Reality Check: Designing a New Leadership Program for the 21st Century*

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Abstract

The need to redesign principal preparation programs for increasing student achievement has been realized by universities across the nation. This example of the design and implementation process of a new school leadership program contributes to the knowledge base. The reality check is in the lessons learned and challenges faced.

NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of the Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a scholarly contribution to the knowledge base in educational administration.

School improvement cannot occur without good leadership, and leadership knowledge and skills cannot be developed without sound school leadership preparation programs.Today, the best school leaders have cultivated their craft through many years of experience, dependent upon trial and error and self-reflection, and professional development. However, this method does not meet the need to produce the quantity of quality school leaders needed to turn around poor and failing schools and school districts. A report by the Southern Regional Education Board (2006) stated, "Given the urgency for increased student achievement, it would seem that redesigning principal preparation programs around leadership practices that have a high impact on students' learning would be a high priority at every university. Yet, it is not" (p. 2). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2000) and research substantiates both a scant supply of talented candidates to lead schools and the importance of these individuals in improving student achievement (Mazzeo, 2003).

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For the past decade, university school leadership preparation programs have been under vigorous scrutiny by such researchers as Levine (2005) and Murphy (1992). For example, Levine (2005) claimed the quality of most preparation programs for school leaders ranges from "inadequate to appalling" (p.24). In the Accidental Principal, Hess and Kelly (2005) stated that when the contents of 31 programs across the United States were studied, researchers concluded that principals are not mastering the skills necessary to lead school improvement and increase student achievement in the 21st Century.

The Research Base of School Leadership Preparation Programs

Recent research has focused on the need to redesign principal preparation programs to select the best and brightest teacher leaders, provide skills to lead teachers in increasing student achievement, and meet the challenges of standards-based accountability (Grogan & Andrews 2002; Portin, Knapp, Murphy & Beck, 2003) According to Murphy (1992), the most potent forces for leadership development occur in the context of ongoing field work rather than formal classroom settings. When colleges teach subject matter in isolation of field experience, this knowledge has little or no transference to practice (Murphy, 1992). Consequently, the concern of school leaders and researchers is that the knowledge graduate candidates learn in university classrooms is inapplicable to real-life situations and challenges for school improvement.

In order to design an exemplary program, distributed and shared leadership must be practiced at all levels—state, university, and district. Shared/distributed leadership is neither a top-down nor a total grass roots model. A shared decision making model is the best for total commitment and sustainability. This has prompted the use and development of partnerships, especially at the university/district level. Successful partnerships have been developed in places such as East Tennessee State University (West, 2003), University of Kentucky (Browne-Ferrigno, 2004) and other universities across the country. During district partnership sessions, East Tennessee based its program on themes rather than distinct subjects (West, 2003). The University of Kentucky Partnership identified the lack of knowledge and dispositions for instructional leadership as one of the main needs of preparation and professional development programs (Browne-Ferrigno, 2004). The goal of this paper is to discuss the lessons learned and challenges faced in developing a partnership program at Southeastern Louisiana University in hopes of helping others in their quest to improve school leadership preparation program.

Louisiana's Redesign of School Leadership Preparation Programs

In 2001, the state of Louisiana formed a partnership with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) that has been instrumental in the development of school leader preparation programs. Support in new program development and teaching strategies have been offered to help university/district partnerships. In spring 2005 the Southeastern Louisiana Partnership began the recruitment, selection, and implementation process for the new school leader preparation program and professional development of sitting school leaders. This article focuses on the LEAD Southeastern Louisiana Partnership; LEAD is an acronym for Leading, Engaging, Assessing, and Developing (School Leaders) in Southeastern Louisiana. A knowledge and skills base for school leadership preparation has been developed and is constantly being reviewed and renewed with the assistance of such groups as the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Two major problems with respect to principal preparation exist: (1) How to bring this new knowledge base to school leaders in the field through professional development, and (2) How to design and implement leadership preparation programs to effectively teach these skills. The focus here is on the latter, concerned especially with examining the creation and implementation of the new research-based program at Southeastern Louisiana University. The creation process began in 2001, implementation with the first cohort of students in fall 2005, and the collection of the first assessments and surveys in May 2006. An example of the design and implementation process of a new school leader preparation program and the challenges of the change process are presented in this article. Until 2005, the plans had only been on paper, and now the reality check is in the implementation.

Leadership Development Framework

Leadership occurs at all levels of the learning community. In England, Southworth and Doughty (2006) describe the leadership development framework of the National College for School Leadership as five stages of leadership from the teacher stage to consultant stage. The five stages are: (1) Leading from the Middle, (2) National Professional Qualification for Headship, (3) Early Headship, (4) Advanced Leadership, and

(5) Consultant Leadership. Although not as highly developed as England's program, the new program in Louisiana and at Southeastern Louisiana University has recognized three stages where leaders can benefit from knowledge and skill development: teacher leader, school building leader, and district leader.

Each stage of educational development trains school leaders during real field-based experience with district and university mentors. The goal is to prepare exemplary people who can make immediate use of their newly learned skills in the school in which they are leading or in a new leadership position. The state of Louisiana, the university, and school districts are working together to align every aspect of the process. Endorsements, certifications, and/or degrees result at the successful completion of each level, with ongoing support and training guidance from the LEAD Southeastern Louisiana Partnership and the state. The purpose of LEAD is to recruit and select exemplary educational leaders at all levels of leadership identified in our state. Three core programs (described in full at the state's website, www.leadlouisian.net[1]) are designed to prepare teacher leaders, entry-level principals, and superintendents.

Teacher Leader Endorsement

This endorsement reflects the theory of shared and distributed leadership and is designed to assist teachers improve effectiveness in raising student achievement and leading faculty teams. The goal is to create a leadership team of two to four teacher leaders with in each school in our service area. At the completion of the program each teacher leader has the option of continuing in the degree program or assuming the role of leading school-based teams. The requirements include a teaching certificate, 3 years successful teaching experience, and completion of a state-approved Teacher Leader Institute which incorporates:

1. A minimum of 6 graduate hours (90 contact hours).
2. A combination of face-to-face and field-based professional development activities that may include the use of a cohort approach.
3. Support from and mentoring by current outstanding administrators serving as mentors and facilitators.
4. An electronic component (online or compressed video) to ensure each participant's access to key resources and to build a statewide network of qualified administrator candidates that may include the development of cohorts.
5. The development and presentation of a culminating portfolio that provides evidence that knowledge gained and skills acquired are aligned with national and state leader standards.

Educational Leader Certificate – Level 1 and 2

The Educator Leader Certificate – Levels 1 and 2 are mandated for all who aspire to school and district leadership positions, assistant principal, and principal and includes "on-the-job" training and mentoring from an advanced school leader. Components of the certificate include the completion of a competency-based graduate degree preparation program in the area of educational leadership from a regionally accredited institution of higher education; a passing score (168 recommended)on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA); upon employment, enrollment in a 2-year Educational Leader Induction Program, which must be completed within 3 years. At the successful culmination of this induction, a Level 2 Certificate is awarded.

Educational Leader Certificate – Level 3

Educational Leader Certificate – Level 3 is inclusive of Levels 1 and 2 and is requisite of those who aspire to become a superintendent and may be enhanced by an earned doctorate degree (Ed.D.) from the new Consortium for School Leadership, a joint program from Southeastern Louisiana University and University of Louisiana at Lafayette. To earn this certificate, students must have 5 years successful experience at the level of principal or above; a passing score (154 recommended) on the School Superintendent Assessment (SSA); and a passing score on the School Leadership Licensure Assessment, which is a new certification test from the Educational Testing Service School Leader Portfolio Assessment. To renew any certification, each educator must complete a minimum of 150 Continuous Learning Units of Professional Development over a 5-year period that is consistent with Individual Professional Growth Plan and that includes updating the educational leader portfolio.

How to Design a School Leader Preparation Program

The new school leadership program at Southeastern Louisiana University incorporates the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC)standards and draws from the best practices of both the transforma-

tional and shared instructional leadership models in order to develop the leadership skills of aspiring school leaders (Marks & Printy, 2003). The new preparation program combines the two models of leadership into an integrated approach. Furthermore, the new program blends the critical mass of technical, human, and educational forces, as recommended by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), into the professional content (the what) and theory (the why) with practical skills (the how and when) through case studies, simulations, and extensive field-based experiences.

Following the creation of a partnership with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in 2003, the state of Louisiana mandated that all universities redesign preparation programs for school leaders be based on the new standards, which are reflected in the state certification guidelines. In addition, all university degree programs are required to be National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) certified.

The LEAD Southeastern Partnership differs from the other Louisiana university/district partnerships in that it is composed of urban, suburban, and rural school districts with dramatic demographic differences. Leadership is context-specific, as the National College for School Leadership in England discovered (Southworth & Doughtly, 2006). The program requires diverse field experience throughout order to qualify graduates to work in a variety of settings.

The plan provides professional development for existing school leaders and improving conditions at low performing schools to increase student achievement. Located on the northern shore of Lake Ponchatrain, Louisiana, populations within the partnership districts have grown since the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina and thus the need for highly qualified school leaders is of foremost importance. Current issues of culture, diversity, social justice, and various socio-economic groups are prevalent in this area of the Deep South and add to the many challenges faced in this era of high-stakes testing and high expectations. The partnership has attempted to design a leadership preparation program that will foster conditions of success for leadership in a variety of schools.

LEAD Southeastern Louisiana has allied with other leadership preparation programs, professional organizations, and related educational groups around the country to maintain a current knowledge base of best practices in principal preparation, related policy issues, and licensure and professional development for school leaders. These schools and organizations include LEAD Fairfax in Virginia, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), The Gallup Organization, and the SREB.

In 1975, Hills (cited in Murphy, 1992) stated that the educational administrator of the future should understand and be able to use the skills of developmental psychology, socialization, cultural variation, teaching and learning, instructional methods and materials, and curriculum development. Murphy (1992) recommended that the preparation program should becomprised of"the creation of learning communities that incorporate the understandings of the human condition; the infusion of content from a greater variety of areas, especially the humanities; and the use of instructional approaches that promote cooperative effort, dialog and reflection" (p. 146). According to Murphy, the goals for training school leaders should concentrate on the development of model educators. Each school leader is able to articulate and model the use of (1) an explicit set of values and beliefs, including a strong sense of social justice, to guide their actions; (2) developmental psychology, socialization, cultural variation, and instructional and curricular methods and materials; (3) problem solving and inquiry skills; and (4) shared leadership. Murphy (1992) has encouraged universities to use different training models that are thematic-integrated seminars incorporating the capacity to learn. Candidates should seek knowledge as a tool rooted in action and guided by cognition. Reading material should be the most current gathered from original sources.

Creating the Plan for School Leadership Preparation

During the early stages of the redesign effort, EDL faculty conducted semi-structured informal interviews with area principals. Many of the interviews took place at current practicum sites. The interviews were for the purpose of soliciting specific input from principals, such as sequencing, scheduling, and delivery of courses, the cohort concept, and the groups' perceptions regarding needed content, skills and field-based activities prior to assuming an educational administrator role. Principals were asked in which management/leadership areas they felt most prepared as they assumed their first administrative job and in which areas they felt the least prepared. The purpose was to seek input on the sequencing of courses, scheduling and delivery of courses, the cohort concept, and their perceived needs regarding needed content and activities prior to

assuming a school leadership role.

Following this, an advisory council was formed and this group conducted focus group interviews within their districts. All levels of input were acquired and critiqued by the advisory council to decide which to include in the plan. The draft of the new program and its rationale was presented by a team EDL faculty and district leaders, followed by small-group activities through which participants helped to incorporate standards into specific seminars and helped develop competency-based activities. (See Appendices A, B, and C for interview questions and additional responses.)

Southeastern Louisiana University professor David Stader (2003) constructed and field tested the Belief Matrix instrument. It was designed to guide discussions of the importance of understanding beliefs in decision-making and in formulating a shared school vision throughout the program. Candidates completed surveys regarding their perceptions of self efficacy in school leadership by using the instrument in guiding the clarification and articulation of their beliefs. The results of the study revealed that continued use of the instrument could be of benefit to the students and program. Continued research is being conducted on the Belief Matrix (Stader, 2003) effectiveness of field based skill development and impact on PK-12 student achievement.

The external critique of the plan for redesign of the school leader preparation program was administered by consultants from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Canada. They also met with university and district school leaders and attended focus group presentations, and made two recommendations: One, begin the graduate studies with instruction and field based work in leading teacher teams in how to review research data as a means of examining school context and selecting research based strategies for school improvement. Two, introduce the methods for facilitating a high performance learning culture and integrate these methods throughout the remaining seminars (Hill-Winstead & Stader, 2004). After 5 years of collaborative research and examination of best leadership practices, the new school leadership preparation program was approved for implementation in fall 2005.

Master of Education Degree in School Leadership

Recruitment and Selection

The first step of the LEAD program was to recruit experienced teachers. District leaders were requested to nominate exemplary teachers with a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience whom they viewed as possessing leadership capabilities as future school administrators. These teachers were invited to apply for admission to the university and enroll in the first seminar. During this semester, each candidate completes an application portfolio consisting of letters of recommendation, writing samples, artifacts with corresponding assessments from the first seminar, Graduate Record Exam Scores, transcripts, and teaching and leadership experiences. As part of our partnership with the Gallup Organization, each candidate also is assessed for leadership dispositions online called "Principal Insight." The selection process culminates with a formal group and individual interview scored according to a rubric and the Belief Matrix (Stader, 2003). The interviewers are a team of district and university leaders who make the final selections after analyzing the participant profiles.

Structure of Seminars

As an integral part of the program is a series of seminars with embedded field-based experiences, culminating in a full internship so that graduates may immediately enter the principalship as "turn around" change agents. Field-based experiences are planned by university professors with the students and their clinical supervisors/mentors in order to design relevant activities that help the aspiring school leaders develop leadership skills that produce improved teaching and learning. Through the seminar and field experience, each student maintains a reflective journal. In addition, reflections are self analyzed using the Belief Matrix (Stader, 2003) which has proven successful for the purposes of defining one's growth and development of skills and dispositions. Finally,rigorous, ongoing assessment is conducted throughout the seminars. For example, students are required to lead a team of faculty members in several activities, which are observed and assessed by the university instructors of record and/or district mentor, using a preset rubric for each. Who developed the rubric and what are some key items on it?

Face-to-face class sessions are team taught with other professors and school district leaders. Students proceed through the program as a cohort, sentence is too long—make it two sentences) mirroring the type

of learning community that they need to form in their schools as leader. The cohort model facilitates the building of group and individual knowledge and the solving of problems from multiple viewpoints.

Thematic seminarsinclude research-based best practices from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), ELCCStandards, action research, portfolio development, and technology utilization. The traditional knowledge base of leadership/management that features educational theory, history, management, school/community relations, human resource management, finance and law are integrated throughout the program. The curriculum spirals with reviewed concepts, new concepts, discovery, and reflection. Each seminar is infused with case study analysis and simulation exercises of technical leadership, instructional leadership, and professional development for school improvement. The seminars build skills gradually, from observing, participating, leading small teams to whole faculty, and finally to leading district teams.

Seminar I: Facilitating a high performance learning community. This establishes the foundation of aligning core beliefs with strategic structures and mission and vision of establishing distributed accountability. Along with these skills, candidates are taught to lead teacher teams in discussing school improvement. They begin by deciding what kinds of data are needed to depict a clear picture of the school's present level of achievement, collecting the data, and finally planning activities for school improvement. Some of the data is readily available from standardized methods of collection. The teams decide what other data is needed to examine school practices, what students are taught, how they are taught and what is expected of them. The team analyzes data and studies research about teaching methods that have proven successful for students. This provides an initial plan for school improvement so they will have the skills needed to exercise the best practices of making data-driven decisions and building a vision. At this point, training in technologyis infused to introduce integration of technology with teaching and learning, as well as to assist with the establishment of a student's electronic portfolio. After successfully completing the first seminar, participants receive their Teacher Leader endorsement from the Louisiana Department of Education. This is a new certificate endorsement awarded by the state.

Seminar II: Organizational management and legal issues. The focus here is on the legal and fiscal issues of organizing the learning environment, building and leading effective teams, and coaching for school improvement. At this point and throughout the program, candidates are required to complete field-based activities at a variety of school levels and central office settings. Through these activities, the candidates lay a foundation for the practices of collaboration and shared decision-making by leading teams through problem-solving, consensus-building, and information-sharing. They are also expected to demonstrate efficient and effective use of time, space, people, and resources to maximize student learning. Through case studies, students utilize federal regulations, state laws, and local policies to inform decision-making; through simulations, they make ethical decisionsin various school management situations.

Seminar III: Human resources and school-community relations. Here participants explore communication with the learning community, staffing and induction, and needs-based professional development of teachers. Developing effective interpersonal relationships with faculty, staff, and community is the focus of the course, which lays the foundational skills needed for best practices such as developing relationships and communicating effectively. Throughout this seminar, students complete field-based activities of human resource management, including recruitment, selection, induction, and professional development.

Seminar IV: School leader as instructional facilitator. This program strand concentrates on leading improvement in literacy and numeracy instruction, as well as methods of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students. The instructional program is explored through an analysis and evaluation of curriculum, student assessment, and instruction. Emphasis is placed on the supervision of the teaching and learning process as it relates to continuous school improvement. The candidates learn how standards, teaching, and learning are dynamic structures in constant flux; thus, the best practices of mapping and monitoring the curriculum are continuously practiced.

Seminar V: School leader as change agent. School improvement with an emphasis on the importance of change and the best practices of action research and data analysis is the objective of this course. Each candidate concentrates on leading change by understanding self and others, directing staff in the creation of professional development, and working with others in creating a personalized learning environment. Students make final preparations for the action research project to be completed by the end of the final semester prior

to graduation.

Seminar VI: The internship. The final seminar is a full internship, with candidates participating in the beginning and ending activities of the school year, totaling 150 hours of field-based experience. During this time, the action research project is completed, in which the students and their respective stakeholders collaborate on a selected topic for school improvement. More advanced technology training is included in this seminar; it is designed primarily to provide guidance in the refinement of the candidates' electronic portfolios and to support their action research projects. Leadership projects and artifacts are maintained in an electronic portfolio that demonstrates individual growth. The prospective leaders work to refine their electronic portfolios for the final defense in their educational leadership master's degree program.

1 Selection and Assignment of Field Sites

Recent research (e.g., Bottoms, 2004; Davis, 2005) supports the use of practicing administrators in the field as role models to mentor and help close the gaps among leadership knowledge, theory, and practice. Mentored experiences over an extended period of time provide the opportunity for greater understanding on the part of those mentored and are designed to demonstrate the application of the knowledge and skills emphasized in each instructional seminar.

In the School Leader Preparation program, worksites include public and private educational units. Those schools and systems used in the preparation of candidates are diverse in community type, school type, enrollment, grade configuration, race, income level, academic performance scores and/or performance designations.

According to Bottoms (2004), educational administration programs need to select knowledgeable, experienced administrators to serve as coaches and mentors. In the program, potential mentors are nominated by their supervisors and/or superintendents. Each mentor is selected based on leadership experience, certification type and area, professional activities, personal qualities, successful use of technology, commitment to mentoring interns, and successful participation in a mentor training seminar. The mentor training seminar provides information on tools and strategies to support and supervise field-based administrative experiences and consists of a program overview, coaching techniques, shared decision-making activities, and assessment and evaluation procedures for assessing program candidates.

2 Assessment of Candidates

Assessment of program participants is accumulated as artifacts in an electronic portfolio platform of PASSPORT, developed by the Louisiana Department of Education. Artifacts are documents that provide evidence of a standards-based leadership experience and include traditional written narratives and tests, self-assessments, and field-based observation assessments. Periodically throughout the six semesters of the program, candidates must successfully pass through a series of "portals" or gates in order to continue to the next program component. They are required to submit a minimum of two artifacts per seminar for their portfolio. These documents are evaluated using standards-based rubrics developed by university faculty and advisory council members. Students are required to cite the relevant standards for school leaders with respect to the evidence submitted. In addition, each portfolio artifact is accompanied by a reflective summary describing how it documents mastery of the related standard.

The portfolio documents become part of the formative and summative evaluation process. In addition to traditional methods (e.g., written work, tests) for evaluating and monitoring student progress, the acquisition of skills associated with each seminar is documented by the artifacts and evaluated through the use of rubrics. As students progress through the program, each portfolio entry is evaluated by the professor of record. As part of the summative program assessment, artifacts are formally presented for defense before a committee of graduate faculty members and field administrators serving as mentors.

3 Methods for Evaluating and Modifying Program Components

Program evaluation regarding the effectiveness of curriculum and field activities in meeting the needs of their respective school districts is being conducted through surveys completed by program participants, mentors and/or clinical supervisors, and university faculty. Over time, school leadership success factors (e.g., professional development opportunities, student discipline, and teacher satisfaction) that are not measured by traditional accountability reports, notably standardized test scores, are examined to determine the longitudinal impact of the school leadership preparation program and its prospective leaders. For each field-based project completed and implemented by candidates, a self-developed survey is distributed to stakeholders (e.g., teachers, parents, students [as appropriate], administrators) to determine their level of satisfaction with the overall performance of the candidates during that seminar. Additionally, follow-up surveys are distributed to school and district administrators to determine their perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of program participants involved in field experiences and internships at their respective sites.

Each candidate is surveyed at the end of Seminars II and V to determine individual levels of satisfaction with the program and the quality of instruction. These evaluations are used to provide the data necessary to monitor, evaluate, and modify the program as needed. The data are collected through the PASS-PORT electronic assessment system. Other data, such as student opinions of teaching and exit surveys are used to provide additional information regarding the quality of the program.

Analysis of the results is conducted by the university staff and members of the advisory council, who then carry on the processes of program evaluation, formal discussion and dialogue, and collaborative decision making before making recommendations for program improvement. Approved changes are then systematically studied to measure their effects on the program and, consequently, on the leaders being produced by this program.

Results from Surveys and Assessments

The first two cohorts completed surveys, some individually and some in focus groups. Mentors and field site school principals completed an open-ended evaluation of the program. Superintendents wrote letters of opinion. Professors completed an electronic evaluation.

Cohort Surveys and Assessments

When asked if the first 6 hours met their expectations, students asked for more field experiences and less lecture (face-to-face) time, additional assessment during the semester, and extra field time with their mentors. They felt a lack of district and school recognition, support, and approval. Some felt afraid to talk to their site principal, even when they had a school leader mentor from another site. Some reported that other teachers who had completed another graduate program complained about the attention and release time for cohort members. They reported the need for more communication with mentors and release time for field experience. The artifacts generated by each student in their electronic portfolios have been, on the whole, judged to be of high quality. (See Appendix D.)

Evaluations from Mentors and Field Site School Principals

When asked about their impression of the program, school leaders notedthat they really appreciated the attention and skill development for aspiring school leaders and wished that their preparation program had been this intense. They expressed a concern for time spent away from the classroom to conduct field experience. A need for a thorough mentor preparation workshop was noted. Several respondents expressed appreciation for the advanced learning they received as a result of site visits by the university mentor: as in, "You have made me think of my school and student achievement in new ways I never thought of before. I have learned so much from this experience." One principal took the opposite point of view by criticizing the program when he said, "I will encourage any of my teachers who want to get a master of education degree in school leadership to go to Mississippi. They don't have this crazy program there. Teachers should be able to get a degree without all of this interference from the university. I don't have time to deal with this." Clarify what this quote means

Letters from Superintendents

Superintendents expressed concerns of sustainability and wondered if their district could continue the leadership program if funds were reduced. Others did not want their teachers out of the classroom and

thus were opposed to release time. Some expressed concern about nominating teachers for the leadership program, resulting in perceived favoritism and complaints. One superintendent said, "I am proceeding with caution about this different way of preparing school leaders. I need to know more." She continued to explain that she had not been active in the design of the program, and had sent a representative in her place. Now, during implementation, she felt like she needed to be more involved in the decision making process.

Survey of Professor Views

Some professors believed that the new program could make a real impact on PK-12 student achievement and school leadership. A few felt that the most of the workload for design and implementation was being placed on junior faculty, without compensation for tenure and promotion. Other professors were very concerned about the amount of field work and didn't know how they were going to have time to travel to districts. These professors were concerned about their subject area being covered thoroughly due to the lack of real lecture time. Lecturing about subjects such as law, finance, history of education, and other subjects were a very important missing ingredient of the new program. Since the content and method of delivery of many parts of the program had been mandated through the process of state approval and strict curriculum alignment to standards, some professors believed that their academic freedom had been curtailed. Still, others believed that their academic freedoms had been breeched due to the.

Reality Check: Lessons Learned and Challenges Faced

Change is difficult, especially in the implementation stages. Even though partnerships were formed to create shared and distributed leadership for the development of the new preparation and development program, at this time some resistance to change is being experienced. Perhaps those who chose not to be involved in the design process may become involved now as the program is modified as an outcome of the program evaluations.

Not surprisingly, this new process of preparing school leaders through field experience was a major paradigm shift for area school leaders, especially superintendents. Assurances that this was a partnership and paradigm shift were difficult to accept by many area leaders. In addition, school district leaders were reluctant to nominate exemplary teachers for the program fearing accusations of favoritism from teachers. The shift to the new paradigm at the university level was met with the challenge to include more people in the process.

Field experiences are a challenge to manage. Some clinical supervisors and mentors have to experience additional professional development in order to provide appropriate guidance to candidates. During the implementation of the program, the university initially struggled with providing appropriate training of mentors as well as university staff. With training and additional support from SREB programs, such as the Training Mentors for School Improvement module, this process was better facilitated.

Future plans include addressing the challenges of diversity and social justice, moving away from the status quo, and finding new solutions to unanticipated problems. Murphy (1992) has stated that school leaders were often former teachers residing within a 25 to 50 mile radius of the school they now lead. Additionally, most schools seem to promote from within with little regard to skill. If a broader pool of leaders could be tapped, the educational and skill level may increase. It is hoped that a more national and global leadership community may be developed using the technology of distance learning and capstone experiences. In this way, professors, administrators, and administrative candidates could share and benefit from appropriate field experiences and unfamiliar perspectives in their region or state.

The authors believe that the new program of leadership development and preparation will be successful, even though the program is in its infancy. However, according to a study conducted by Davis (2005), leadership programs that were concept-driven, cohort-based, and field-based scored higher on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), received higher performance ratings by supervisors, and were perceived by teachers as being more effective. It is hoped that this new leadership program will train new leaders to make a notable difference in school improvement and student achievement in Southeastern Louisiana University's service area.

Conclusion

The recent focus on the importance of school leadership and its effects on school improvement has put school leader preparation programs under scrutiny and prompted them to redesign. Even though new

research is being conducted, the task of preparing educational administrators has suffered from a lack of clarity and paucity of systematic scholarly inquiry. This examination of Southeastern Louisiana University' new program contributes to the knowledge base for school leadership preparation because it is a leader in the arena of state, university, and school district(s) collaboration to educate all students effectively and equitably.

A deeper understanding about the impact of school leadership as a means for promoting social justice and democracy especially in the Deep South are needed. The ongoing outcomes of Southeastern Louisiana University's school leader preparation program may provide better understandings of how to integrate powerful transformative and instructional learning experiences into preparation program design, content, and field experience to develop leadership capacity. There is much to be learned as these new leadership preparation programs unfold throughout the nation. It is hoped that an ever-evolving research base will help all institutions of school leadership preparation and professional development to learn from each other.

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Appendix A

Beginning Principals

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

It may have seemed like you were "thrown to the wolves" when you became principals. Tell us what we need to teach new and aspiring principals.

1. What did you need to be successful?
2. What content in college classes did you need to use?
3. How should we address this content?
4. What types of field activities do candidates need?
5. How can we best prepare candidates to pass the licensure test?
6. What type of support do you need from the university?

Appendix B

Survey of Region 2 Superintendents and Administrators in Louisiana

The task before us: A RIGOROUS SELECTION SYSTEM

A rigorous system that chooses only the best candidates for principal preparation will encourage more talented educators to seek out leadership programs, National Governors Association. How can universities and school systems work together to "tap" or select the right individuals for leadership preparation? Here are some ideas gathered from brainstorming sessions at the SREB Leadership Initiative summer conference.

Please check the ideas that you will support for recruitment and selection in your district.

WHAT SHOULD WE CONSIDER?

_ Demonstrates success in raising achievement for all students
_ Shows leadership in coaching other teachers to raise student achievement
_ Recommended by high-performing principals
_ Implemented innovative learning strategies in their classrooms
_ Challenges all students through rigorous, standards-based teaching
_ Integrates technology into daily teaching
_ Good communications, human relations and organizational skills
_ Ability to motivate
_ National Board certified
_ won awards and recognition
_ earned a master's degree in a content area
_ Active in professional organizations
_ Provide professional development for other teachers
_ Worked collaboratively on teaching/learning issues
_ Written successful grant proposals focused on student achievement

[1] http://www.ucea.edu/

_ Works successfully on teaching teams
_ Can analyze research and apply it to practice
_ Uses student data and work samples to make instructional decisions
_ Shows leadership in the larger community
_ Articulates and implement a vision
_ Committed to continuous improvement
HOW SHOULD WE SCREEN POTENTIAL CANDIDATES?
_ Joint screening by university and school system leaders
_ Nomination by principals, peers and parents
_ Assessment tools like Myers-Briggs, leadership style inventories, 360-degree competency-based instruments
_ Self-assessment
_ Portfolios documenting teaching and leadership skills
_ Screening protocols based on the SREB leadership success factors
_ Direct interviews and conversations with peers
_ Observations and videos of classroom and peer teaching
_ Simulations and role plays
_ Biographical sketches
_ Demonstration of effective oral and written communications skills
_ Candidate analysis of case studies
_ Willingness to work in high-need schools
_ Mini-courses that expose potential candidates to the challenges of leadership
_ "Gateway" internships to gauge leadership potential
_ List other ideas

4 Block 1- Organizational Management

1. Bring the school vision to life by using it to guide shared-decision making about students and the instructional programs enhancing staff/ school and community relations.
2. Monitor and evaluate school operations and use feedback appropriately to enhance effectiveness/manage fiscal resources/time management.
3. Apply laws, policies, regulations and procedures fairly, consistently, wisely and compassionately that promotes positive school environment.

Additional Activities: must have the ability to organize, oversee, and promote special education.

5 Block 2 - Building Management

1. Maintain open communication with the school community, and effectively convey high expectations for student learning to the community.
2. Work collaboratively with the school community to develop and maintain a shared school vision.
3. Use research and data from multiple sources to design and implement professional dev. act.
4. Provide incentives for learning and growth and encourage participation in professional dev. activities at national/ state and parish levels.
5. To effectively use teacher evaluation.

Additional Activities:

- · Scenarios to role play.
  · Attend two similar parental involvement activities and compare.
  · Add: Conflict Resolution .

Concerns:

1. $$ - new limitations on funds.
2. Assessments: individual or group?

6 Block 3- Community Relations

1. Write a mission statement.
2. Communicate mission statement to school community.
3. Understand techniques/strategies for shared decision making and team building.
4. Identify organizational structure and team members and the role of each.
5. Develop an instrument to survey the school community foster and strengthen the vision.

7 Block 4 - School Leader as Instructional Facilitator

1. Analyze test scores – individual, grade level, school wide, district wide.
2. Observe, assess and evaluate instruction.
3. Analysis of lesson plans.
4. Knowledge in curriculum development by grade level and subject area.
5. Implement and follow through with the evaluative process.

Concerns:
Time/ support from the university

8 Block 5 - School Leader as Change Agent

1. Strategies for monitoring progress.
2. Methods of data collection.
3. Research, measurement, and assessment strategies.
4. Technological use.
5. Security and allocating resources.
6. Interview process for new teachers (design the school process0. Include interpretation of SAM.
7. Question: Timeline for cohorts.

9 Block 6 - Internship

1. Each system will be responsible for their own interns.
2. Concern over the number of contact hours: 2/6 hours.
3. Different setting important.
4. Involved in the opening and closing of schools.
5. Financing the interns?
6. How much involved in personal? Legal Question.

Appendix D
FOCUS QUESTIONS AND SUMMARY OF ANSWERS
COHORTS 1 and 2

This is the protocol for your focus group discussion. None of your professors will be present. This ensures that your discussion and responses will be private. You will need to select a facilitator and a recorder. Discuss each question and provide your input. Thank you for your participation.

Did the first seminar meet your expectations?

- need more practical, real-life field experience
- need less lecture-type presentation of information – more hands-on
- we liked our mentors and appreciated field experiences, especially shadowing
- can SLU do more to encourage district participation?
- more feedback from instructors throughout the semester

What does a Teacher Leader need?

- district recognition, support and approval
- district communication with principals
- principal support and encouragement (afraid to talk to their site principal)
- greater communication
- time off from teaching position (release time)

What would you like to learn in Seminar 2?

- focus on legal issues
- what is coaching?

What would you like to learn in remaining seminars?

- what I need to know to be an effective, licensed administrator
- we are concerned about being prepared for the position of administrator – our degree will imply knowledge that we must have

What other comments do you have?

- additional assessment during the semester
- extra field time with their mentors
- lack of district and school recognition, support, and approval
- other teachers who had completed another graduate program complained about the attention and release time