires buffering people and their curriculum and instruction processes from frivolous demands so that human resources can be replenished (Smylie, 2010).

Additional challenges of managing this dilemma at UIC come from the need to keep pace with continual changes in CPS’s job eligibility requirements, as well as major reform in the state’s requirements for
school leader program accreditation and principal certification. The pace and magnitude of such change can create tension between our need to be responsive (our faculty’s inclination toward innovation) and the need to stick with particular program elements and practices long enough so that they can be both implemented well and fairly evaluated. The pace and magnitude of such change can strain program resources and tax program faculty, an important consideration.

Concluding Observations

Our experience, consistent with the program evaluation data collected thus far, suggest that institutions of higher education can indeed change and effectively enact innovative and robust programs of school leader preparation. The short history of the Ed.D. Program at UIC presents an existence proof of this possibility. Further, our story points to the promise of cycles of inquiry, and the approach of continuous improvement for program development and long-term effectiveness also illustrates important details of this work and process. Although such processes have begun to be encouraged recently (Bottoms et al., 2003; Cheney & Davis, 2011; Orr, 2006), few illustrations exist in the scholarly literature on leadership preparation beyond our account.

This story also demonstrates that a continuous improvement approach to school leader program development is, to borrow the phrase from Elmore & McLaughlin (1988), “steady work.” It is difficult and complex work. Program development is not something to do and be “done.” It is ongoing. This approach requires strong commitment and sustained attention of all involved. The work is resource-demanding. It requires cultivating and sustaining the right kinds of capacities in sufficient quantities and qualities. Importantly, it cannot be done well “on the cheap.”

In conclusion, if cycles of inquiry and continuous improvement mark an important step in the maturation of the logic and practice of school leadership preparation and program development, then we in this field are almost certainly going to need to mature in our use of these processes. Developing the self-awareness, the sources of information, the routines, and the resources to engage in the process of continuous improvement of individual programs and of the field will likely be critical areas of attention if the goal of consistently preparing school leaders to measurably improve student learning in high-need schools is to be realized.

End Notes

1 We authors use “we” in this story to connote the collective work of Department faculty. We do not mean to imply that every aspect of this story involved every faculty and staff member. We authors note where the work of individuals, small groups, and the faculty as a whole has particular meaning in the overall story.
2 The M.Ed. Program was later reopened as a program of introductory graduate work in educational policy studies and educator professional development, including teacher leadership.

3 In addition to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The Broad Foundation, we have received generous external funding from the Chase Foundation, Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Public Education Fund, the Lloy A. Fry Foundation, McCormick Foundation, McDougal Family Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, and the National Science Foundation.

4 We admitted new cohorts of 15 to 17 students to the program each year, and in one year admitted two cohorts.

5 Students hired at the district level were given substantial responsibility. Three of the 4 UIC students hired as sub-district administrators for designated geographic areas within CPS collectively supervised the work of 32 principals.

6 We have received roughly $5.5 million in external funds to support various features of our innovative program or for aspects of program development work. Another $9 million of funds have been provided by CPS to support residency salary and benefits.

7 Teams were developed to examine several aspects of the program, including its mission, core values, and vision; curriculum and coursework; field experiences and coaching; the comprehensive examination and thesis research project.

8 CPS introduced and subsequently revised on two occasions a process for gaining eligibility for CPS principal positions. At the present time interested candidates who hold or anticipate earning state principal licensure engage in a range of pencil-paper, performance, and role-play assessments where candidates are evaluated against a set of CPS Principal Competencies. Students typically begin this multi-step eligibility process during the final semester of their administrative internship. Given the dynamic nature of this process and identified competencies over the last five years, we have needed to be carefully attentive and responsive to changes with eligibility expectations.

9 The Rainwater Leadership Alliance is a national coalition of school districts, universities, foundations, and nonprofit organizations dedicated to the improvement of school leadership. The Alliance exists to share information, provide exemplars, and promote and “scale” effective methods to develop and support PK–12 school leaders.

10 Program curriculum now emphasizes three signature themes woven across multiple course experiences including: (a) cycles of inquiry and data use for improvement, (b) leadership for social justice, and (c) leadership practice development and assessment.

References


Norton, J. (2002). *Universities in the lead: Redesigning leadership preparation for student achievement.* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.


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YOU ARE THE CURRICULUM:
PARTICIPANT IDENTIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE
AND PRACTICE WITH IMPACT

In the globalized and technological world in which we now live, school leaders must be prepared to engage in complex and interdependent systems. Hierarchical power and authority will not provide the leader with the capacity to challenge people and systems to adapt and change to the emerging needs of students from differing social, political, and cultural contexts. Principals require a model of leadership that transcends epistemological boundaries to nurture learning organizations that produce students who are equipped to engage in the global knowledge economy and to participate as citizens of the world. This article presents participant perspectives of a model of leadership development that has resulted in over 60% of graduates obtaining school or district leadership positions within two years of program completion and recognition by the Wallace Foundation as a recipient of their 2011 funding program aimed at improving the pipeline to the principalship.

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Rationale

An inquiry-based approach to the preparation of school leaders requires learning through self-reflection, group inquiry and leadership prac-
tice within the organization. Leadership preparation must be more than transmission of knowledge of a field; it must challenge existing values, critically examine actions and be grounded in the complexity of practice. Aspiring leaders need to learn the judgment and skill needed to challenge people and systems toward maximizing opportunities for all children. Participant responses reveal a spiraling up process of growth resulting from this approach toward leadership learning. The larger epistemological impact suggests that such a shift in notions of self allows for disruption of the hegemonic discourse, which in turn allows for the interruption of leadership that creates cultures of replication of the dominant power structures within and through schools.

Review of Literature

University-based principal preparation has historically consisted of models where program participants learn theories and methods within university settings that they are then expected to apply within schools (Murphy, 1992; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). These models have been criticized and deemed ineffective by those within and outside of the field (Hess, 2003; Levine, 2005; McCarthy, 1999; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009; Murphy, 2002; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). However, the field of preparing school leaders has gained legitimacy due to research that demonstrates the connection between the quality and effectiveness of school leader impact on student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Research has shown the connections between leadership preparation and the practice of the principal (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2009) and the relationship between principal preparation and school outcomes (Braun, Gable & Kite, 2008; Martorell, Heaton, Gates, & Hamilton, 2010; Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

This research on the need and quality of school leadership preparation heightens the need to examine the work of and experiences of participants within successful university-based principal preparation programs. The following article describes the theoretical framework, values, knowledge base and pedagogy of a principal preparation program that grew from a university-district collaboration forged to prepare adaptive leaders capable of facilitating second order change. From 2003–2007, over 130 aspiring principals have graduated from the program; of these graduates, 64 are currently serving as principals or assistant principals within the district.

The program is evaluated annually by both the university and the district through surveys and interviews of current students and program graduates, interviews with district administrators and reviews of student work. The program has been evaluated by both local and national evaluators and consistently scores higher, and is proven to be more effective than similar principal preparation programs around the country, particularly stronger than similar programs in the areas of leading learning content and
active student-centered instruction (Orr, 2011). Participants report that the program taught them how to be leaders in setting vision, promoting ethics, encouraging student learning, helping the district build its capacity and engaging with parents and community members.

The program addressed in this study builds experiences for participants through the interaction of self, group and organizational learning based on theories of action science, systems, change and culture (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Deal and Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Freire, 1972; Senge, 1990; and Wheatley, 2001). This integration of content and context provided a platform for aspiring principals to not only learn knowledge and skills but also develop dispositions and exercise judgment as they learn how to lead and promote social change. The program is based on equity pedagogy (Banks & Banks, 1995) and an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

The instructional processes and practices disrupt the conventional power dynamics of academic settings. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) use the phrase “recasting teaching” (p. 108) to describe how an inquiry stance changes teaching within university culture. This recasting includes reinventing pedagogy, content and outcomes as inquiry. In practice this means that courses become places where faculty and students generate and investigate questions, collaboratively construct knowledge, produce uncertainty and challenge assumptions. The contextual knowledge and perspectives of the program participants becomes the foreground of the courses rather than the subtext. The students and their experiences become the curriculum of the program and classes become labs where aspiring principals publicly share their thinking, assumptions, experiences, successes and failures and open themselves and their practices to inquiry and analysis. This integration of practice and inquiry promotes knowledge and theory production and blurs the boundaries between theory and practice—researcher and practitioner and faculty and student. The learning and inquiry process becomes generative and models the work of an effective leader who continuously gathers data, builds relationships and adjusts practice rather than blindly implements “best practices” and policy. The inquiry process allows participants to learn content and skills within an authentic context to explore multiple courses of action and activate leadership for social change.

Methodology

The purpose of this article is to share the voices of participants within this successful model of leadership development that utilizes an inquiry-based approach through the progressive interactions of self, group and organization. Narrative inquiry provides a way of understanding experience through “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Narrative inquiry is essentially about discourse and
interpretation from those who have lived an experience. The stories that emanate from experience reveal the things that matter and persist. This interpretive inquiry connects the experiences of the participants with the content of the program as a means to identify the practices with impact.

This study began with a request to the 64 program graduates serving as school leaders to participate in a study designed to document the pedagogical practices that have impacted their leadership. All program graduates received an email requesting them to submit stories about how one of the program practices experiences made a difference in their leadership. Twenty program graduates responded with descriptions of how they have connected their learning from the program to their leadership. However, the descriptions did not yield rich stories, so I scheduled small group meetings with graduates so they could enter into a dialogue about their experiences with the hope that stories would emerge. Hosting dialogue sessions allowed the graduates to talk freely and openly to each other about their experiences without the intrusion of a researcher asking questions.

These dialogues were audio-taped and the content was transcribed. The data were analyzed to discern categories and themes through open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Trustworthiness of the data was ensured through an audit trail, member-checks, and peer-debriefing.

Findings

Traditional processes in university courses include reading and writing assignments, lectures, discussions, etc. to meet pre-established course outcomes and standards. These processes do not often fit with the contextually dependent and organic nature of inquiry pedagogy. Dialogues with program graduates revealed distinct elements and processes that provided definition to the recasting of teaching through inquiry pedagogy. The following is a sample dialogue of three program graduates in three different cohorts (Joe—2008, current assistant principal at a middle school; Terry—2011, current principal at an elementary school; and Shelley—2004, former elementary principal, now district administrator).

Shelley: I never wanted to be a principal. I remember thinking at the retreat that I would never be able to do this job. I never felt so inadequate in my life.

Joe: Yeah. That retreat really shook me up. It was amazing that so many different people were able to come together and help each other. I really learned how much I didn’t know.

Terry: I was really new to the district and didn’t know anyone, but the openness and stories really helped me understand the district culture.
Shelley: Remember the Organizational Diagnosis? I don’t know what I would have done my first year without that notebook. Every time I was stuck, I pulled it out and found some strategies, questions or direction.

Joe: Yeah, the organizational diagnosis really helped solidify all the areas to look at within a school. It helped me know how to prioritize and ask questions. I think we are in the middle of a movement in our district. Leaders are willing to have courageous conversations.

Shelley: I think the movement is starting, but when I graduated from the program (2004) I felt like a fish out of water. I remember going to district meetings and thinking how am I ever going to work with these people. At every meeting we learned about another report to complete. I don’t remember kids ever being mentioned.

Terry: Wow. I guess a lot has changed. Things like our new teacher evaluation system have helped me turn the focus to kids.

Joe: Yes, I know a lot has changed. I have always been in this district, as a student, teacher and now assistant principal. I never saw the willingness to have the conversations that we are willing to have now. We are having conversations about data and the beliefs behind data, people’s mental models and some of the baggage. I know that graduates from all nine years of the program are ready to step up and have that conversation with me. It is really about student centered leadership; what is best for kids is not always what is best for teachers.

Terry: I totally agree. I really can’t see the shift because I wasn’t here, but I do think we have become a sub-culture. We share values and have connections. I think there is even jealousy about us. The strong bond we share creates fear outside.

Shelley: Leadership in the district is definitely different now, but we still have a long way to go.

Joe: Well, if you look at what is happening with kids, there is not a lot to argue about when you see principals from the program being successful. I have an administrative team that is composed of graduates of the program, the principal, three assistant principals and a current program participant. The speed that we arrive at decisions is pretty serious. If teachers come up against our values of kids first, it is pretty serious. We take quick action. This makes for tumultuous days because we push back on those who aren’t making decisions for kids. We need support from central administration and are seeing that support, and it’s empowering.
Terry: I agree about the urgency. All of us have this drive and we are not willing to wait. As one of the facilitators would say, “This train is leaving this station and you are either willing to get on or we will leave you behind.” This can create days full of conflict but it is best for kids.

Joe: Yeah, I came into a school with considerable turnover. The principal had fired 40 people. Before he came, it was a dumping ground for bad teachers. Getting people to stay and stability are good things, and the program gave us a lot of skills on how to coach people and provide support. Sometimes support might be a swift kick. At the end of the day we do care about being stable with people, but where we cut our losses is around values. If I don’t think that you really believe that all kids can learn, if I think that you might be someone who is imposing your values on kids, if kids are consistently not being successful in your learning environment, then I have to take action. The values piece is non-negotiable.

Terry: It is a balance between creating a positive school culture and looking at what is best for students. If we share a belief that every child can learn, then every adult can learn. My current thinking is that it is the growth rate that matters. I believe that every adult can learn, but I don’t have the time for poor teachers to practice on another 100 children until they get it right. I don’t have the time to wait, and if you are sleeping in the classroom you need to leave, and if you are not doing your job, you need to leave.

I hire for potential and what matters is their ability to grow. You can’t teach the values and the beliefs for teaching. I look for a belief about student learning and support the skills for teaching.

Joe: Yeah, right now I’m struggling with pressures of competing priorities and what is the most important piece to work on. I guess we have to get used to always working behind. The courageous conversations are those things that we never can have enough practice with—confronting issues of race and poverty—in the program we practiced a lot with that, but I don’t know if you ever can get enough practice with that.

Shelley: It is different being on the district side now. The good thing is that the district wants you to keep having those courageous conversations. When I started, principals were getting in trouble when the district was getting calls from families or union grievances. We have a long way to go, but I think since there are now close to 150 of us, and we are being successful, that change will happen.
This is a representative conversation of four dialogues among program graduates from each of the nine cohorts. The data were coded and revealed themes about values and actions: urgency, student focus, confrontation and data. These themes are the distinguishing features of program graduates and led to the district’s proposal to the Wallace Foundation to build a leadership pipeline to support these values and actions.

The results from the dialogues were compared to the email responses of program practices that were identified by program graduates as making a difference in their practice as school leaders. The pedagogical practices of open frame, leadership labs and project revisions were identified as the practices that had the greatest level of impact on their leadership values and actions.

Open Frame

All program graduates talked about the importance of values and the integration of values into discussions and demonstrations of leadership within the program challenged their thinking and created a bond between all graduates of the program. The program explicitly values leadership for social justice and high expectations for all students and uses these as the lens of analysis for participant reflections and descriptions of actions. The process of self assessment and reflection became a habit through a ritual, open frame that occurred at the beginning of each class. Participants met weekly for a six-hour class with one hour devoted to learning from each other through sharing their work experiences and reflections on actions. Each class began with the prompt—“Is there anything that you are sitting with that you would like to share for the good of the group?” This open time allowed authentic issues to emerge and become “live” cases for feedback and analysis. Participants would share struggles and triumphs that they had experienced with students, parents, teachers, supervisors, staff, etc. These replays of action offered them a time to hear multiple perspectives and make value connections in a safe space. One graduate stated: “When we brought issues to the table in open frame, it was always brought back to student centered leadership and what is best for kids” (Jerry Adams, personal communication, September 10, 2011). Graduates report that they looked forward to this time and wished that they had opportunities to do this with colleagues as they practice their leadership in their formal roles as principals and assistant principals. Being able to share their difficulties without fear of judgment or breaches of confidentiality was a highly valued practice.

The consistent practice of opening every class with an open frame seemed to lead to the “crystallization of values” that graduates “draw on at any time when I make an important decision. I often talk to my teachers about my value of clear and honest communication” (Sally Adams, personal communication, December 19, 2011). The program’s focus on leadership for reform requires that graduates are able to tackle difficult issues.
One graduate stated, “I saw in my year in the program that leading from this place of values was imperative. The many hard conversations I have hosted in my 2.5 years of reform work would not have been possible without this foundational approach of the program. I also make all data public, even comments from the staff about my performance. Much of this was extremely negative my first year and by making the data public we were able to move forward” (Nathan Vonn, personal communication, October 20, 2011). Graduates shared that the expectation of open and honest communication, focus on values and the resulting trust that developed within each cohort promoted a “sub-culture with connections, shared mental models and beliefs” (Terry). After nine years, this sub-culture is shared with over 130 program graduates within a district with almost 200 schools.

**Leadership Labs**

One requirement of the program was that each student had to design a “leadership lab” which was a simulation that allowed them to practice their leadership skills in the class environment. The students were required to identify an area in which they struggle or were fearful, i.e. dealing with angry parents. They designed scenarios and the faculty and their colleagues helped them role play the experience. After the simulation they received feedback on their actions. Graduates reported that this experience helped them apply leadership tools and become more confident in dealing with difficult situations: “I’ve been able to begin the change process within my current situation rather than learning what should happen” (Jim Barlow, personal communication, October 15, 2011).

Leadership labs provided practice to frame conversations and engage in confrontational dialogue. Participants are able to see and feel the dynamics of conversations and replay action to develop skill. One graduate stated, “The leadership labs helped me experience how important it is to be heard and to receive feedback. I honestly don’t think I would have learned this without these experiences. I used to roll my eyes and make judgmental comments without ever asking questions or listening” (Carla Hass, personal communication, November 3, 2011). Being “on stage” clearly demonstrated the importance of planning and framing conversations.

**Project Revisions**

The pedagogy of the program reflected many elements of the realities of the work of principals rather than typical practices in university courses. For example, the predictable structures and assignments (schedule of readings, papers, etc.) of university courses do not simulate the uncertainty and ambiguity that principals face when leading schools, nor do they model the practices we want principals to use as they design differentiated professional development for their teachers. Participants and fac-
ulty customized projects to fit individual needs and the context of practice while providing standards for evaluation. This practice reflects the “integral relationship between knowledge and reflective action” of equity pedagogy (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 153). Faculty and participants practice reflective self-analysis by continually examining assumptions and the alignment between espoused values and actions.

When participants submit their projects for evaluation, the faculty provide feedback against the established criteria and ask probing questions that encourage deeper reflections. The questions challenge student’s assumptions and ask them to consider gathering more data or engaging more voices before action. Participants must address all questions and feedback provided through another submission of their work. This opportunity to “revisit” their work through the feedback of others is an example of equity pedagogy (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 155) and has greatly improved the quality and depth of work. It has also been recognized by participants as somewhat unique and personally meaningful and helpful to their growth as critical thinkers and leaders. One graduate reflected, “Many times I received a project back with the question, ‘Is there something that you should do first?’ written in the margins next to my description of leadership moves. Invariably, the facilitator was referring to my lack of surveying an important stakeholder group prior to making an important decision. Even today, if something goes awry in my leadership practice, I can almost always pinpoint the cause to my lack of gathering information from parents or teachers before moving forward” (Dawn Hill, personal communication, August 18, 2011.)

The pace of leadership work often promotes a reactive stance with technical solutions; this practice of revisiting work forces reflection and the consideration of the perceptions of others. New skills, capacity and actions are needed for schools to become able to meet the needs of all students to attain proficiency on standards. It is apparent that in order for schools to change so that all children are given the knowledge, skills, time and opportunities to learn technical solutions (solving problems that can be addressed through current knowledge) will not be sufficient. However, there are many barriers to adaptive change and the leadership skills needed are different from those that influence technical change (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003).

Learning involves the awareness and correction of error, and when things go wrong people have a tendency to look for a strategy that is compatible within their mental models and/or the rules of the organization (Senge, 1990). Argyris and Schön (1978) call this reactive process single-loop learning. Another way to approach problems is to examine and question the existing mental models and practices through double-loop learning. Single loop learning often occurs in a typical process of grading work that students submit; however, double loop learning is promoted when thinking is challenged and work has to revisited and recast through the feedback of others.
Contribution to the Field

The stories of participants within this successful leadership preparation program revealed high impact practices and behavioral indicators of the development of an empowering leadership stance. Shulman’s (2005) definition of professional education is reflected in the inquiry pedagogy practiced in this program.

Professional education is about developing pedagogies to link ideas, practices, and values under conditions of inherent uncertainty that necessitate not only judgment in order to act, but also cognizance of the consequences of one’s action. (p. 19)

He promotes a pedagogy for professional education that supports aspiring leaders as they “engage in practice” with “a sense of personal and social responsibility” (p.18). To optimize this learning, the context of the profession and the preparation of professionals should be interconnected and enable generative knowledge development. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducted a ten-year study to understand how aspiring leaders are prepared for practice in the professional fields of law, engineering, the clergy, teaching, nursing and medicine. One result of this study (Shulman, 2005) was the conclusion that professional education is

... a synthesis of three apprenticeships—a cognitive apprenticeship wherein one learns to think like a professional, a practical apprenticeship where one learns to perform like a professional, and a moral apprenticeship where one learns to think and act in a responsible and ethical manner that integrates across all three domains. (p. 3)

Many preparation programs utilize coursework, workshops, case studies, and internships to provide learning experiences that simulate or approximate the work of school leaders. These preparatory experiences promote the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions but their position outside of the practice and context of an authentic leadership role does not approximate an apprenticeship. The practices of open frame, leadership labs and project revisions allow aspiring leaders to engage in cognitive, practical and moral apprenticeships. The structures for facilitation allowed faculty and participants to question and examine the social, cultural and political issues of school leadership in the district context. Values were the lens and frame for analysis and the generative learning practices integrated the cognitive, practical and moral apprenticeships.

This study identified specific learning experiences and facilitation practices linked to participant-reported impact of these experiences and practices. These findings contribute to school leadership program development, pedagogy and evaluation. The landscape of leadership preparation is about to collide with the accountability movement as leadership
preparation programs will be evaluated by the performance of their graduates. It is time for university preparation programs to examine and rethink their practices through the lens of impact and effectiveness. The practices of open frame, leadership labs and project revision recast teaching as a collaborative inquiry process where students and faculty are “legitimate knowers and knowledge generators” who are engaged in a “reciprocal and symbiotic” process within a field of educational practice that is “relational, theoretical, practical and political” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 89).

References


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ENHANCING “OJT” INTERNSHIPS WITH INTERACTIVE COACHING

The intent of this article is to examine how the best type of internship, i.e., the full-time, job-embedded model can be enhanced using coaching. Before illustrating an exemplary internship program with coaching, this paper describes what an exemplary full-time, job-embedded internship experiences looks like and expounds on the importance of designing exemplary “OJT” job-embedded internship experiences and not settling for less. Subsequently, this paper examines briefly the literature surrounding coaching and how it benefits the internship experience. Upon completion of the coaching literature, we share the elements of an exemplary residency program implemented by the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) as part of their doctoral program (Ed.D.) for developing urban school leaders. And finally, we conclude this paper with policy recommendations for states to consider in designing an internship experience that fully inducts an intern into the real life world of school leadership.

Internships have been touted as critical experiences in preparing effective school leaders (Barnett, Copland, & Shoho, 2009). Clinical experiences have been incorporated in educational leadership preparation programs for over fifty years (Chance, 1991; Foster & Ward, 1998). Initially borrowed from the field of medicine, internships or residencies were intended for practitioners to gain “on the job” (OJT) experience near the completion of their formal preparation (Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991). In the medical residency, an intern follows a practicing physician as they visit patients in a clinical hospital environment. The relationship of the intern to the physician is one of apprentice to master, or using a sports analogy, player-to-coach. The focus of “on the job” experience has been described in a variety of ways; however, in their description of internships in educational leadership preparation, Fry, Bottoms, and O’Neill (2005) explained:

A well-designed internship expands the knowledge and skills of candidates while also gauging their ability to apply new learning in authentic settings as they contend with problems that have real-world consequences. Built right, the internship becomes a sturdy vessel upon which new practitioners can navigate the swift, unpredictable currents that separate classroom theory and on-the-job reality (p. 3).

In reviewing internships in the field of educational leadership, the internship has been touted as a critical element of pre-service preparation (Barnett, Copland, & Shoho, 2009) and induction into the field. Yet, de-
spite its importance, educational leadership internships across the country vary considerably and are generally less than stellar in achieving their purpose of providing real life on the job experience for aspirants.

The intent of this article is to examine how the best type of internship, i.e., the full-time, job-embedded model can be enhanced using coaching. Before illustrating an exemplary internship program with coaching, this paper describes what an exemplary full-time, job-embedded internship looks like and expounds on the importance of designing exemplary “OJT” job-embedded internship experiences and not settling for less. Subsequently, this paper examines briefly the literature surrounding coaching and how it benefits the internship experience. After examining the coaching literature, we share the elements of an exemplary residency program implemented by the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) as part of their doctoral program (Ed.D.) for developing urban school leaders. And finally, we conclude this paper with policy recommendations for states to consider in designing an internship experience that fully inducts an intern into the real life world of school leadership.

**Job-Embedded Internships**

In 2006, Murphy indicated there was a “revitalization of the internship” (p. 53) in educational leadership preparation programs and a corresponding increased emphasis on field-based activities directly affecting student learning (e.g., shadowing and interviewing administrators, working on projects affecting students and teachers). In a chapter written by Barnett, Copland, and Shoho (2009), they outlined the varying standards and experiences for internships across the country. Despite this variability of internship experiences, there is widespread acceptance and acknowledgement that the best internship experience is a model where the interns are relieved from their teaching responsibilities and given a full-time administrative experience under the watchful eye of the principal. The full-time, job-embedded internship is considered the best model for aspiring principals (Carr, Chenoweth, & Ruhl, 2003).

The full-time, job-embedded model allows aspiring principals to be immersed in on-the-job learning during their internship experience. As Shoho and Barnett (2010) discovered in their study of new principals, nothing replaces “on the job” experience. Almost universally, new principals identified “on the job” experience as the most valuable learning opportunity in their development as school leaders. While the job-embedded model represents a small number of internship programs across the country, its appeal is growing, especially if preparation programs are able to establish strong linkages with school districts or capitalize on legislative mandates. For instance, the University of Illinois at Chicago has established a long-standing partnership with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) that supports full-time paid residencies. One frequent criticism of full-time job-embedded intern-
ships is their cost. There is no doubt that the cost associated with supporting full-time paid job-embedded internship is expensive, but the real question is can school districts and university preparation programs continue to operate otherwise, given the high turnover rate of principals, especially in high need urban schools? Similar to successful learning organizations that invest their resources in human capital, school districts and universities must change their paradigm on internships, emphasizing quality over quantity in terms of learning experiences that prepare aspirants to assume the roles and responsibilities of an effective principal.

By providing interns with full-time extensive experiences, interns learn about the organizational culture and operating norms of the schools where they are placed. It also allows them to be socialized into the community of school leaders. The UIC program is founded on ten factors which (see Table 1). As the logic model illustrates, these ten factors are meant to nurture leadership knowledge and skills to develop a school’s organizational capacity to support instructional practices to achieve high levels of student learning.

### Table 1

**UIC’s Ten Factors for Building Urban School Capacity for Improved Student Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logic Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership ⇒ Organizational Capacity ⇒ Instructional Practices ⇒ Student Learning</td>
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UIC’s theory of action: *The principal is most effective as the leader of improvement – specifically improving student learning—when s/he engages key individuals in leadership roles, develops a climate of trust through strong relationships, creates a sustainable culture with high aspirations and expectations, and builds professional communities focused on improving both adult and student learning. UIC views the process of transformational school leadership in terms of ten closely related factors:*  

To build a culture of shared responsibility for achieving high aspirations, the school must:

1. Attract, enlist and develop a leadership team of highly qualified teachers who see it in their self-interest to co-lead, with the principal, the building of a highly effective learning community capable of doing all of the following items.

2. Establish among students, parents and teachers a detailed, pro-active set of expectations for the behavior, interpersonal conduct and academic performance of all parties who shape the school-wide and classroom culture of the school. This culture should make clear on a daily basis the correlation between academic success, effective habits and a productive and fulfilling life.

3. Establish grade-level and content-specific teams that develop goals, strategies, classroom assessments and tracking tools that are used on a daily or weekly basis by the team to document progress and modify practice for the purpose of measurably increasing the learning of all of the children in each grade level.

(continued)
To establish structures and systems to realize those aspirations, the school must:

4. Develop written course outlines, or curriculum maps, for each grade level and content area that are based on state standards, test score analysis and teacher knowledge of student work. Curriculum and instruction for literacy, numeracy, and higher order skills receive heavy emphasis in these course outlines.

5. Develop structures, tools, and procedures to ensure that every teacher in the school is engaged in mastering a wide and deep range of instructional practices and classroom management strategies that ensure the high achievement of every child.

6. Establish a highly transparent, school-wide data tracking system to which everyone has the access and ability to analyze the implementation and results of all goals and strategies.

To provide the necessary technological and human supports for such systems, the school must:

7. Develop the social and emotional supports needed by everyone to engage in the above efforts and achieve at the level defined. The school leadership team recognizes that human relationships are at the heart of sustainable school change, and that social and emotional learning [for students, staff, and administration] are important to achieving transformative school goals.

8. Integrate technology into the management and execution of instructional practice through strong learning communities.

9. Develop specific strategies for engaging parents in the daily support of their children’s learning development and achievement.

10. Be able to manage up and out as well as manage down. That is, not only must school leadership have the organizational and management skills to implement and sustain complex change at the building level, but it must also have the political and interpersonal skills to work productively with system level officers and community stakeholders to achieve school goals.

This strong emphasis on developing organizational capacity to foster effective instructional practices lends itself to developing urban leaders who can lead professional learning communities as touted by DuFour and Eaker (1998).

While the job-embedded internship has an intuitive appeal, there is not much empirical, evidence-based work that focuses on its effects or outcomes. As noted by Barnett, Copland, and Shoho (2009), despite the scant empirical literature on internships, there are some areas where internships seem to have an impact. These involve: (a) a better understanding of the role conceptions of the principalship; (b) being socialized to what it means to be a principal; (c) developing skills through “real” experiences on the job; and (d) the importance of developing a support network or finding a mentor or coach to share ideas in a safe environment. It is this last area on which this article focuses its attention. While there has been extensive literature on mentoring and its importance for new leaders, mentoring is distinctive from coaching. The coaching literature, while predom-
Coaching for Leadership Preparation and Development

Peer coaching in educational systems has primarily been used for teacher development, especially for teacher induction or remediation (Garmston, 1987; Joyce & Showers, 2002). In recent years, however, more attention has been devoted to how coaching prepares aspiring school leaders and supports practicing administrators (Barnett & O’Mahony, 2008). As a result, many school systems are embracing coaching as a way to influence and enhance leaders’ skill development, cognitive abilities, and emotional intelligence (Crow & Matthews, 1998). This section provides an overview of coaching for school administrators by focusing on how the concept has been conceptualized, the benefits of coaching, qualities of effective coaches and programs, and the potential limitations of coaching relationships.

What is Coaching?

A variety of professions use coaches, including business and industry (Zeus & Skiffington, 2000), teacher education (Jonson, 2002; Portner, 1998), and graduate education (Brause, 2002). Most definitions of coaching do not view this as a supervisory or evaluative process; rather, effective coaches promote change by establishing their credibility and developing meaningful relationships with their coachees (Taylor, 2008). Leadership coaching involves two people setting and achieving professional goals, being open to new learning, and engaging in dialogue for the purpose of improving leadership practice (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005; Robertson, 2005).

Often, the terms coaching and mentoring have been used interchangeably; however, there are clear conceptual and practical distinctions between these developmental processes. Mentoring tends to be a long-term relationship between a senior person overseeing a protégé’s career development (Douglas, 1997). In contrast, coaching has “a more narrow focus, notably relating to an individual’s job-specific tasks, skills or capacities” (Hobson, 2003, p. 1). Typically, observation, instruction, demonstration, and feedback are provided in coaching relationships (Gray, 1988). Although mentors may have good coaching skills and be able to nurture strong relationships, they need not have strong coaching skills (Grant, 2001).

What are the Benefits of Coaching?

Although there are limited studies documenting the empirical effects of coaching (Hobson, 2003), the general sentiment is that coaching has the potential to provide numerous benefits for school leaders.
The rationale for leadership coaching has been espoused by Barnett and O’Mahony (2008), who claim that the process: (a) is a flexible way for two people to devote time for interacting and reflecting on leadership issues, (b) allows for social interaction and personalized support, (c) focuses on the realities of school leadership, and (d) complements other workplace learning activities (e.g., job shadowing, book studies).

Several small-scale studies of leadership coaching validate the value of the process, especially for novice principals. On one hand, beginning principals report being extremely satisfied with having coaches during their first year on the job (Robertson, 2005; Strong, Barrett, & Bloom, 2003). They appreciate the opportunity to examine important issues, including conflicts with staff, external demands from their district, time management, parental and community expectations, and the legacy of previous administrators (Strong, Barrett, & Bloom, 2003). On the other hand, leadership coaching has been reported to help novices increase their self-confidence and reduce isolation (Bolom, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling, 1993; Daresh, 2004), enhance their instructional leadership, strategic leadership, and problem-solving skills (Rich & Jackson, 2005; Robertson, 2005; Strong, Barrett, & Bloom, 2003), and influence their decisions to remain on the job (Strong, Barrett, & Bloom, 2003).

What are the Qualities of Effective Coaches and Programs?

Coaching qualities. To be effective, coaches need to possess specific skills and attitudes when working with individuals who aspire to leadership roles or are practicing school administrators. Killion and Harrison (2006) specify five components of effective coaching: (a) build relationships, (b) serve as change agents, (c) focus on improving teaching and learning, (d) gather small-scale formative assessment data, and (e) identify and provide resources. Perhaps the most important aspect of the coaches’ role is to be able to develop strong relationships and rapport with their coachees. Without this foundation, coaches stand little chance of being viewed as credible resources, capable of providing genuine support and guidance. The leadership coaching literature describes the importance of relationship development for this process to succeed. Coaches build solid relationships by formulating trust, providing emotional support, and focusing on agreed-upon goals (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). Solid relationships form as coaches schedule time to meet, prepare agendas, and carefully listen and observe (Rich & Jackson, 2005). Coachees report being motivated to work with individuals who are sincere, reliable, and competent (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005); authentic and credible (Panasuk & Lebaron, 1999); and who allow them to take risk (Ross, 1989).

Program qualities. To assume that successful administrators automatically know how to coach aspiring or practicing school leaders has been found to be fallacious. The most successful coaches are involved
in programs that prepare and support them to work effectively with their coachees (Barnett & O’Mahony, 2008; Strachan & Robertson, 1992). Hopkins-Thompson (2000) discovered that successful leadership coaching programs: (a) have organizational support, (b) establish clear outcomes, (c) carefully screen, select, and train coaches, (d) focus on learner needs, and (e) constantly monitor and evaluate the process. Based on their experience at the New Administrators Project (NAP) working with first- and second-year administrators, Bloom, Castagna, Moir, and Warren (2005) found the most effective coaches: (a) have at least five years of leadership experience, (b) have previous coaching experience, (c) complete formal training, and (d) participate in ongoing professional development. Finally, effective coaching programs ensure partners maintain regular and sustained contact, realize matches work best when coaches have leadership experience in similar types of schools as their coachees, and understand coaching relationships may take extended periods of time to develop and may extend beyond the formal operation of the program (Barnett & O’Mahony, 2008; Strachan & Robertson, 1992).

What Are the Limitations of Coaching?

Despite the promise of leadership coaching, there are various situations and circumstances that can inhibit or minimize coaches’ influence. On one hand, coaches may not be well suited to the role, depending on their experiences and qualifications. Problems may arise if they are unable to provide individual support (Bloom, Barrett, & Strong, 2003), are insensitive to working with adult learners (O’Mahony & Barnett, 2008), unwilling or unable to devote adequate time to develop the relationship (Bloom, Barrett, & Strong 2003; Hobson, 2003; Robertson, 2005), or are reluctant to share and retain confidential information (Bloom, Barrett, & Strong, 2003). On the other hand, coaching programs can be compromised when they do not provide adequate training and support, (Hobson, 2003), inappropriately match coaches and coachees (Hobson, 2003), and do not encourage coaches to use reflective questioning strategies (Robertson, 2005).

Coaches’ Influence during Internships

During their internship experience, students typically are assigned a school-based administrative supervisor (typically the principal where the intern works) and a university-based faculty supervisor (Barnett, Copland, & Shooho, 2009). Because school and university supervisors have many other job responsibilities, they cannot devote much time to actively and consistently observe, demonstrate, and engage in reflective conversations with interns, problems that plague ineffective coaching programs (Hobson, 2003; Rich & Jackson, 2005; Robertson, 2005). As a result, internships become fragmented and disjointed experiences, diminishing the
potential to impact interns’ leadership development. However, if trained coaches were allowed to spend concentrated periods of time with interns (e.g., three to five hours per week), the impact on interns’ growth and development could be substantial. Coaches could collaborate with principals to allow interns to spend considerable time on instructional leadership activities (e.g., professional development, teacher observation, data analysis), and important management tasks (e.g. scheduling, budgeting, managing facilities), events that most interns rarely have the opportunity to experience (Fry, Bottoms, & O’Neal, 2005).

**Career stages.** As a result of these intensive interactions with coaches, interns would be socialized to the realities of school leadership much earlier in their careers, easing their transition into the role. Earlier personal, social, and professional experiences greatly affect beginning administrators’ job expectations and perceived abilities to succeed (O’Mahony & Matthews, 2003; Reeves, Moos, & Forrest, 1998; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). In their first few months on the job, novices strive to understand the dynamics of their schools, assess staff members’ strengths and capabilities, and determine areas of need (Day & Bakioglu, 1996; Parkay & Hall, 1992). After about six months on the job and throughout their second year, novices begin to initiate action and implement change (Reeves, Moos, & Forrest, 1998; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Astute coaches can help interns recognize these common career stages and determine effective ways to address these predictable socialization experiences.

**Job challenges.** Furthermore, coaches can help interns anticipate the typical challenges new administrators face, ones they often are not prepared to deal with effectively. For instance, newcomers confront teacher resistance (Nelson, de la Colina, & Boone, 2008; Woodruff & Kowalski, 2010) are compared with their predecessors (Briggs, Bush, & Middlewood, 2006; Cheung & Walker, 2006); encounter substantial workload demands (Sackney, Walker, & Gorius, 2003; Slater, Garcia, & Gorosave, 2008), and are pressured by policymakers, community members, and parents to improve student performance (Briggs, Bush, & Middlewood, 2006). In addition, novices have acknowledged the importance of understanding how their personal and professional qualities align with what is required for leadership success. Examples include demonstrating emotional intelligence, being flexible, treating other people fairly and equitably, having strong communication skills, developing productive working relationships, and having strong organizational skills (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012).

If coaches devote considerable time to these tasks and topics, novice administrators would be better able to “hit the ground running” by anticipating and addressing the job realities much earlier in their careers. Their initial culture shock when beginning the job would be reduced, allowing novices to spend more time on teaching and learning processes. The sooner administrators are able to establish goals and expectations, co-
ordinate instructional programs, promote sound professional development programs, and ensure an orderly and supportive learning environment, the more likely their schools will begin to see dramatic increases in student learning (e.g., Leithwood, Anderson, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Similarly, if coaches continue working with novices once they enter the workforce, they not only can help beginners develop a more strategic view of the school, clarify their personal visions, establish long-term goals, and make more sound instructional decisions, but also maintain their motivation to remain on the job. To illustrate how effective coaching enhances an internship experience, we highlight the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) coaching program with the Chicago Public Schools. What is unique about this program is that the UIC internship is a full-time paid residency, i.e., a job-embedded placement with full-time coaches to provide individualized support during this time, as well as the first three years of their administrative careers.

Since the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to meet the challenges of urban leadership are so extensive and require considerable time and experience to develop, UIC decided to situate the program in an educational doctorate (Ed.D.) rather than a traditional Master’s program or a Ph.D., which is better suited to developing researchers and policymakers. Below, we describe the UIC/CPS residency program, paying particular attention to the role of coaching to enhance the experiences of the residents.

Coaching Components of the UIC Urban Principal Preparation Ed.D. Program

The key components of the UIC residency program are:

- A one-year, full-time paid residency funded by CPS and administered by UIC under the terms of CPS/UIC memorandum of understanding (MOU)
- Coaching for a one-year residency and for the first three years of their principalship by a full-time UIC coach who is a recently retired CPS principal with a transformational student achievement record. It must be emphasized that coaches must have a demonstrated record of success in leading high-performing urban schools

The one-year paid residency. In May of each year, a process begins to match those candidates going into a paid residency with a residency site and a mentor principal. The primary role of the mentor principal in the UIC program is to be leading a transformational process in his/her school as defined by the UIC theory of action described in the UIC 10 factor framework. This creates the opportunity for the resident to see how a leader, on a daily basis, goes about the work of establishing a high performing professional culture in a previously failing CPS school in the face of multiple obstacles. That theory of action is:
The principal is most effective as the leader of improvement—specifically improving student learning—when s/he engages key individuals in leadership roles, develops a climate of trust through strong relationships, creates a sustainable culture with high aspirations and expectations, and builds professional communities focused on improving both adult and student learning through collaborative data analysis and problem-solving (See Table 1).

UIC selects mentor principals from among those students in its Ed.D. program who have a substantial percentage of the 10 factor framework established in their school, whose student achievement score gains exceed the CPS average, who have demonstrated their ability to mentor and develop leadership in their school, and who commit to the mentor principal responsibilities outlined in the residency syllabus. UIC’s mentor principal recommendations are forwarded to CPS for final approval.

Incoming residents develop a profile of their developmental needs and indicate the conditions that they would like to see in a residential site. That information, along with a resume, is sent to all approved mentor principals. Approved mentor principals compile a list of the things that they are looking for in a resident and a list of the potential residency projects that could be undertaken at their school that would give the resident the experience needed to develop his/her instructional leadership skills and pass the rigorous CPS principal qualification process. That, in addition to the report card on their school, is mailed to all residents. Shortly after completion of these information exchanges, a matching session is arranged to allow all parties to meet each other individually and indicate their first through fourth preference. Based on that information and the judgment of the UIC team, residency recommendations are sent to CPS for final approval.

In the first week of July, residents report to their residency sites and are given a week to get acclimated and initiate their relationship with the mentor principal and others on site. During the second week, the UIC assigned coach meets with the resident and mentor principal to begin the discussion of goal and action plan development for the residency. The selection of those goals is guided by developmental needs of the resident, the 12 CPS principal leadership success factors which must be met to make the principal eligibility list, and the development needs of the residency site as defined by the mentor principal. For the remainder of July and into August, residents are building the relationship with their mentor principals, opening up the relationship with other members of staff, parents and community leaders, familiarizing themselves with the School Improvement Plan for Advancing Academic Achievement (SIPAAA), the budget and key performance data on the school and continuing to refine their goals and action plan for the residency in weekly meetings with their UIC coach. They also determine which one of those goals will become the CPS instructional change project which must be written up and submitted for approval to CPS along with a budget of $3000, which they must manage throughout the residency using the school’s budget program.
During this same period, assistant principals admitted to the program are also meeting with their coach and principal to design residency goals that will give them the same developmental opportunities that are afforded the residents. From this point on, every aspect of the residency being described also applies to the assistant principal residents. Part of the logic for this is driven by the school system: to become a principal in CPS, a candidate has to pass a rigorous, multi-part assessment, regardless of prior experience. The residency enables assistant principals and former teachers alike to work with coaches toward the common goal of successfully passing that eligibility assessment. This is no small feat, as the failure rate for candidates who are not enrolled in a UIC or other principal residency program is over 70%.

Coaches are observing residents in their interaction with staff in the building and others. Often there are opportunities to plan and conduct professional development for teachers, manage summer school programs and do home visits. The key things that coaches are checking at this stage of the residency are interpersonal relationship skills, data analysis skills, goal setting and action planning skills, professional development skills, disposition for proactivity, problem-solving and follow-through, and the residents’ credibility as instructional leaders with teachers.

Toward the end of August, coaches are insuring that each resident has significant responsibilities for “school opening duties” and getting their goals and action plans in final form. Mentor principals, residents, and coaches meet once toward the end of August for presentations by each resident on the goals for his/her residency plan. The mentor principal gives his/her take on the performance of the resident to date. The coach is also meeting with the mentor principal and resident separately to make sure that the resident/mentor principal relationship is on solid ground with a high degree of mutual confidence in its potential success. Residents are also attending their first classes for two required courses. Residents who are not performing satisfactorily are given program counseling at this date; if the problem has been a recurrent one and progress is not satisfactory, an alternative residency placement may be considered or the resident may be counseled out at the end of the summer.

From September through the end of the calendar year, the resident is:

- Beginning action on residency goals
- Getting into classrooms and doing observations related to residency goals; leading meetings with teams related to those same goals and to administrative assignments s/he may have
- Meeting with the mentor principal daily to participate in key experiences with the mentor principal and once a week for deep reflection on his/her core performance
- Meeting monthly with the coach and mentor principal to evaluate the resident’s performance using the CPS 12 success factors, which they must meet to get on the principals’ eligibility list
• Engaging in a monthly day-long Friday meeting at one of the residency sites, where the host resident and mentor principal do a presentation on the history of the school under the leadership of the mentor principal, do classroom observations, personally assess the school’s progress and host a panel of students and teachers who discuss their experience in the school. Time is also set-aside for residents to discuss their residency goal progress with coaches other than their own, in order to get multiple perspectives on their work.

• Meeting weekly for at least two hours to do one or more of the following tasks:

  * Observing the resident giving feedback to a teacher, leading a team meeting, conducting a professional development (PD) session, carrying out one of his/her administrative duties
  * Conducting a walk-through with a resident and checking notes on how each one assesses the things that they observed
  * Examining the tools that the resident is developing to monitor progress on the residency goal with his/her team
  * Engaging in a deep discussion about problems, challenges and success that the resident is experiencing in the implementation of residency goals and the residency overall
  * Evaluating how the relationship is going with the mentor principal and all of the other people in the building
  * Analyzing key school data and what is improving because of the resident’s efforts, where that question is relevant
  * Assessing how the resident is managing stress. Key question: Is the resident able to be relational, relaxed, reflective, creative and strategic with his/her residency goal team members in spite of pressures of a heavy residency and UIC class load?

• Participating in three full-day Friday sessions in December during which the residents and coaches meet to vet their written progress reports on residency goals using the CPS success factors, they check the degree to which they are assembling evidence that they meet those success factors and to practice their ability to orally respond to questions from fellow residents and coaches about how their work documents their leadership skills.

• Spending January, February and March focusing on “driving for results” on their residency goals, building their relationship with their network chief (the person who supervises the work of their mentor principal and 24 other principals for CPS), and completing their application to be certified by CPS for the principals’ eligibility list. That application includes a resume and three essays of 500 words each, providing evidence of their skills and abilities as described by the 12
success factors. They also take the eligibility assessment, consisting of a series of interviews and paper and pencil tasks.

- Devoting their attention from April to the end of June to complete their residency goals and applying for principal jobs if they passed the eligibility process, or applying for assistant principal jobs if they didn’t. Those who don’t make eligibility will have the opportunity to apply again in a year; our experience is that they make it the second time around. Each year only one or two of the UIC residents fail the assessment on their first try. Throughout the period from January to the end of August, their coaches continue to meet with them to prepare them for eligibility and for their job search. Coaches are not only coaching, but also using their relationships to develop leads for job interviews. Mentor principals are doing the same. Where it is possible, coaches also attend job interviews to directly observe the residents’ interviewing skills and giving feedback.

The coaching process: Why are coaches needed in addition to mentor principals? The UIC program faculty believes that coaches are needed in addition to mentor principals for the same reason that clinical faculty are needed in addition to supervising classroom teachers in teacher preparation programs—only more so, because of the greater complexities of the position. The personal attention required for such development goes beyond what mentor principals can afford to provide, given their primary leadership responsibilities. There are a limited number of principals who have produced transformational results in previously low performing urban schools. While a mentor principal can only handle one resident at a time, a coach with proven transformational skills and results can work intensely with at least 10 residents at a time.

Coaching approach. In the residency phase of the program, our coaches are guided by the program’s theory of action, the developmental needs of the resident measured against CPS standards, the requirement for the successful completion of the residency goal and action plan, and the CPS MOU requirement that a significant percentage of residents pass the CPS eligibility assessment. UIC coaches use the wide range of coaching strategies described in Blended Coaching (Bloom et al., 2005). Facilitative, instructional, collaborative and consultative coaching are used as the situation demands, but the strategy most frequently used is transformational coaching, because it forces the resident to reflect on who they are and who they need to become in order to be transformational, rather than focusing primarily on the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Coaching of first through third year principals. While every school has its own unique developmental needs, there are core efforts that need to be undertaken in every school by a new principal. Although these efforts are described sequentially, the actual implementation is simultaneous and iterative:
Analyzing all of the key student achievement, administrative and dashboard data on the school to help shape the conversation with teachers and parents about the first year strategy for the school

Conducting individual meetings with all school personnel and local school councils (LSC) for the purpose of opening relationships, getting a sense of their concerns and priorities for the school, and to get their take on the principal’s own preliminary assessment of the school. These are the beginning steps for establishing trust and transparency.

Initiating relations with key community leaders, public officials, local social service agencies and local media

Developing a plan for maintaining and re-norming the vision, climate, and culture of the school

Preparing for the return of teachers, students and parents to the school

Establishing various grade level, departmental, and instruction leadership teams and setting a timetable for them to establish their goals, strategies and inquiry cycle patterns

Establishing the two-way communication strategies that will establish a sense of direction, purpose, and transparency

Getting into classrooms on a daily basis for supportive culture building and instructional purposes, but also for assessment purposes: beginning the process of determining who can lead, who can improve and who needs significant support

Establishing a relationship with their Network Chief and beginning the process of setting goals and expectations.

These are just a few of the things that a new principal has to initiate in his/her school. UIC coaches have all put such steps into practice in their own work, and they spend a great deal of time during July, August, and September with their new principals insuring that they are taking these steps while reflecting on what they are experiencing and learning as they undertake these efforts. Our coaches have to work hard at getting their new principals to understand that they have to make time for all of these key strategic priorities, rather than simply reacting to operational and crisis pressures and emergencies.

The coach’s key message is that the principal’s key responsibility is to engage and develop leadership teams that help them put in place the systems and routines that develop a reflective professional learning community with a culture of high expectations that is learner-centered and can overcome all obstacles. UIC coaches are in these schools on a weekly basis, accompanying principals as they do classroom observations, attend key meetings, do walk-throughs, examine data—all for the purpose of getting them to be reflective, strategic, relational and proactive about what
they are experiencing. Their main job is not to advise them, but to help them think and ask the key question—“What do I need to be doing to build the capacity of this professional learning community?”

Generally speaking, by the end of the first year, the coach expects to see the new principal establish the following:

- A central leadership team that has drafted a vision and comprehensive strategic plan (SIPAAAAA), for the coming school year
- Grade level and vertical teams that have developed a draft of working plans, routines, benchmarks and tools for taking their work to the next level
- Visible signs that a culture of high expectations is beginning to develop in the school
- A strong positive behavioral strategy is in place that is beginning to go beyond disciplinary rule compliance
- A local school council (LSC) feels respected and involved in setting the direction for the coming school year
- Parents, in general, feel well informed and positive about how their children are feeling and generally feeling heard
- A substantial percentage of teachers feel good about the growing focus and collaboration, but a level of tension among other teachers who are concerned about regular presence of the principal in their classroom. Principal conversations take place, with a few teachers about finding a more suitable school next year
- Test scores start moving on an upward trajectory—in a few cases by as much as 10–15%
- Attendance increases, disciplinary issues decline and the overall appearance of the school noticeably improves. There is observable progress, but a long way to go.
- In the very lowest performing schools where there may be extensive resistance, a number of these benchmarks will not be as advanced as described above, but there should be a clear sense that the school is on a new path and will not be deflected.

The coaching focus of the second year begins about March of the first school year, with the coach helping the principal use his/her leadership team to do an in-depth evaluation of all aspects of the first year, planning how to use the summer to get a running start on the second year. The summer is a good time to build the instructional, leadership, and team capacity of school community and to acclimate the new hires to norms and culture building efforts that the leadership is in the process of creating. The effort will be to go deeper, especially in the areas of instruction and social support systems for students.
During the second year, the coach focuses the principal on developing his/her strategies for:

- Substantially improving the classroom instructional skills of all teachers. During the first year the coach has the principal assessing the strengths and weakness of the teachers and beginning to get the teachers to look at their current practice against a higher standard. The principal needs to get all of the teachers to discover their self-interest in committing to a college prep level of practice and of getting the students to recognize their self-interest in learning at a higher level. This process should be far enough along to begin to free the school of the gravitational pull of its past culture of failure.

- Deepening the leadership bench so that a greater percentage of teachers, other school personnel, parents, and students are helping to build the capacity and achievement results of the professional learning community (PLC).

- Making all team meetings more focused, strategic, systematically reflective, with each successive meeting building on the work of the preceding meeting.

- Clearly systematizing the individualized efforts to keep chronically distracted kids on track with regard to all leading indicator benchmarks.

- To do all of these things well, coaches must get principals to reflect throughout the first year and assess how well they did against the skills, knowledge and dispositions expressed by the accomplished principal standards, with special attention paid to dispositional development. That is the element that is perhaps most essential for transformational change. The coach makes sure that the principal is asking (in effect), “Am I becoming so ingrained in developing metacognitively as an instructional and motivational leader that I am beginning to shed my non-generative self and become transformational from the core out?”

- Student achievement scores should be making a noticeable increase—3% to 8%—a magnitude that if sustained over time will signal a genuinely transformed school. We are aware of the “implementation dip” that sometimes flattens or reverses such improvement trends in the second or third year, and we see that phenomenon in a minority of our UIC-led schools, as well.

Fundamentally the job of the coach during all three to four years of coaching is to get the resident (and then the principal) to understand that a substantial part of failure of currently low performing schools is that they are places where people merely go to work in relatively isolated cells to carry out uninspiring tasks under very stressful circumstances with little or no sense of direction or appreciation. To change that, principals must learn to reflect deeply and broadly on their own sense of themselves as leaders.
of learning and development—their own first, followed by that of others. How good are they at asking the question: “How good are my knowledge, skills and disposition at enabling me to get others to see where we have to be, the gap between our goal and our present position, and at getting them to recognize their own self-interest in closing the distance?” If the coach can get the principal to that point, the principal will likely be able to build a high performing school.

The preceding paragraphs have dealt with the “what” and “how” of coaching. We focus now on how the program ensures that these things are occurring. There are essentially three elements that have proven effective in managing the coaching process. The first is the individual meeting between the Director of Leadership Coaching and the individual coach. These two-hour meetings have fluctuated between monthly and bi-monthly, meeting the focus on the coach’s work with each coachee under their care. The second is the two-hour meeting of all coaches led by the Director of Coaching, and those meetings occur in the off-weeks from the individual meetings. These meetings focus on a wide range of issues that grow out of the patterns and concerns that the Director of Coaching picks up from the individual meetings with coaches, or that the coaches are identifying and talking to each other about. When core issues are discovered from this process, it prompts a longer planning or problem-solving meeting. For example, coaches identified the need for the residents to meet monthly for a full day on a Friday with all of the coaches to share and reflect on specific aspects of their residency experience. This meeting is the third thing that has proven effective, because these are “high-sharing meetings” that also serve to expose what all coaches are doing with their residents and principals, so that best practices among individuals can become the practices of the whole organization.

Conclusions

In this article, our goal was to articulate the need for the full-time job-embedded internship model. We have described how it is enhanced through the support of coaches who have demonstrated the leadership skills and track record of a highly successful urban school leader. We identified the importance of full-time job-embedded internships and how coaching is distinguished from mentoring and can enhance the internship experience. We subsequently highlighted a nationally recognized model program at the University of Illinois at Chicago, partnering with Chicago Public Schools and providing full-time job-embedded residency. This partnership has operationally shifted the paradigm of producing principal candidates from one of producing as many candidates as possible and hoping some of them can lead high need urban schools effectively to one of producing fewer principal candidates, but with higher quality experiences. In Jim Collins’s (2001), Good to Great, he puts forth two operational concepts for organizations. One is being a “fox.” The other is being a “hedgehog.” Collins advocates that “great”
organizations operate like hedgehogs and not foxes. Foxes are organizations that chase every new thing, most of which are fads that fade away in a short period of time; another way of describing a fox is an organization that is a “jack of all trades, master of none.” In contrast, hedgehogs determine what is best for the organization and pursue it with zeal and determination. Similarly, university preparation programs must confront a stark reality: Do they want to be known for quality and great graduates, or do they just want to generate the most semester credit hours and produce a mixed bag of graduates? One of the most telling questions any person associated with preparing future leaders should ask is, “Would I want this person to be the principal or teacher of my child?”

Given the criticism of cost that is often cited as the biggest deterrent to school districts and preparation programs from implementing full-time job-embedded internships with coaching on a larger scale, we argue that if we continue as a nation to do the same things with internships that we have done for more than fifty years, then we should not expect anything different in terms of outcomes. One way to implement high quality, full-time, job-embedded internships is to communicate and advocate to policymakers and legislators about the importance of providing such experiences. Successful efforts have occurred in North Carolina and Illinois. In Illinois, UIC faculty were able to provide data to show the supply and demand for school leaders in the short- and long-term and then help craft legislation that would require preparation programs to have high quality internships as part of their program (these programs would be subject to review for quality elements prior to approval). The data that UIC faculty were able to generate indicated that the state of Illinois was producing way more principal candidates than it could ever need. This glut in the supply line was at the expense of providing high quality experiences and candidates. It was also more costly, because public institutions are subsidized by public funds to lower the cost of tuition for principal candidates seeking initial licensure or certification. By using a policy and legislative approach, UIC was able to encourage the state to establish a policy that would shut down all “diploma mills” and re-direct the focus on leadership preparation to a dialogue centered on what creates highly effective school leaders. It may be time for other states to follow their lead in developing this dialogue and policy change.

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SENDING FORTH TINY RIPPLES OF HOPE THAT BUILD THE MIGHTIEST OF CURRENTS: UNDERSTANDING HOW TO PREPARE SCHOOL LEADERS TO INTERRUPT OPPRESSIVE SCHOOL PRACTICES

Despite the dramatic shift in demographics occurring within public schools, there is scarce research connecting issues of diversity and race with the curricula guiding educational leadership preparation programs. In the field of leadership preparation, little information has been offered as to how professors facilitate social justice oriented conversations within their classrooms, particularly conversations focused specifically on race related issues. This article considers concepts the author believes should be included in leadership preparation programs seeking to develop leaders for diverse settings. In studying the outcomes of a course in “leadership for social justice” which is based on transformational learning experiences centered on issues of social justice, the author uses case studies and pattern matching to yield three emergent themes in the students’ experiences: increased critical consciousness, deepened empathic responses, and advocacy to activism. Throughout, the author focuses on the question, “how do participants in this program understand what it means to lead for social justice and equity in U.S. public schools?” The article concludes by discussing suggestions that could help contribute to the development of a transformative curriculum for leadership preparation programs.

The purpose of this case study was to examine how three graduate students enrolled in a school leadership preparation program understood and addressed issues of social justice and equity within U.S. public schools through arts-based principles. This study contributes to the extant literature, because it explores the impact of innovative methods being used at a northeastern university to prepare aspiring school and district leaders to understand what it means to lead for social justice and equity in U.S. preK–12 public schools (see Boske & Tooms, 2010b; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Grogan, 2002; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Shields, 2003; Tillman, Brown, Campbell-Jones, & Gonzalez, 2006). Leading for social justice is a highly emotional endeavor requiring courage, integrity, imaginative possibilities and self-awareness. It is important to acknowledge the ongoing debate and tensions regarding multiple meanings for social justice, what it means to lead for social justice, and pedagogies that encourage and support school leaders to lead for social justice.

We think and learn through multi-layered lived experiences. People are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives; therefore, our ways of knowing and responding to the world are essen-
tial to understanding the ways people think and learn. This inquiry centered on those experiences as the starting point for understanding aspiring school leaders, their relation of self to others and to their school communities (e.g., Dewey, 1934, 1938, 1961). One means of deepening our ways of knowing is to engage in the creation of systemic changes within school communities. Such efforts are intended to improve the lives of those we serve. For the purpose of this study, these efforts centered the use of critical reflection—a connective process that precedes meaningful learning centered on a change of self, and ultimately, changing ways of knowing and responding to the world (Boske, 2011b). School leaders are not often prepared to engage in transformative leadership practices with an emphasis on leading for social justice (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Tooms & Boske, 2010). Rather, they are traditionally prepared to understand their roles as managers of systems versus deepening their ways of knowing and making meaningful connections with school communities. This article seeks to push at current conceptual boundaries within the field of educational leadership to understand relationships among preparing candidates to lead for social justice, critical reflection and meaning making through the senses—ways in which school leaders perceive their lived experiences and relation to others.

The article begins with a review of the literature. Next, I describe the research method employed in this study, modes of analysis and findings. The article concludes with a discussion which centers on how these understood their roles and responsibilities as school leaders.

**Literature Review**

Educational leadership is at the center of unprecedented attention. School leaders are often perceived as pivotal players in making systemic changes in the pursuit of equity (Bogotch, 2002; Boske & McEnery, 2011; Boske & McEnery, 2010; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Tooms & Boske, 2010). Many school leaders are ill-prepared to address the oppressive school practices impacting the educational experiences of children in 21st century schools (McKenzie et al., 2008; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Educational administration faculty tend to promote the status quo rather than push candidates to consider the need to embrace silenced or marginalized learners (McClellan & Dominguez, 2006). School leaders within increasingly culturally diverse school communities will need the knowledge, skills and willingness to address issues facing marginalized populations in order to understand how cultural issues (i.e., race and race relations) within and between various school subcultures influence leadership practice (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). However, for school leaders to have the capacity, willingness and courage to interrupt oppressive practices, they need to be afforded spaces for renewed discussions, critical self-reflection and experiential learning centered on broadening, deepening and enriching their school leadership identity. Such efforts have the potential to pro-
vide school leaders with spaces to make shifts in their ways of understanding and responding to those they serve, especially for those who live on the margins (Boske, 2011a; Boske & McEnery, 2011).

Art-Making as Sense-Making

We think and learn through multi-layered lived experiences. Because school leaders are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives, our ways of knowing and responding to the world are essential to understanding the ways they think and learn. Their lives and how they are composed are of interest to those who prepare them. This inquiry centers on understanding learning and teaching, how it takes place, as well as undertaking different beliefs, values, and assumptions within diverse contexts in an effort to find links to learning, teaching, and leading through sense-making. From this perspective, experience is the starting point for understanding people, their relation of self to others, and to their environment (e.g., Dewey, 1934, 1938, 1961).

There is an urgency to deepen understanding regarding how to create spaces in which school leaders promote and address issues of social justice and equity in U.S. public schools (Boske, in press; Tooms & Boske, 2010). This increased attention is aligned with arts-based principles centered on understanding sensory ways of knowing. Critical reflection (i.e., Mezirow, 1990; Schon, 1983; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009), artmaking (Eisner, 2008; Springgay, 2008), and transformative learning (Brown, 2004, 2006) are recognized as experiential modes of inquiry that reveal insights and ways of understanding that impact our capacities for knowing (e.g., Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2008). Artmaking is recognized as an experiential mode of inquiry that reveals insights and ways of understanding that impact our capacities for knowing (e.g., Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2008). Utilizing artmaking for making sense of our lived experiences through sensory exploration creates spaces for school leaders to consider their actions and reflect upon their impact (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005; Springgay, 2008). This study is significant to furthering the extant literature by examining arts-based principles through the senses. Specifically, it does so through the use of critical reflection and artmaking in an effort to create spaces for school leaders to shift their sense-making from text to audio/visual to art-making—a formal curricular decision grounded in the recognition of rich meanings and imaginative possibilities embedded in non-text-based, sensual understandings.

Context for the Study

In the spring of 2010, a northeastern university created the “Leading for Social Justice” course in response to the call from the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA). UCEA is a national orga-
Leading for Social Justice actively engaged students in sense-making reflective practices—a process that included increasing critical consciousness through weekly audio/video reflections (e.g., Boske, in press; Brown, 2006), experiential service learning (e.g., Bowden, Billig, & Holland, 2008), and artmaking (with guidance from community artist mentors) (Boske, 2009, in press; Shapiro, 2010). Students responded each week to 15-25 predetermined questions centered on cultural proficiency via audio and video-recorded reflections (e.g., Terrell & Lindsey, 2009), examined the lived realities of specific marginalized groups in U.S. schools (e.g., Marshall & Oliva, 2010), conducted an equity audit (e.g., Kozol, 2006; Skrla, Scheurich, & Bell McKenzie, 2009), and took a critical stance on one social justice issue. Throughout the process, students worked with a community artist mentor to translate their often emotionally-laden responses into visual art that was in turn displayed at the university’s gallery space at the end of the semester.

Methodology

This study examined the overarching question: How do participants understand what it means to lead for social justice and equity in U.S. public schools? I utilized a case study approach. This methodology was particularly well-suited to this work, because case methodology affords the researcher with opportunities to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context across multiple sources of data (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Yin, 1994). Data collected for this study consisted primarily of 39 weekly audio/video reflections (three participants and 13 reflections each), field notes and course assignments (i.e., three equity audits, 27 metaphors, 15 small group written reflections, and three artmaking projects). Participants included Laura, a white female in her early thirties who worked in a suburban middle school as a math teacher in a predominantly white community; Tyrone, a black male in his mid-thirties employed as a suburban high school principal in a predominantly black
school, but white community; and Michael, a white male in his late forties who worked in a predominantly white suburban school district in a central office position.

Analysis

Data analysis consisted of examining and categorizing data evidence to address the initial propositions of a study (Yin, 1994). To do this, I utilized a kind of pattern-matching, one of the most desirable strategies for analysis in case studies because of the ways in which this technique compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (Trochim, 1989; Yin, 1994). Analysis yielded the following three emergent themes: (a) Increase critical consciousness; (b) Deepened empathic responses; (c) Advocacy to activism.

Findings

Emerging themes included the need for participants to deepen their critical consciousness, deepen empathic responses, and shift from advocacy to activism. These emergent themes center on school leaders undergoing self-transformation for meaningful systemic change. The findings suggest those interested in leading for social justice must engage in a complex process in which candidates deepen their understanding of self to lead in authentic ways to make meaningful actions aligned with the needs of the individual or community.

**Increased critical consciousness.** Tyrone, Michael and Laura understood critical reflection as central to their personal transformation. They emphasized how their artmaking afforded them spaces to problematize issues of social justice within the context of problem posing and dialogue with other learners. Michael stressed how the process afforded him with spaces to “rediscover his power and affirm that the more critically aware he became, the more he felt able to empower those he served and subsequently his own ways of knowing.

Michael titled his artmaking *Self Reflection of Educators* (see Figure 1). He created a multilayered, transparent visual piece to represent the layers of storied selves that impact an individual’s way of knowing and responding. Each sheet began with the name of the individual who documented impactful life experiences that significantly influenced their sense of self as educators and school leaders.

Educators identified three impactful life experiences that shaped their view of what it means to educate children, especially children who live on the margins. I transcribed the interviews and noted experiences each educator deemed significant, which are identified as a “storied self” on each transparent white sheet. It was to give the illusion of a journal and the ability to see within...
someone’s soul … to understand them more completely … to be present with that person … to understand her journey and how she made meaning from her lived experiences.

The three subjects came to believe that their artmaking was significant to understanding their aspirations in becoming educators and school leaders. They stressed a deepened critical consciousness, because they examined how their life experiences shaped their relationships of self with others. Moving from text to audio/video to artmaking afforded them with spaces to understand how their meaning-making influenced their decision-making processes. Tyrone stressed that “although people may have good intentions, good intentions are not enough to make the necessary changes we need in our schools for those who live on the margins.” Laura emphasized the need to deepen critical consciousness, “because we need to embark on building meaningful relationships with children, families and school community members…and develop an ethic of care.” Michael focused on utilizing his artmaking to uncover the need for those who serve in U.S. public schools to be more cognizant of the impact of their lived experiences and how such experiences are internalized:

My hope is this art challenges you to consider how your lived experiences have shaped who you are and decisions made along the way in addition to the need for all of us to look within through critical self-reflection and examine how our lived experiences impact how we relate to others, especially those who continue to live on the
margins. We have a tremendous amount of responsibility to look within and critically examine who we are and who we want to become in an effort to make a positive impact on our students’ lives.

Participants stressed that through dialogue with self and others, they began to understand themselves as active agents. This new way of understanding enabled them to identify and create conditions for the possibility of change, which were expressed visually throughout their artmaking. Their emphasis on critical reflection was not only about deepening understanding; Tyrone, Michael and Laura stressed the need to afford themselves and those they serve with spaces to actually engage in discussions centered on issues of social justice. Such dialogue seemed to encourage curiosity, raise doubt and stimulate creativity. Within these moments of deepening their critical consciousness, their artmaking reflected on their sense making, their ways of knowing and how their ways of knowing were made and then revisited again and again.

**Deepening empathic responses.** Participants believed the critical reflections involved a critique of assumptions they often acquired during childhood, which seemed to determine their beliefs. As aspiring school leaders, such beliefs often influenced their capacity to understand the lived experiences of other people. What they determined throughout this process was which beliefs remained functional for them as leaders for social justice. Their evolving beliefs emerged throughout their critical reflection. The process increased their ability to be empathic, which included a culture of careful listening and openness to new perspectives. The validity of their initial assumptions about the lived experiences of underserved populations was challenged throughout the critical reflective process. Tyrone stressed that as he became critically aware of his assumptions about underserved populations, he “challenged how he made meaning from those experiences” and how those experiences “established habitual patterns of expectations of himself, others and those he served.” Tyrone described the significance of deepening empathic responses throughout his artmaking titled *The Struggle* (see Figure 2):

Getting teachers to step into the shoes of another is a challenging task, especially when they are White and don’t acknowledge how their privilege influences the way they see the world. My artmaking integrated the same students who teachers identified as failures. The process of coming together and talking about their life experiences was incredible. What we uncovered was directly translated into our artmaking. It was authentic, accurate and fitting.

Tyrone emphasized throughout his artmaking the need to “recognize, understand and use tools to overcome hegemonic practices” in order to empower “young Black males to climb the mountain of life.” The mountain symbolized the struggles they had “undertaken as Black men who needed to be heard and understood…to be honored…to be validated.” The
pathways around the mountain represented the lived experiences of young Black males as they navigated through apartheid educational systems. At the top of the mountain, Tyrone emphasized the symbolism of the hand as “writing their own destinies.”

Figure 2. The Struggle by Tyrone and high school students.

Michael, Laura and Tyrone emphasized the need for school leaders to reconsider to what extent, if any, they have the capacity to understand those they serve. For these participants, they became more aware of what it meant to be empathic when they developed the capacity to enter the life of another person as well as a commitment to engage with people in the present. All of them identified the critical reflections, sense making and artmaking as critical to deepening their empathic responses, especially towards underserved populations. They realized empathy required people to have passion, understanding and interconnectedness, as well as the ability to understand that people cannot assume they see what the other sees, because of differences in lived experiences, ways of knowing, and ways of responding. Michael emphasized that “those who engage in this type of work need to reconsider their willingness and ability to understand how social, cultural, economic and political contexts influence what we do in schools.” Participants stressed that their artmaking illustrated their increased deepening of empathic responses. They noted that such responses did not require individuals to merge self with other; rather, the ability to imagine oneself as another person was considered a slow empathic immersion in which one person attempted to understand the lived experiences of others while maintaining her objectivity.
Advocacy to activism. Tyrone, Michael and Laura emphasized the need for aspiring school leaders to engage in leading for social justice within their school communities. The critical reflective process and artmaking required them to increase their critical consciousness. As Michael noted, “My increased consciousness encouraged me to actively engage with my school community versus merely reflecting for the sake of passivity.”

Their artmaking focused on deepening their understanding of social justice issues facing their campuses and ways in which they addressed these issues as aspiring school leaders. For example, Laura titled her artmaking Faces of Change. She arranged the rectangle textured and stained glass in abstract ways to represent how school leaders analyze patterns in school data and respond to school populations according to their meaning making. The bumpy textured glass symbolized paths school leaders may take when choosing to interrupt the status quo, especially when addressing issues of social justice and equity-oriented practices in schools:

Because addressing the lived realities of underserved populations (i.e. due to race, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, immigration status, native language and ability) is such a daunting task, and requires school leaders to look within, I carefully selected sections of mirrored glass so you could see your own reflection and contemplate to what extent, if any, you have committed yourself as a faces of change … some glass pieces were left clear to represent how you can see someone’s “true self” when immersing yourself in this courageous work.

Figure 3. Faces of Change by Laura
Laura was “in search of genuine, caring school leaders committed to interrupting oppressive practices in schools” and Tyrone “fought hard to find solutions to the tough problems facing his community.” Michael emphasized “the need for change to begin from within and acting on that change right here and right now.”

The subjects emphasized the need to shift from advocating for underserved populations to building on community potential through empowerment. Laura met with her superintendent regarding her equity audit work. He questioned the data collected as well as the lived realities of marginalized populations within the school community. Laura emphasized the need to “walk the superintendent through the process” in order for him to understand the wider implications of choosing to perpetuate oppressive practices especially for children who identified as Black and children receiving special education services. The superintendent requested Laura to collect, analyze and present equity audit data to his central office personnel as well as principals across the district. After one year, Laura presented her findings. The superintendent sent out a message to families, the media and all school district employees regarding changes in policy and practice:

We do not offer every special education program in every building. Oftentimes, this results in students being forced to leave their home school unnecessarily when there is no legitimate reason we cannot provide the services they need in their home schools. Instead of moving children with disabilities to our great programs, when appropriate, we are going to bring our great programs to the children who need them … We are doing this because it is the right thing to do.

Michael, Laura and Tyrone recognized this process as “transformative” and “essential” to deepening their understanding, ability and willingness to be agents of change for those they served, especially for disenfranchised populations.

**Discussion**

Utilizing the senses (sight and sound) through a myriad of learning opportunities (i.e., written text, audio, video, metaphor, artmaking, and equity audits) afforded participants with spaces to experience feeling to form and form to feeling (Langer, 1953). As participants moved from text to audio to visual metaphors through artmaking to activism, they came to know and lived their inquiries, which centered on social justice and equity issues facing U.S. public schools. They responded to concerns raised about the importance of addressing issues of social justice. As they deepened their empathic responses, they increased their readiness to interrupt oppressive practices on their campuses as well as within themselves. Making connections among critical reflection, art-making and sense-making
emphasized the need for participants to imagine a better state of being (Greene, 1995). The connections stressed the significance of artmaking as a vehicle to transform an individual’s consciousness, enlarge the imagination and encourage problem-solving (Eisner, 2002). The process of artmaking played a significant role in their sense-making, because the act of knowing was interconnected with their affect, intuition and imaginative thinking (Eisner, 2008; Zwicky, 2003).

For these participants, art-making was not about feelings and emotions. Rather, art-making was how each of them came to know (Langer, 1982). The inclusive experiences offered them opportunities to increase their critical consciousness and examine how their identities were constructed as well as how their identities influenced their responses, especially towards underserved populations. Artmaking became a symbolic projection of vital emotion and intellectual tensions among the mind, feeling and process (Langer, 1972). Therefore, artmaking as sense making reaffirms the significance of lived experiences and personal knowing of what it means to lead for social justice as school leaders (e.g., Land & Stovall, 2009).

The interconnectedness among the senses, lived experiences, and developing school leadership identity afforded them with spaces to create multiple meanings centering on what it meant to lead for equity and social justice (see Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006). School leaders made connections among what they saw, heard, and experienced by connecting their emotion-laden experiences through sense-making, which directly impacted their ways of knowing (Langer, 1982) and responding to those they served. This sense-making process guided them through a process in which their senses transformed their consciousness (Boske, 2011b; Eisner, 2002), deepened their understanding of their beliefs and attitudes towards power (Allen, 1995), and created spaces centered on an ethic of care through imaginative possibilities (Boske & McEnery, 2011; Greene, 1995; Noddings, 1984). Utilizing these transformative curricular practices afforded participants with spaces to make sense of their lived experiences as individuals, school leaders, and activists. This sensory exploration created spaces for each of them to consider their actions, the significance of their actions in relation to others, and opportunities to reflect and act upon their impact in schools, especially for those from underserved populations (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005; Springgay, 2008). They took steps to promote and identify themselves as catalysts—activists for social justice and equity in schools and community-at-large (see Bogotch, 2002; Boske, in press; Boske & McEnery, 2011).

**Implications**

School leaders are faced with the challenge to eliminate long-standing academic disparities between those who are members of the cultural majority (i.e., White, middle class, English speaking, able body/mind,
U.S. citizens, Christian, and heterosexual) and those who are marginalized (i.e., race, class, ability, sexual identity, religion, immigration status, language) (Foster & Tillman, 2009; Kozol, 2006; Lopez, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Those interested in leading for social justice must begin to understand how to interrupt oppressive school practices in an effort to improve the lives and educational experiences of all children, especially those from underserved populations (Bogotch, 2002; Boske & Tooms, 2010a, 2010b; Tooms & Boske, 2010; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Faculty preparing teachers and school leaders might play closer attention to the ways in which candidates understand how their lived experiences influence their capacity and willingness to identify themselves as catalysts for systemic change, especially for those who are underserved.

**Conclusion**

There is a need for school leaders to deepen their understanding of social justice work in schools and the influence of their ways of knowing (Langer, 1953). Understanding the impact of meaning-making through critical reflection, sense making and artmaking are some of the pathways to increasing a school leader’s critical consciousness regarding social justice and equity work in schools (Boske, in press; Theoharis, 2007). This article opens up possibilities to deepen understanding in how to prepare school leaders’ ways of knowing through sensory experiences for the purpose of meaningful change. The findings encourage those who prepare school leaders to expand candidates’ ways of knowing and responding to those they serve (e.g., Boske & Tooms, 2010a, 2010b). The intersections of critical reflection, sense making and artmaking afford tremendous possibilities for teaching and learning by placing pedagogy at the center of programmatic practices with knowledge and experience in the making (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005).

**References**


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PREPARING LEADERS FOR MATH AND SCIENCE:
THREE ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL PREPARATION

Improving student achievement in math and science has become a priority in the United States. As instructional leaders, principals can influence instruction in these vital subjects by working with classroom teachers to improve their instruction. Surprisingly, the research about the principal’s role in supporting instruction in these subjects is limited, as is research related to principal preparation for content-specific instructional leadership. In this article, we draw from existing research to present three programmatic alternatives to existing preparation programs. These alternatives aim to strengthen preparation for content-specific instructional leadership in math and science.

Improving student achievement in math and science has become one of the United States’ top education priorities. There is growing concern among many groups that the United States is trailing its international peers in the competition to prepare the next generation of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians—fields considered essential for future economic success (National Academies, 2007). Considerable attention has been directed toward improving student achievement in math and science in elementary, middle, and high schools. Analyses of student achievement in math and science reveals persistent achievement gaps between students from racial/ethnic minorities and their Caucasian peers (Museus, Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2011). Further, there is ample evidence that these achievement gaps often persist throughout students’ education and long into their professional careers if not addressed in their K–12 educational experience (Museus et al., 2011). Although many factors potentially explain the differences in math and science achievement, a significant portion of the variation may be attributed to differences in the quality of math and science instruction provided to students by their classroom teachers (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003; Kane & Staiger, 2008). Researchers believe that teacher quality varies dramatically from school-to-school and that historically disadvantaged student populations are often taught by less qualified teachers, particularly in math and sciences (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Flores, 2007; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; Peske & Haycock, 2006). As instructional leaders, principals have an important role to play in improving instruction in math and science by working with classroom teachers. Surprisingly, the research literature has not paid much attention to the principal’s role in supporting instruction in these subjects, nor provided potentially effective strategies that may be effective to prepare principals for this type of leadership. In fact, our review
of the existing literature suggests that instructional leadership has been treated as a generic set of leadership actions that lack specific reference to the subjects that it seeks to influence.

The connection between a principal’s instructional leadership and improved student learning is well-established in the research literature. Many researchers posit that improved instructional leadership is an important element in any school improvement effort (Copland & Knapp, 2006). Principals influence student learning by shaping the conditions in schools, structuring the instructional program, ensuring accountability among students and teachers, and supporting teachers’ work (Blase & Blase, 2003; Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). At the classroom level, principals influence student achievement by working with classroom teachers to refine their instructional practice, and providing resources to support professional growth (Blase & Blase, 2003; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). Analyses demonstrate that when principals engage in this leadership, it positively influences student learning (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Surprisingly, educational leadership researchers have not spent considerable time discussing principal leadership related to specific content areas or their work with classroom teachers in specific subjects. We found that discussion related to the preparation of principals for leadership in specific subjects has received virtually no discussion despite analyses showing significant weaknesses in preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Hart & Pounder, 1999; Levine, 2005; Murphy, 1999).

In this article, we argue that one of the keys to improving math and science performance in the nation’s schools involves developing principals who understand how school conditions influence efforts to improve math and science instruction that increase student achievement. As such, improvements in principal preparation activities are needed so that principals have a basic understanding of instruction as it relates to specific content areas. The purpose of this article is to discuss existing research related to principal preparation to identify the current weaknesses in preparation programs, and to propose three alternatives to existing preparation programs. If implemented, we believe these program designs would begin to strengthen preparation activities that will prepare principals to lead improvements in math and science. Furthermore, the alternatives attend to some of the perceived weaknesses in preparation programs cited in the educational leadership literature. We begin with literature summarizing the current challenges related to math and science in the United States. Next, we present literature related to the importance of principal instructional leadership as well as the current research on effective preparation activities. We conclude by discussing the three alternatives to existing preparation program designs beginning with the alternative having the most con-
servative changes and concluding with the alternative that makes the most
dramatic changes. Our discussion ends with a review of the implications
these alternatives have for preparation programs, as well as future research
on effective leadership preparation strategies.

**Relevant Literature**

In preparing this article, we reviewed literature broadly related to
student achievement in math and science, research about principals’ in-
structional leadership, and existing discussions of the strengths and weak-
nesses of principal preparation. We found within this literature three in-
ter-related concerns. First, substantial research suggests that students in
the United States are not performing as well in math or science as their
global peers, and that much of this can be attributed to the teaching and
learning conditions in the nation’s schools. However, the discussion has
not focused on the role that principals may have in improving student
achievement in these important subjects. Second, as instructional leaders,
principals can exercise considerable influence over these conditions, and
research suggests that there is a relationship between instructional leader-
ship and improved student learning. Yet, scholars have generally not fo-
cused on leadership actions specifically related to content areas. Finally,
despite the importance of instructional leadership as a focus for principals,
the literature on principal preparation suggests that many preparation pro-
grams do not adequately prepare principals to lead improvements in teach-
ing and learning. And, of particular relevance to this discussion, there is
hardly any discussion related to preparing principals related to leadership
in content areas, such as math and science. We discuss each of these issues
in the sections that follow.

**The Math and Science Challenge in Public Education**

National concern about the need to improve math and science in-
struction is not new. In fact, it has been an issue of national importance
since the 1950’s. There is increasing evidence, however, that for all of
the rhetoric related to math and science in the United States, the rhetoric
alone is still not providing students with adequate instruction in math or
science. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) indi-
cates that for most of the past decade, student achievement in math and
science has not increased substantially. According to the National Center
for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011) significant disparities exist in math
performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) between students of
different ethnic/racial groups. Similarly, student SAT Math scores have
not improved dramatically across ethnic groups over the past two decades
(1990–91 to 2008–09). Furthermore, data obtained from post-secondary
education reveals that metrics such as degree completion, participation
in STEM fields, and the career trajectories of graduates from the nation’s universities reveal that many students—particularly students of color—are not pursuing education related to these fields (Museus et al., 2011). Researchers have linked these outcomes to the quality of math and science education students receive in the nation’s K–12 schools.

Student performance in math and science in post-secondary education is heavily influenced by their high school preparation. For example, Adelman (2006) drew from data collected as part of the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS: 88/100) to assess which factors predicted whether a student completed a post-secondary degree. He discovered that the content—which he referred to as academic intensity—of the student’s high school curriculum predicted a student’s completing a post-secondary education more than any other factor. Related to the intensity of the high school curriculum, researchers have also found that students perform differently depending on the academic track to which the school assigns them. Gamoran, Porter, Smithson, and White (1997) used a three-level hierarchical model of student scores in four urban school districts and found that students in more rigorous math courses outperformed their peers in less rigorous courses. Closely related to this, researchers have also shown that minority students often attend high schools with less access to Advanced Placement courses in math or science and, even when they do have access to these courses, they often participate in these courses in much lower numbers (Clewell, Anderson, & Thorpe, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Lewis, 2003).

Other school-level factors have been shown to predict student success in post-secondary math and science education, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities. Adelman (2006) studied high school curricula and found significant differences in the learning opportunities provided to low-income students compared with their more affluent peers. The National Science Foundation (NSF) (2010) reported that racial and ethnic minority students have less access to qualified math and science teachers. This claim is widely supported in education research which consistently shows that poor and minority students are often taught by teachers with fewer years of teaching experience or training that is not related to their content area (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Flores, 2007). Even if classroom teachers are qualified, many teachers maintain lower academic expectations for poor and minority students (Flores, 2007; Oakes, 1990). Each of these claims reinforces the view that disparities in education resources contribute to significant differences in student attainment in post-secondary education, as related to science, technology, engineering, or math and particularly in schools which predominately serve the largest proportion of low-income and minority students (Adelman, 2006; Flores, 2007; Oakes, 1990).
The Importance of Instructional Leadership and Content-Specific Preparation

In the literature, we found many of the factors shown to affect student achievement in math and science fall under the principal’s influence as an instructional leader. Indeed, the importance of educational leadership, especially principal leadership, has gained considerable attention in the education literature. Since the effective schools research identified principal leadership actions related to instruction as essential school improvement (e.g., Edmonds, 1979), researchers have sought to identify leadership actions that support instructional improvement and thus boost student achievement. Instructional leadership has been conceptualized in various ways (e.g., Blase & Blase, 2003; Murphy, 1988; Southworth, 2002). However, as Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) summarized, instructional leadership generally involves: working with classroom teachers to improve instruction; providing resources and professional development aimed at improvements in instructional capacity; coordination of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; regular monitoring of student and teacher performance; and cultivation of a school culture focused on improvements in teaching and learning. This conception has been widely advanced in the educational leadership literature (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, 2005; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Louis et al., 2010; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Strong principal leadership can address school conditions which research indicates typically disadvantage low-income and minority students in math and science. For example, as instructional leaders, principals can take an active role in this process by working with classroom teachers to provide opportunities for students to participate in these fields. Researchers have reported that students who are not native English speakers benefit from schools which offer strong, bilingual education programs that include courses in math and science (Gándara, 2006). Within the classroom, principals can support teachers in engaging students in these subjects by adopting culturally relevant or responsive teaching practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lipman, 1995). Denson, Avery, and Schell (2010), for example, interviewed Black high school students to determine how their classroom instructional experience influenced their perception of math, science, and engineering. They found that teachers who introduced students to engineering as a career choice positively influenced the students’ perceptions of the field. Students also benefit from early exposure to STEM fields. Researchers suggest these experiences change students’ perceptions of these fields and prompt many students to participate in educational opportunities and careers related to these fields (Lewis, 2003; Oakes, 1990). In each of these cases, strong principal leadership was likely essential to introducing and sustaining these supports over time. Thus, as we assert in the next section, the need for a broader understanding of content-specific leadership and its implications for principal preparation is essential.
Content-specific leadership preparation. The alternatives that we propose in this article reflect a conception of educational leadership which emphasizes principal actions in support of improved math and science instruction. Unlike other concepts of instructional leadership which emphasize generic leadership actions—the conception we advance in this article focuses on leadership as it relates to a specific content area. As such, we argue that the conception emphasizes a set of inter-related leadership actions that, if taken together, could have a positive influence on math and science instruction in schools, and lead to improvements in both teaching and student learning. These actions have been shown in previous research to have a significant impact on instruction individually, and if taken collectively, could result in improved math and science instruction as well as improvements in other subjects.

Much has been written recently about focusing the attention and action of educational leaders on the improvement of student learning (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Knapp et al., 2003). Scholars have used various names to describe this form of leadership, among them learning-focused leadership (Knapp et al., 2010); leadership for learning (Knapp et al., 2003); and learning-centered leadership (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). The common element among these descriptions is that effective leaders place learning improvement—for students, professionals, and the organization as a whole—at the core of their work and use it to focus their leadership actions. This type of leadership requires a persistent and public focus on learning, sustained investments in the practice of instructional leadership, a reinvention or transformation in the work of instructional leadership, development of new, cross-organizational relationships, and reliance on evidence of growth and impact (Knapp et al., 2010). Leadership for math and science emerges from this conception in that the central focus for leadership action is to improve instruction, learning, and achievement in these content areas. To this end, we suggest that leadership for math and science has five characteristics:

First, leadership for math and science emphasizes the principal’s role in supporting the dynamic relationship between pedagogy and content knowledge for the purpose of improving student learning. Effective instruction is not only dependent on the teacher’s ability to assess how and whether their instruction is making content accessible to students but also on his or her understanding of the content upon which the instruction is based (Knapp & Associates, 1995; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Schulman, 1987). Consequently, leadership for math and science not only involves asking the familiar questions about instructional practice but also seeking answers to questions which are less familiar to many instructional leaders. These questions include: What is adequate content knowledge? How do I assess it? How can a teacher’s content knowledge be improved when it is deficient? Instructional leaders for math and science must have the capacity to help teachers identify and address gaps in teachers’ understanding of the con-

Second, leadership for math and science emphasizes the principal’s role in encouraging the adoption and use of project-based or inquiry-based student learning. A critical task for education leaders committed to improvements in math and science is to foster a sense of exploration among students that is well-suited to math and science (van Zee, 2010). Furthermore, principals work with classroom teachers to make math and science content relevant to the world around them. The central question is not whether material is received, but whether they see the connections between what they are learning and the world around them (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics [NCTM], 2000; Rhodes, Stevens, & Hemmings, 2011; Zelkowski, 2011). This occurs when student learning is embedded in projects that have “a well-defined outcome, or deliverable, and a well-defined task” (Morgan, Barroso, & Huggins, 2009, p. 7), thereby creating an authentic learning opportunity for students. This kind of learning often happens in groups. Thus, students are able to use both their individual knowledge base as well as to leverage the knowledge base of other students in order to accomplish a unique task that provides new learning. However, creating these kinds of projects often requires resources, which necessitates a leader who understands how to (re)allocate or (re)invest resources in support of math and science instruction, including opportunities for collaboration as well as fiscal and human resources to prioritize. Additionally, for authentic instruction opportunities to occur, principals must create, encourage and support pedagogical risks in teachers’ classrooms.

Third, leadership for math and science emphasizes teacher/leader collaboration within disciplines and across instructional domains to facilitate a shared focus or common understanding of the importance of achievement in these subjects. A variety of models exist to promote teacher/leader collaboration. The professional learning community (e.g., Stoll & Louis, 2007) is perhaps one of the most familiar. Professional learning communities allow teachers to have the structural, social, and human resources (Louis & Kruse, 1995) not only to collaborate, but also to co-construct (Louis, 1994) pedagogical practices through collectively meeting to make transparent or to “deprivatize” their practice, focus on student learning, and engage in reflective dialogue (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1995) in order to increase student achievement. Through these processes, teachers can work toward shifting to, or increasing the use and rigor of, pedagogical practices that are inquiry-based, such as project-based learning (Capraro & Slough, 2009).

Fourth, leadership for math and science depends on leaders who understand how to invest or leverage resources to promote student achievement and educator development in math and science. Kelley (1999), for example, described how leaders leverage resources to support learning improvement, noting that leaders must often combine multiple funding streams and types of resources to support improved instructional delivery. In regard
to math and science, leaders must leverage human, monetary, programmatic, and partnership resources. This may require making strategic investments in professional development for classroom teachers, crafting master schedules that allow for inter-disciplinary collaboration that previously did not exist, or purchasing materials that help students learn independently using technology. Moreover, it may involve developing human resources through professional development, mentoring, or other capacity-building activities (Leithwood, 1994; Lord & Mahler, 1993; Plecki et al., 2009).

Finally, leadership for math and science involves developing partnerships to engage teachers, students, and the instructional program with the context surrounding the formal learning environment. Given the pace of changes in science and technology-driven fields, leaders will need to develop partnerships with industry, business, and academia in order to draw experts and expertise into their schools. Additionally, principals may engage external partners in order to help classroom teachers make learning opportunities relevant to students and the real world. With the increasing fiscal pressures placed on school districts throughout the United States, it is unlikely that any single school or school district can afford the accoutrements necessary to provide an instructional program that offers students and teachers the exposure they need for all the emerging applications for math and science. For example, principals might work with local businesses to create internship opportunities for students interested in engineering or the biomedical health sciences. A classroom teacher might draw from the more robust laboratory resources found at a nearby community college or university that his or her own school or district cannot afford to provide.

Three Alternatives to Existing Programs

Building on this working conception of leadership for math and science, we propose three alternatives to existing principal preparation programs. If implemented, we believe these alternatives would fundamentally improve a principal’s understanding of instruction in math and science as well as the actions they can take to support improved achievement in these subjects. Given the limited research on principal leadership in math and science, these alternatives represent our best thinking about what a preparation program more acutely focused on math and science might look like. For each of the alternatives we propose, we assume that the preparation program has certain characteristics in place. These characteristics have been cited in research on the most effective leadership preparation programs and are deemed essential to a robust preparation experience (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2005). Each of our proposed alternatives assumes that the program structure is cohort-based, enrolls 20–24 students, spans approximately two years, incorporates a field-based internship, and admits students who are pursuing state-sponsored administrative certification. As illustrated by Table 1, the proposals we offer build from a traditional 30-credit
preparation program. Students begin the program in the summer and complete the program in approximately 24 months. Throughout the program, students complete activities aligned with key learning objectives and the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. Consistent with research on effective internship experiences, the internship and academic coursework are closely aligned (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010).

**Table 1**

**Traditional Preparation Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Leadership development seminar—emphasizes the personal and professional challenges facing school leaders. Discusses the relationship between leadership action and leadership values.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Instructional leadership—emphasizes the principal’s role as a leader of learning. Provides particular emphasis on the micro-political relationships within the school, provides opportunities to practice observing and critiquing instruction. Internship—provides the intern with an opportunity to work toward the completion of a state-required 540 hour internship; students complete approximately 10 hours per week of activities.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Improvement of student learning—emphasizes the principal’s role as a leader of learning, with particular emphasis on the use of data to improve student achievement and guide instruction. Internship—provides the intern with an opportunity to work toward the completion of a state-required 540 hour internship; students complete approximately 10 hours per week of activities.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Community and communications—a concluding seminar focused on the formation and leadership of a professional learning community, the stewardship of conversations related to social justice, and the centrality of parent/school/community partnerships.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Education law and accountability—provides an introduction to legal principles associated with school administration as well as a broad introduction to the influence that accountability systems have on teaching and learning. Internship—provides the intern with an opportunity to work toward the completion of a state-required 540 hour internship; students complete approximately 10 hours per week of activities.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Resource management seminar for school leaders—an integrated course introduces students to the principal’s role as a leader of resources (people, money, time, and programs). Internship—provides the intern with an opportunity to work toward the completion of a state-required 540 hour internship; students complete approximately 10 hours per week of activities.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Credits** 30.0

*Note.* For an illustrative discussion of the programmatic requirements for principal preparation, see http://education.wsu.edu/graduate/specializations/edleadership/#cert
In addition to the assumptions we make about the structure of the preparation program, we also assume that the design of the program, especially its curriculum, is embedded within a set of “design principles” (Bellamy & Portin, 2011). These design principles describe the cultural orientation of the program toward the development of leaders and the role of practice in that development. According to Bellamy and Portin (2011), who describe an innovative program they have designed based on these principles, preparation programs should be designed to link the preparatory experience with the core work of instructional improvement. As such, preparation is conceptualized as being about the development of a prospective principal’s capacity to lead teaching and learning as well as to be an effective steward of school-based relationships. Related to this, the content of a preparation program should align with the district’s improvement efforts and be equally grounded in theory and practice. To these four principles, we also note that effective preparation requires problem-based learning activities (Bridges, 1992; Copland, 2001). Bridges (1992) characterized problem-based learning as an instructional strategy that “organizes knowledge around administrative problems rather than disciplines” (p. 20).

With these assumptions guiding our discussion, we propose three alternatives to existing preparation programs: a traditional program with math and science content infused into the curriculum; a program that bases its delivery on the strength of an inter-disciplinary faculty; and a program that builds from each of these adaptations but introduces the concept of a leadership specialization in math or science. As illustrated in Table 2, the alternatives we propose offer different strengths and weaknesses. In the discussion that follows, we touch on each of these program alternatives and detail both the strengths and weaknesses of the various models.

Table 2

*Three Alternatives to Existing Preparation Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Traditional Program with Math and Science Content Infused</th>
<th>Collaboratively Delivered Program with Inter-Disciplinary Faculty</th>
<th>Preparation as Leadership Specialists in Math or Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen leadership preparation by introducing math and science content.</td>
<td>Strengthen leadership preparation by leveraging faculty expertise and program content.</td>
<td>Strengthen leadership preparation by introducing a content specialization related to instructional leadership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Collaboratively Delivered Program with Inter-Disciplinary Faculty</th>
<th>Preparation as Leadership Specialists in Math or Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lower cost to implement</td>
<td>• Enhances the content expertise of faculty</td>
<td>• Provides students with in-depth examination of a content area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can be integrated without programmatic changes</td>
<td>• Requires modest changes to the preparation program curricula</td>
<td>• Offers an innovative model that could be used for other content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increases coherence of preparation program curriculum</td>
<td>• Increases coherence of preparation program curriculum</td>
<td>• Provides a clear connection to the internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited improvements in application of theoretical concepts</td>
<td>• May increase cost due to multiple faculty teaching courses</td>
<td>• Potentially narrows the scope of leadership preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faculty may or may not be familiar with the math/science content</td>
<td>• Depends on faculty commitment to teach in an inter-disciplinary program</td>
<td>• Requires modification to existing academic requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not address issues related to alignment with the internship</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Depends on faculty commitment to teach in a specialized program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traditional Program with Math and Science Content Infused

The first alternative is the most conservative in that it merely adapts an existing program by introducing new content related to math and science. The alternative might be appealing to colleges and educational leadership programs, as it would be reasonably inexpensive to implement and would not require substantial modifications from external credentialing boards. In this alternative, we presume that courses on instructional leadership would continue to emphasize models or theories of principal instructional leadership. For example, the bulk of readings would still relate to general theories of instructional leadership (e.g., Blase & Blase, 2003; Nelson & Sassi, 2000). However, the instructor might choose to integrate Steven Leinwand’s (2000) text, Sensible Mathematics: A Guide for School Leaders, to provide insights into leadership associated with improvements in math. Further, texts such as Sousa’s (2007) How the Brain Learns Mathematics might be added to familiarize aspiring principals with the cognitive processes that occur when learning mathematical concepts. To enhance the instruction further, the faculty member might integrate other resources related to brain
development and mathematics (Ronis, 2006), leadership and its relation to student learning (Fink, Markholdt, Copland, & Bransford, 2011; Leithwood & Louis, 2012), and research related to differentiated instruction (Benjamin, 2002). The combination of these resources would strengthen the student’s experience with to math and science content.

While this alternative represents an improvement over existing preparation programs, it does little to help aspiring principals develop leadership skills specifically related to instruction in math or science classrooms. This, we feel, is the core weakness of many preparation programs and is not addressed by this alternative. Additionally, the model maintains the survey approach to leadership preparation, which we believe does not adequately prepare principals for leadership in content areas. The survey approach emphasizes breadth at the expense of depth and misses opportunities to connect academic courses and the applied learning opportunities provided with the administrative internship. Thus, for this discussion and in the proposals which follow, we treat the concept of infusing math and science content into a preparation program as a starting point for any programmatic change. Each of the alternatives that follow includes new content specifically with math and science.

**Collaboratively Delivered Program with Inter-Disciplinary Faculty**

The second alternative strengthens the delivery of the program by integrating faculty from across disciplines. Whereas the first proposal largely reflected a curricular change, this proposal combines curricular changes with changes in the program faculty. It reflects the assumption that many educational leadership faculty lack deep understanding of specific content areas and that the absence of this specialization can be addressed by incorporating other education colleagues. The alternative takes the stance that faculty from across a school or college of education should be engaged in developing future school leaders. In a program emphasizing leadership for math and science, for example, educational leadership faculty might serve as co-instructors with faculty who have expertise in math or science education. We envision the educational leadership faculty providing the expertise in leadership theories and perspectives while a colleague from teaching and learning provides expertise in pedagogy and content. Although we emphasize math and science as a focus, a similar approach might be used with language arts or literacy, bilingual education, or special education, depending on the needs of the school districts served by the program.

To illustrate how an inter-disciplinary approach might work, consider the example of an instructional leadership course. In many programs, an instructional leadership course serves as a theoretical introduction to the instructional improvement work of a school principal. Faculty provide the broad theoretical frames that researchers have empirically found to explain how successful principals engage in leader-
ship actions that improve instruction in their buildings. This introduction serves the conceptual needs of the program but does little to make explicit connections to leadership practice. In a collaboratively delivered program, an educational leadership faculty member might co-teach with a faculty member who has experience in math or science education. The combination would provide students with access to a strong theoretical expert and an instructional expert. The following scenario might be possible in a collaboratively-delivered program:

Faculty develop a course designed to prepare aspiring principals for the work of instructional leadership. The primary goal of the course is to introduce the student to both the theoretical and practical dimensions of principal leadership using math and science instruction as the point of reference. Throughout the course, the student receives instruction from both an educational leadership faculty member and a faculty from teaching and learning. The leadership faculty member sensitizes the student to the leadership challenges posed by inequitable student achievement in math and science. They also describe the generalized school improvement process. A central goal for the educational leadership faculty member is to contextualize the need for leadership action in the area of math and science as well as to consistently frame inadequate performance in math and science so that a student comes to understand how he or she could present the issue to his or her staff.

To this point, the course proceeds much as a traditional course would in that it has emphasized the conceptual ideas related to instructional leadership. However, after introducing students to the leadership challenges associated with improving math and science achievement, the faculty member from teaching and learning might begin connecting the discussion to the work of classroom teachers and provide opportunities for the students to practice instructional leadership behaviors with an individual who can emulate a teacher’s response.

To complement the concepts presented by the leadership faculty, the teaching and learning faculty member provides students with an introduction to research on best practice in math and science. Lectures and presentations focus on questions such as “What is good math instruction? What does good instruction look like? How do you tell if students master the concept or idea?” As part of this effort, the faculty member shows students videotaped model lessons in math and science with the students and faculty then engaging in a debriefing about what they saw. In addition, the faculty members model for the students how they might conduct a conversation about improving practice with a struggling teacher. At times, the faculty member assumes the role of a classroom teacher and allows the students to practice offering feedback much as they would in a school.

While this change might not appear dramatic, the integration of faculty with different expertise reflects a significant departure from existing programs in that it provides significant opportunities to deeply engage students with the content. For example, the combination of faculty pro-
vides opportunities for students to practice leadership in new and innovative ways. Consider the following activity:

After learning about the connection between instructional leadership and math instruction, students participate in hands-on learning activities designed to introduce the concepts of project-based learning and to model how they—as principals—work with their staff to develop a shared understanding of what effective instruction in the content areas entails. The goal of these activities is to model how to design professional development to engage classroom teachers in considering how math or science instruction might be improved, as well as modelling the kind of hands-on learning activities that are effective when engaging students. To facilitate this experience, the faculty might, for example, provide students with supplies needed to experience project-based learning through constructing a small windmill. Their task is to design and build a windmill that would allow them to generate power for a community or lift an industrial load from a truck. After they demonstrate their windmills, the students and faculty engage in a dialogue about ways that they could make these activities relevant to different student groups and how they could, if needed, work with resistant teachers.

As illustrated, the scenario introduces certification students to the kind of hands-on learning that researchers indicate is essential for student success in math and science. It also simulates what a principal could do to engage staff in thinking about math or science instruction differently once assigned to a school. In this example, the students in the program reap the benefits of an experienced leadership scholar and an experienced teacher educator, as well as activities that are specifically tailored to content area. As a result, the connections between leadership theory and leadership practice are made explicit and the simulated professional development activity serves as an opportunity for modeling and reflection.

While this alternative improves existing preparation activities, it does present two significant challenges for educational leadership programs. First, the introduction of faculty from multiple disciplines who co-teach courses could result in increased cost to deliver the programs. While this may not pose a significant challenge to many colleges, those facing budget cuts due to declining state support for public universities may not be as amenable to this alternative. Further, as with any inter-disciplinary program, the success or failure of the program’s delivery largely depends on the willingness of the faculty to work collaboratively to deliver the courses as well as to establish shared commitments about what should be covered within the context of the program.

**Preparation as Leadership Specialists**

The final alternative we propose represents the most significant break with existing preparation program designs. The alternative introduces the concept of a content specialization for school leaders. Where-
as many preparation programs provide students with exposure to a wide range of topics and issues, the third alternative substantially narrows the focus of the program to prepare principals or teacher leaders with specific leadership skills. As such, it represents a significant break from preparing principals as generalists and replaces it with programs designed to prepare principals with a deeper understanding of instruction in specific areas. This alternative emerges from increasing interest on the part of the academic and philanthropic community in developing “turnaround principals,” or principals who possess specific skills needed to improve student learning in specific areas. Further, it reflects the growing view that a tight connection between preparation programs and school districts is essential for shared programmatic success.

To achieve this specialization, the third alternative we propose infuses the program curricula with specific content and relies on an inter-disciplinary faculty. These are reforms that are essential to an improved focus on math and science content. The alternative also changes the program model by replacing general courses on instructional leadership with targeted content seminars aimed at developing principals’ knowledge of instruction in specific domains. While an overarching conception of instructional leadership might guide the program, for example a program might use the concept of leadership for learning as a guide (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003); each seminar would help the students learn to apply their leadership within a content-specific context. In this discussion, we assume that content relates to math and science.

Much as in the previous alternative, principal certification students would complete a series of problem-based or performance-based tasks under the direction of an inter-disciplinary faculty. However, unlike the previous alternatives, the activities presented would be aligned with content areas. These would extend beyond the traditional activities such as formulating a school improvement plan, developing a communication strategy, or conducting a survey of school-level resources, to include activities specifically tailored to educational leadership for math and science instructional leadership. For example, a group of students might be presented with a scenario asking them to formulate a leadership response to declining student achievement in ninth grade algebra. The scenario might be presented in the following manner:

Assume you are the new principal at Merlot High School. Ninth grade students have consistently performed below the district average in Algebra, scoring between 20 and 25 points below their peers in the district. The achievement gap is widest between English and non-English speaking students. As the new principal, your task is to analyze the achievement data provided by the district’s assessment office and develop an action plan to respond. The plan must include an analysis of the existing practices used to support math and science as well as a discussion of measures that will be used to monitor your school’s progress over time.
The scenario provides students with an opportunity to work within a specific content area to acquire leadership skills that they could then employ in a real setting. Related to this activity, a student might be asked to plan and lead a professional development session focused on improving math achievement at his or her internship site. The purpose of both activities is to weave together theory and practice so that students acquire specialized skills in relation to a particular content area. Whereas the first and second alternative maintain many of the generalized concepts of school administration or principal leadership, the third alternative provides specific opportunities for students to link their leadership development with a content area.

Implications

As much as the proposals we present offer opportunities to integrate math and science more tightly into a principal preparation program, they also provide a template for introducing other subjects into principal preparation programs. For example, using the same model, a preparation program could include special education, ELL or bilingual education, or even literacy, depending on the specific needs of the community and nearby school districts. We see this as one of the strengths of the proposal, as it opens opportunities for programs to introduce content that directly relates to the challenges facing school districts and supports the development of a collaborative relationship that researchers have deemed essential to the improvement of university-based preparation programs (Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010). Further, the alternatives address one of the primary criticisms of preparation programs—that programs represent a combination of classes lacking a strong connection to the principal’s role as an instructional leader (Hess & Kelly, 2007).

The models also provide possibilities for universities interested in providing certificated administrators the option to secure additional training or specialization in specific fields. This approach has been widely cited in research on teacher education, which calls for the establishment of a teacher preparation continuum in order to constantly expand a teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Applied to content-specific leadership, principals could return to their preparation program to participate in professional learning activities related to specific content areas. For example, a principal might be initially trained in math and science. After a few years of service, the principal might return to acquire training in ESL or ELL instructional strategies. One of the strengths of this model is that it would establish a continuing connection between the administrator and the university, as well as provide the university with opportunities to generate fee-for-service professional development revenues.

Research on principal preparation programs indicates that the most effective programs often break from the traditional model that provides students with a series of disconnected classes. As Hale and Moorman (2003) not-
ed, the most effective programs are “cohort-based and serve 20-25 students who enter the program at the same time and are bonded into a community of learners” (p. 10). Moreover, these programs emphasize extensive application of theoretical constructs related to effective instructional leadership. In short, “students are given opportunities to solve real problems in real schools” (p. 10). In the third proposal we offer, the integrated program—including a field-based internship that takes place in the student’s home school and nearby schools—seizes on this structure while linking it to specialized content. We see this link as critical to providing the kind of problem-based preparation which has been shown to consistently be a strong alternative to other methods (Bridges, 1992). This method allows principals to experience instructional leadership behaviors, to learn effective leadership skills, and to develop and articulate theories-of-action which support sustained school improvement.

A Response to the Skeptics

The proposals we advance in this article, particularly the third proposal, represent a significant change to the focus of preparation programs. We anticipate that there are likely many who read these proposals with skepticism or reservation. We anticipate that many will argue that the content of preparation programs does not allow for an explicit focus on discipline-specific areas. Related to this, we anticipate that some will argue that being a principal requires a breadth of skills that makes content specialization unnecessary. Some may suggest that state regulations governing preparation programs make it impossible to change content without lengthy approval and review. Others may fear that formal cohort-based structures will lower program enrollment. Each of these concerns is legitimate and worthy of consideration. These alternatives are not meant as a panacea for programs but as a starting point for a thoughtful discussion about the relationship between leadership preparation and leadership for math and science.

What is also true is that there is ample research which suggests that school districts are inherently dissatisfied with many practices currently employed in university-based preparation programs and many states are responding to their dissatisfaction by allowing districts and programs with no affiliation to a university to prepare leaders (Orr et al., 2010). Surveys of superintendents indicate that they are not getting the kind of leaders that they need in order to improve student learning (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003). Moreover, there are surveys of principals who say that their preparation did not pay sufficient attention to student learning or classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Indeed, as a high school principal in the state of Washington wrote on a recent survey about his or her preparation experience related to math and science, “I think administrators are somehow okay with the way math and science teachers teach because they may or may not know the content that well.” Ultimately, we hope the alternatives presented serve as an invitation to join a dif-
ferent conversation about the scope and direction of preparation programs for school leaders that are possible. Most importantly, we see these alternatives as a call to be innovative and bold in making improvements to university-based preparation programs.

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