

# School Leadership Study

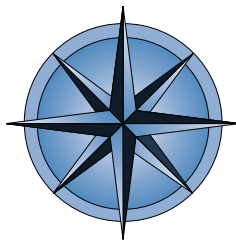
## Case Study Summaries

### Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World Case Studies of Exemplary Programs



Principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools, but existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified candidates is sparse. What are the essential elements of good leadership? What are the features of effective pre-service and in-service leadership development programs? What governance and financial policies are needed to sustain good programs? *The School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals* is a major research effort that seeks to address these questions. Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and undertaken by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute in conjunction with The Finance Project, the study examines eight exemplary pre- and in-service program models that address key issues in developing strong leaders. Lessons from these exemplary programs may help other educational administration programs as they strive to develop and support school leaders who can shape schools into vibrant learning communities.

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The final report, *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs*, can be downloaded from <http://seli.stanford.edu> or <http://srnleads.org>.

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# Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Case Studies of Exemplary Programs

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# Introduction

By Linda Darling-Hammond and Michelle LaPointe

Much research suggests that the most important factor in improving learning is strong instruction in the classroom. But effective teachers are not lone rangers: Their work is most reliably developed within well organized schools where they have opportunities to learn with and from colleagues and can contribute to a clear vision and plan of action. School principals are the key players who organize these conditions for effective teaching. Not surprisingly, recent studies have shown that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction when it comes to improving student achievement.<sup>1</sup>

School leadership today is an increasingly challenging task. Contemporary school administrators play a daunting array of roles, ranging from educational visionaries and change agents to instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders.<sup>2</sup> New expectations of schools—that they successfully teach a broad array of students with different needs, while steadily improving achievement—mean that schools typically must be redesigned rather than merely administered. This suggests yet another set of skill demands, including both the capacity to develop strong instruction and a sophisticated understanding of organizations and organizational change. Finally, as new approaches to funding schools are developed, the principal’s role in making sound resource allocation decisions that are likely to result in improved achievement for students is a critical element of reform plans.

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<sup>1</sup>Leithwood, K., Seashore-Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning* (Learning From Leadership Project Executive Summary). New York: The Wallace Foundation; Mandel, David R. (2000). *Recognizing and encouraging exemplary leadership in America’s schools: A proposal to establish a system of advanced certification for administrators*. Washington, DC: National Policy Board for Educational Administration; Peterson, K. D. (2002). The professional development of principals: Innovations and opportunities. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 213-232.

<sup>2</sup>Davis, S.; Darling-Hammond, L.; LaPointe, M.; & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals* (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.



**[The study's] programs were chosen both because they provide evidence of strong outcomes in preparing school leaders, and because, in combination, they represent a variety of designs, policy contexts, and partnership strategies.**

much larger sample of programs. To understand local contexts, we selected programs with several cohorts of graduates working in a concentrated region. The programs were chosen both because they provide evidence of strong outcomes in preparing school leaders, and because, in combination, they represent a variety of designs, policy contexts, and partnership strategies.

Pre-service programs were sponsored by four universities: Bank Street College, Delta State University, the University of Connecticut, and the University of San Diego working with the San Diego Unified School District. In-service programs were sponsored by the Hartford (CT) School District, Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools (which includes a pre-service component), Region 1 in New York City, and San Diego Unified Schools. In several cases, pre- and in-service programs created a continuum of coherent learning opportunities for school leaders. (See Table 1.)

Can programs be designed to enable principals to learn this wide array of skills? What would it take for states, districts, and universities to create the conditions for these learning opportunities to be widespread? This study seeks to respond to these questions. In 2003, with funding from The Wallace Foundation, a national team of researchers organized by Stanford University and The Finance Project set out to find and examine a set of exemplary pre- and in-service professional development programs for principals, along with the policy contexts in which they operate. The purpose of the study was to identify effective ways of developing strong school leaders — leaders equipped to create effective learning environments for America's diverse students.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The School Leadership Study analyzed a set of exemplary preparation and in-service professional development programs for principals within their state and local policy contexts. Eight programs offering evidence of innovative practices and strong effects on principal learning were selected based on expert interviews, a review of the research, and initial research on a



**Table 1: Program Sample**

Pre-service Programs	In-service Programs	Program Descriptions
Delta State University		Delta State overhauled its program to focus on instructional leadership, featuring a <b>full-time internship</b> and <b>financial support</b> so teachers can spend a year preparing to become principals who can transform schools in the poor, mostly rural region. The program benefits from <b>support from local districts and the state of Mississippi</b> .
Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA) at the University of San Diego	San Diego (CA) Unified School District	San Diego’s continuum of leadership preparation and development reflects a <b>closely-aligned partnership</b> between SDUSD and ELDA. The pre-service and in-service programs support the development of leaders <b>within a context of district instructional reform</b> by focusing on instructional leadership, supported by a <b>strong internship and coaching/networking</b> .
The Principal’s Institute at Bank Street College	Region 1 of the NYC Public Schools	Working with Bank Street College, Region 1 has developed a <b>continuum of leadership preparation</b> , including pre-service, induction, and in-service support. This continuum aims to create <b>leadership for improved teaching and learning</b> that is closely linked to the district’s instructional reforms.
University of Connecticut’s Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP)		The UCAPP program is transforming a <b>high-quality, traditional university-based program</b> into an innovative program that increasingly <b>integrates graduate coursework and field experiences</b> and prepares principals who can use <b>data and evidence of classroom practice</b> to organize change. Some candidates go into Hartford, CT, where they receive additional, intensive professional development.
	Hartford (CT) Public School District	The LEAD Initiative has used <b>leadership development to leverage reforms</b> vital to moving beyond a state takeover. Working with the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, Hartford is seeking to create a <b>common language and practices around instructional leadership</b> .
Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools		Since the late 1980s, JCPS has designed a leadership development program <b>tailored to the needs of principals working in its district</b> . Working with the University of Louisville, the district has crafted a pathway from the classroom to the principalship and a wide array of supports for practicing leaders.

To understand how the programs operate and how they are funded, we interviewed program faculty and administrators, participants and graduates, district personnel, and other stakeholders. We reviewed program documents and observed meetings, courses, and workshops. We surveyed program participants and graduates about their preparation, practices, and attitudes, comparing their responses to those of a national random sample of principals selected from lists provided by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. In addition, we observed graduates of each program in their jobs as principals, interviewed and surveyed the teachers with whom they work, and examined data on school achievement trends.

Case studies combining qualitative and survey data provide a comprehensive analysis of each program within its regional and state contexts, including the costs of implementing each program model and the funding sources it uses. This volume provides summaries of the program case studies. The complete cases are available separately. Also available under separate cover is the final report of the study,<sup>3</sup> which includes a cross-cutting analysis of the programs and of the policy contexts in eight states, including those in which the programs are located.<sup>4</sup>

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM FEATURES

To build a foundation for the study, we reviewed existing research on the preparation and professional development of principals. The literature points to a number of important features of leadership development programs, including:

- **Research-based content**, aligned with professional standards and focused on instruction, organizational development, and change management;
- **Curricular coherence** that links goals, learning activities, and assessments around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge about effective organizational practice;
- **Field-based internships** that enable the application of leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner;
- **Problem-based learning strategies** such as case methods, action research, and projects that link theory and practice and support reflection;
- **Cohort structures** that enable collaboration, teamwork, and mutual support;
- **Mentoring or coaching** that supports modeling, questioning, observations of practice, and feedback; and
- **Collaboration between universities and school districts** to create coherence between training and practice as well as pipelines for recruitment, preparation, hiring, and induction.<sup>5</sup>

These strategies were evident, in different configurations and combinations, in the eight programs we studied. In addition to these components, we identified several other factors that contributed to program effectiveness. These included:

- **Vigorous recruitment** of high-ability candidates with experience as expert, dynamic teachers and a commitment to instructional improvement;

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<sup>3</sup>The individual case studies and the final report, *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs*, can both be found at <http://seli.stanford.edu/research/sls.htm>.

<sup>4</sup>The states included in our policy analysis include: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, and Mississippi.

<sup>5</sup>Davis, S.; Darling-Hammond, L.; LaPointe, M.; & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals* (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute. Jackson, B. L., & Kelley, C. (2002). Exceptional and innovative programs in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 192-212.

- **Financial support** for pre-service candidates to enable them to undertake an intensive program with a full-time internship; and
- **District and/or state infrastructures** supporting specific program elements and embedding programs within a focused school reform agenda.

**Rather than waiting to see who applies, the exemplary programs purposefully recruit talented teachers with leadership potential and with other characteristics they value.**

We found that the programs' approaches and outcomes are tied to their contexts and shaped by their institutional partners. Each program is a dynamic system that produces school leaders who are oriented toward instructional leadership, the ability to organize a school to focus its activity on student learning, and a commitment to working with schools throughout their careers. The programs provide very different examples of how to influence the development of leadership ability in school principals.

## KEY COMPONENTS OF INITIAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

In different ways, the exemplary programs we studied implemented the components recommended in the research literature. All of the programs have a guiding philosophy based on the concept of the principal as instructional leader. The programs *actively recruit potential leaders* who have demonstrated their ability to teach and to lead their colleagues and who reflect the population of teachers and students in their communities. The programs also *actively support candidates* through well-designed coursework and supportive relationships like cohort groups and strong advising and mentoring. Program content is *research-based* and tightly *aligned with professional standards*. Finally, these programs stress the importance of field-based internships and other learning situations that *emphasize real-life situations* and use these applied situations to *integrate theory and practice*.

### Vigorous Recruitment and Selection

Rather than waiting to see who applies, the exemplary programs purposefully recruit talented teachers with leadership potential and with other characteristics they value. Some programs look for educators with a track record of coaching teachers or working with underserved youth. Some actively seek out women and minorities. For example, the **Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS)** created its principal preparation program as part of an effort to root out segregation and provide more opportunities to teachers of color. **Delta State University (DSU)** works closely with local districts to recruit aspiring leaders who reflect the regional public school population, which is largely African American. At least half the candidates each year are African American, and at least half are women. The other programs also increase the supply of women and minority candidates for the principalship. Districts play a major role in identifying, recommending, and, sometimes, sponsoring these recruits. This is borne out in our survey data: more exemplary program graduates were referred to their program by districts (63% v. 32%), and 2/3 had at least some costs paid, as compared to 1/3 of the national sample.

Selection processes are frequently innovative as well as rigorous. For example, after **Bank Street College** and **Region 1** seek out nominations from regional leaders for candidates with strong leader-

ship potential, they make selections based in part on watching candidates in action in collaborative group activities. San Diego's ELDA uses an instructional observation as a critical part of the selection process. In seeking to develop the leadership capacity of strong teachers, the **Hartford Public Schools** identify potential leaders early in their teaching careers. The district has created a pathway to the principalship to nurture the ability of teachers to coach and mentor their colleagues by helping them become instructional coaches, then Turnaround Specialists who coach a few schools on reform efforts, and finally principals. At each stage, the district can recruit from among those who have proved successful in the previous stage.

### **A Focus on Instructional Leadership and School Improvement**

These programs are distinguished from many traditional principal development programs by their focus on instructional improvement and transformational leadership, which guides high-quality coursework and fieldwork. Whereas traditional programs have focused on administering schools as they are, these programs seek to develop principals' abilities to lead a team around a shared vision for instructional improvement and to develop a more productive organization. The programs share a conception of instructional leadership in which principals develop and evaluate curriculum and use data to diagnose the learning needs of students, coach teachers, and plan professional development. Furthermore, the programs aim to develop transformational leaders who work to improve the school as an organization, develop norms and structures that support high-quality teaching and learning, enhance the capacity of the faculty to meet the needs of students, and implement reform strategies that will improve student outcomes.

Programs launched recently, like **San Diego's ELDA** and **Delta State's** new program, were developed with an instructional focus and the goal of helping leaders prepare to transform low-performing schools. In long-standing programs like those in **Jefferson County** and **University of Connecticut**, respondents noted a shift from a management focus to an emphasis on instructional leadership and change management, built through collaboration. For example, a Jefferson County Principals for Tomorrow (PFT) instructor described how the program's emphasis has changed over time, away from nuts-and-bolts management toward theories of change leadership: "The program has changed. . . . [Candidates are] not just getting to know this is how you put a budget together, but this is how you get a school to *support* the development of a budget." This emphasis on team and community building was shared by the other programs we studied.

### **Well Designed, Tightly Integrated Coursework and Fieldwork**

Our respondents were significantly more likely than the comparison group of principals to report that their pre-service programs exhibited features recommended in the literature, including a comprehensive and coherent curriculum; program content that stresses instructional leadership and leadership for school improvement; faculty who are knowledgeable in their field of expertise; the inclusion of practitioners among the faculty; learning in a cohort structure; the integration of theory and practice; extensive opportunities to reflect on their experiences and development as a leader; and opportunities to receive feedback about their developing competencies.

Program graduates also reported that their programs strongly incorporate strategies to foster learning: They were almost twice as likely as conventionally prepared principals to have been in a cohort and

to have experienced active, student-centered instruction, such as the use of case studies, problem-based learning, and action research. Finally, they were much more likely to rate their programs highly on integrating theory and practice and providing high-quality internship experiences.

The programs organize coursework, learning activities, and advisement structures around principles of adult learning theory: They help candidates link past experiences with newly acquired knowledge, provide scaffolds on which to construct new knowledge, provide opportunities to apply knowledge in practice, and foster continual reflection. Courses are problem-oriented rather than subject-centered, and they offer multiple venues for applying new knowledge in practical settings.

For example, instead of teaching academic content in separate courses, **Delta State University** faculty present critical theories and concepts of administration in an interdisciplinary fashion framed around the issues, events, and problems experienced during the year-long internship, which is integrated with other coursework through weekly seminars. A candidate's experience handling a student discipline problem might be used to stimulate an in-class examination of principles of school law, IDEA, conflict resolution, problem solving, time management, and school-community communications.

Similarly, **Bank Street's Principals Institute** emphasizes action research and field-based projects as a means of linking coursework to a progression of field-based experiences and the internship. The program's courses employ an inquiry model that requires candidates individually or in groups to research the theoretical supports for their current practice. Beginning in their first course, the candidates use their school-based experiences to generate research questions and to develop an action-research project at their school sites, based on their interests. This approach creates a strong sense of relevance and motivation for candidates. As one explained, "You take ownership of your learning. In every course we learn certain things, but when you do your projects, you take ownership and you take it in the direction that you want to take it. If you want to explore an area further in action research, you can do so."

**San Diego's ELDA program** uses many of the same strategies to link experiential learning to relevant theory and research. The thematic courses, which are co-designed and co-taught by university instructors and district practitioners, include problem-based learning cases and applied tasks and are linked to practice through the year-long internship. In Instructional Leadership and Supervision, for example, candidates develop a work plan similar to the district's principal work plan that prepares them to analyze, improve, and integrate a school's professional development structures, the plan for building staff capacity, and the monitoring of student achievement. One assignment asked candidates to identify six teachers, discuss how they would improve the practice of those teachers, design an action plan, and figure out how to organize resources to implement it. In many cases, these plans are then put into action in the internship context.

The problem-based approach is also a hallmark of **Jefferson County's Principals for Tomorrow** pro-

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gram, described by a graduate as “both practical and rigorous.” The program uses problem-based case study exercises to emphasize both “how to work with other people who are resistant to change” and “getting into the most recent instructional processes.” As one graduate explained:

I never thought about this as a course. I’ve always thought about this as an experience, because we never sat down and just lectured. Everything we did was always very interactive and very, very much hands-on, with very practical applications for everything.

The **University of Connecticut’s UCAPP** program has made interaction between coursework and practical applications a major goal as the program has been redesigned from one in which connections between courses and the internship were ad hoc to one in which they are planned and continuous.

Two major strategies are used: weaving reflective discussions of on-the-job leadership experiences into courses and conducting a series of field-based projects. Many of these embedded projects have influenced practice and policy at the local level. As one candidate noted, “I think having the real experience almost from day one has been critical and fabulous, very enriching and realistic.”

### **Robust Internships**

The internship experience is clearly critical to the success of these programs, rendering the coursework more valuable as it is tightly interwoven with practice. This is not surprising, as research suggests most adults learn best when exposed to situations requiring the application of acquired skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within authentic settings. Successful internships, however, are often difficult to implement. Major barriers are the lack of resources to allow practicing professionals to leave their jobs so they can spend extended time learning in a leadership role as well as difficulties in ensuring that candidates receive intensive, expert guidance from highly effective mentor principals and supervisors. Several of the programs in this study offer examples of particularly robust internships; others offer innovative ideas on how to release and support teachers as they gain field experience in administrative roles.

At **Delta State University**, a full-year internship, supported with state funds, is the core of the Educational Leadership Program. Candidates intern at an elementary, a middle, and a high school, and spend two weeks working in a district office. In each location, the interns are mentored by full-time administrators, who are generally program graduates themselves. During the internship, candidates are required to observe lessons and teacher evaluations, conference with teachers, and facilitate professional development activities geared toward improving instructional practice. Candidates and graduates were grateful to have the chance to work full time as a school leader in a guided situation before assuming the principalship. As one candidate said, “I think one thing that we can all agree on is that our internship has been the most beneficial part of the program for us. It’s hands-on, being involved, doing it on our own.”

A full-time, yearlong internship has also been a defining characteristic of the **University of San Diego's ELDA program**. Rooted in the belief that authentic, experiential learning provides the most effective preparation for school leadership positions, the program places candidates with experienced principals who have been handpicked for their expertise, successful management of school improvement efforts, and mentoring capacity. Through the financial support of a large foundation grant, coupled with additional district resources, the district was able to pay participants' full salaries while releasing them from their regular teaching responsibilities. With the termination of that grant, internships have been restructured either to occur while candidates are placed in assistant principalships or during teaching vacations over two years. Despite these adjustments, the bulk of the internship continues to be spent on instructional leadership tasks and on understanding the analytic process that leaders use in making decisions.

The **Jefferson County Public Schools** have also designed an intensive, paid, yearlong field experience for a small number of participants. Some of its Principals for Tomorrow candidates are released from teaching or instructional coaching duties to participate in this highly-structured internship experience, which is explicitly designed around a medical rotation model. In this program, candidates rotate in teams through different school sites, develop case studies of specific issues, and recommend localized interventions. Questioning strategies are used to highlight both strengths and needs at school sites and in principals' and interns' knowledge.

**Bank Street's** internship provides an example of what is possible when funding is not available for a full-time placement. When the City of New York stopped underwriting salaries for this purpose, the college designed a three-semester internship sequence in which each candidate variously uses in-school and after-school time in his or her teaching site, a different site, and a summer school program to undertake a carefully designed set of tasks mapped to national and state leadership standards. An internship mentor, usually the building principal or other school administrator, guides this work with close support from the college. The level and complexity of candidates' responsibilities increases each semester, beginning with observations guided by a protocol for field experience, and continuing through the assumption of administrative tasks, like managing an after-school program or supervising a professional development initiative, and including a paid summer program leadership experience sponsored by Region 1.

The **University of Connecticut's UCAPP** program also works hard to sandwich an 80-day internship around the demands of candidates' full-time teaching jobs over the course of two years. This time is split between an assigned internship site, the school where the candidate teaches, and the summer internship site. UCAPP candidates intern in a district with a different vacation schedule from the one where they teach, which exposes them to a different setting and allows them to complete field work on their vacation days. UCAPP also helps place candidates as administrators for summer school. As at Bank Street, candidates and mentors, who are often UCAPP graduates, are guided by a leadership plan that requires a core set of experiences, including teacher supervision and evaluation, budgeting, scheduling, analysis of test data in order to guide curriculum and instructional improvement, and management of special education. A UCAPP graduate echoed the sentiments of many when he said,

**At their best, cohorts promote collaboration, networking, and teamwork. Cohorts provide natural opportunities for group projects, for candidates to share knowledge, and for members to collectively reflect on their leadership development.**

“The internship experience is phenomenal. We were given an opportunity to experience an internship that . . . had us working with a principal doing things for the school, not just sitting around hearing about it. You’re actually doing it and that was one of the benefits of this program. It’s authentic.”

### **Cohort Groups**

All of the pre-service programs we studied use cohort groups to create collaborative learning relationships among peers that candidates can rely on to share experiences and knowledge and to solve problems. The availability of these supports to program principals was significantly greater than to their peers nationally. At their best, cohorts promote collaboration, networking, and teamwork. Cohorts provide natural opportunities for group projects, for candidates to share knowledge, and for members to collectively reflect on their leadership development.

In **Delta State’s** Educational Leadership program, the cohort is used to model team building, both through small-group academic and team-building sessions and in the way the professor models how to lead a team. As one DSU graduate said, “We learned what it was really like to work together as a team. I think that’s important, because you have to learn to be a team player when you become an administrator.”

Cohorts in **San Diego’s ELDA** and the **Bank Street** Principals Institute provide the structure for coursework and reflection sessions, as well as a professional network for graduates after they have assumed a leadership position. This model provides participants opportunities to reflect on practice, identify challenges and weaknesses, and develop new skills and strategies. In the words of one Bank Street graduate, “The structure of the cohort helps get the transformation to happen. . . . It is not like we are just going through a series of classes to get a certificate. We are going through a process of reflecting.”

UCAPP graduates also identified the cohort as an important part of their program and their later professional network once they graduated. The benefits of this collegial atmosphere were corroborated by a local superintendent who is an adjunct professor in the program: “I think one of the real strengths is the cohort model that they use. It’s amazing how these people function as a team and help one another. . . . And I think that’s important, because if you’re going to be an educational leader in this day and age, you can’t function in isolation. The only way you can operate and do a good job is to function as a team.” In these programs, cohorts create opportunities to test ideas in a supportive, non-judgmental setting. In part because of the cohort experience, the program candidates and graduates appear to have an expanded view of leadership in schools.



## CRITICAL SUPPORTS FOR IN-SERVICE LEARNING

Many of the features we discovered in the exemplary pre-service programs were also present in districts' supports for new and veteran principals. These in-service programs also focused on standards-based content emphasizing instruction, organizational development and change management; pedagogies that connect theory and practice; on-the-ground supports that include coaching and mentoring; and collaborative learning opportunities embedded in ongoing networks. In some ways, the presence of these features in ongoing professional development contexts is perhaps even more remarkable, given the time demands of the job, the usual emphasis of training on generic leadership skills, and the tradition of principal isolation, which has meant that individual course-taking and conference-going were typically the few opportunities for learning available.

Three aspects of these districts' approaches are especially noteworthy. First, they have developed a comprehensive approach that enables principals to develop their instructional leadership abilities in practice, by connecting new knowledge to concrete courses of action.<sup>6</sup> Second, they conceptualize leadership development as a continuum extending from pre-service through induction, ongoing support, and engagement of expert and retired principals in mentoring. Third, they conceptualize leadership as a communal activity embedded in collective work around practice, rather than as a solitary activity.

### A Comprehensive Approach to Developing Practice *in Practice*

Each of the districts we studied provides a set of well articulated approaches for principals to learn how to develop stronger schools that feature more effective teaching and learning. These multiple opportunities are distinguished by how they are informed by a coherent view of student learning, teacher development, and school leadership; are connected to one another; and are grounded in both theory and practice. Rather than offering a flavor-of-the-month approach to professional development, they offer an ongoing approach to the development of a holistic, identifiable professional practice.

**Extensive, High-Quality Learning Opportunities.** The range of strategies used to focus the work of school leaders on teaching and learning includes regular principals' conferences and networks focused on curriculum and instruction, as well as mentoring and coaching. Both the extent and the quality of these learning opportunities are unusual, with principals experiencing more opportunities to visit other schools, participate in a network, receive coaching, and attend professional development sessions. Our subjects often found these learning opportunities to be more helpful than the comparison group of principals nationally. Principals in these districts were also much more likely to have participated in professional development with their teachers: fully 77% had done so seven or more times in the last year, as compared to 50% of the comparison principals.

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<sup>6</sup>Ball, D. L. & Cohen, D. K. (1999). Developing practice, developing practitioners: Toward a practice-based theory of professional education. In Darling-Hammond, L. & Sykes, G. (Eds.). *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Leadership Learning Grounded in Practice.** Much of these school leaders' professional learning is grounded in analyses of classroom practice, supervision, or professional development using videotapes or on-the-job observations. For example, several programs in our study, including San Diego, Region 1, and Hartford, use "walkthroughs" of schools as occasions when principals can look at particular practices in classrooms guided by specific criteria. These are sometimes conducted with a mentor and other times with groups of principals who can caucus together about what they see. (See page 38, for description of this strategy.)

### A Learning Continuum

A second critical feature of the learning context for leaders in these districts is that the districts have conceptualized a continuum of opportunities from pre-service, through induction, and ongoing throughout the careers, with both group and individual supports for principals. For example, in addition to the pre-service program offered through **Bank Street College**, New York City's **Region 1** has developed an in-service program that offers coaching for beginning principals, a principal network, and monthly workshops focused on developing instructional leadership for principals, assistant principals, and assistant superintendents. As Superintendent Irma Zardoya noted, "The belief has always been that we have to grow our own leaders . . . that we have to have constant, ready supply of leaders, which means that we have created a continuum. We keep adding steps to it every year, to get people from the classroom right up to the superintendent."

A similar set of opportunities exists in **San Diego**. In addition, San Diego principals often receive mentoring once they assume a leadership position. In ELDA's Induction & Support program, new leaders work with their mentor to develop their leadership style, reflect on the needs of their school, strengthen their problem-solving ability, design and execute strategic plans, and use data for improving instruction. Mentor principals and participants meet with each other weekly to work on the development of leadership skills. These mentoring sessions might consist of reviewing and analyzing student achievement data and developing appropriate strategic plans to improve school-wide teaching, or they might include a mentor observing a principal's conversation with a teacher and then providing one-on-one feedback.

About half of all principals also receive mentoring in **Jefferson County**, where retired administrators socialize new school leaders to the culture in JCPS and work with veteran principals who need assistance. Both principals and assistant principals participate in induction programs that include mentoring as well as class sessions. New administrators receive specific training on teacher-evaluation strategies. Veteran principals participate in a principals' network, and more than 70% participate in peer coaching and visits to other schools.

The continuum in **Hartford** focuses on developing leaders through multiple pathways, including teacher leaders who can become instructional coaches and Turnaround Specialists, as well as certified administrators. Here, as in our other districts, the learning supports developed for principals, which include networks and regular principal meetings devoted to professional development, are integrated with those for central office administrators, teachers, and other staff to enhance the likelihood that all educators will be working toward the same goals using the same strategies.

## Collegial Learning Networks

The primary delivery strategy for professional development in all of these districts has been to create leadership learning communities. **Region 1** and **San Diego** operate formal networks of schools and principals as part of the district structure. In **Hartford**, principals work in groups around instructional leadership development and most participate in principals' networks. In **Jefferson County**, groups of principals (e.g., middle school leaders, assistant principals) participate in specific long-term professional development courses focused on topics ranging from literacy to teacher evaluation to classroom management.

## SUPPORTS FOR PROGRAMS AND CANDIDATES

Each of the programs in this study has implemented components of high-quality principal preparation cited in the literature. Close examination of program implementation suggests that additional factors—beyond strong program content and delivery—appear to facilitate the execution of a comprehensive system of development. These factors include financial supports for candidates and environmental supports for programs, including local partnerships and supportive policy.

### Financial Supports

Although the literature has been fairly silent on the importance of financial support, it is clearly important to the success of many of these programs. Given the apparent importance of intensive field experiences, financial support for the full-time administrative candidates was crucial to several program models. Such support may also help make these programs more accessible to candidates who are traditionally underrepresented in school leadership.

Many of these financial supports are possible because of outside funding sources, such as the **Mississippi State Educator Sabbatical Program**, which supports teachers for a year while they prepare for the principalship; grants used to waive tuition, such as a federal grant at **Delta State** and funding from the Broad Foundation at the **University of San Diego**; and partial tuition reimbursements, such as those **Hartford** offers from a Wallace Foundation grant to reimburse aspiring principals enrolled in the district-sponsored credentialing program.

Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation has made the development and support of leadership the entire focus of its education work. In addition to the Hartford Public Schools, many of our focus districts and states received funding from The Wallace Foundation, including: Region 1, the Jefferson County Public Schools, and the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, New York and North Carolina. The overall goal of Wallace's education leadership initiative is to fundamentally improve the training and the conditions of education leaders in ways that enable them to significantly improve student achievement across entire states and districts.

### Partnerships

The exemplary programs we studied built partnerships with other organizations. The need for stronger clinical training has encouraged a growing number of universities to collaborate with schools as

equal partners in the design, implementation, and assessment of preparation programs. And districts have turned to local universities to develop tailored preparation programs to certify their aspiring administrators. Collaboration between partners can prepare leaders for specific district and regional contexts and yield a stronger, more committed leadership pool. We also found that strong partnerships can help during leadership transitions, as one partner can take the lead while another is going through change, even helping to ease financial stresses when grants disappear. Partnerships appear to help institutionalize exemplary programs

Strong district/university partnerships were essential to create the continuum of supports in **San Diego** and New York City's **Region 1**. In both cases, the continuum thus created was so seamless that it could be hard to distinguish which staff members worked for the university and which worked for the district. **Jefferson County Public Schools** turned to the University of Louisville to develop a credentialing program tailored to the needs of principals in its district. There, the district recruits and selects candidates and pays for most of the required graduate credits.

In some cases, where universities serve more than one district, the partnerships are regional. **Delta State University** works with a regional consortium of Delta superintendents on program design, recruiting candidates, and securing internships. The **University of Connecticut's** Administrator Preparation Program works with both local districts and the state principals' associations to develop field placements. The program has recently brokered a partnership with three districts to place interns in paid assistant principal positions, thus leading to a stronger program model. Although school district/university partnerships take effort to develop, they reveal many benefits, including expanded resources, a more embedded, hence powerful, intervention for developing practice, and a reciprocal process for institutional improvement, all of which produce better preparation programs and stronger leaders.

### Policy Supports

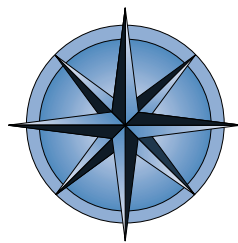
The districts in our sample have developed both systems and policies that foster professional development. They expect and encourage their principals to continuously improve their skills and create incentives toward that end. When we asked what motivated them to participate in on-going professional development, program principals were significantly more likely than comparison principals to report district requirements as a motivation (53% vs. 28%).

Another source of leverage was the use of professional standards to guide program design. All of these programs are aligned with the Interstate School Leadership Consortium (ISSLC) standards, which focus on instructional leadership and school improvement. In fact, respondents in **Jefferson County** suggested that being an early adopter of the standards helped them shift their expectations of principals from building managers to instructional leaders. Leaders in other programs also discussed the importance of these professional standards in guiding their work. Since most states and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have adopted the ISSLC standards, the accreditation process has also helped to facilitate change among programs.

Finally, other state policies that influence teaching and learning also provide important contexts that influence leadership development. For example, in **San Diego, Hartford, and Region 1**, the leadership programs became one piece of a comprehensive reform aimed at improving instruction throughout the district, and the content of the leadership initiative was profoundly influenced by that reform.

These broader elements of state and local policy help to organize leadership development around a conception of teaching, learning, and leading that is reinforced in a number of ways and embedded in a central mission for schools, rather than leaving principal learning as an isolated activity on the margins of the district.

In the case summaries that follow, the specific strategies programs use to enact these features are detailed, along with a brief discussion of the program outcomes we uncovered through our surveys, interviews, and observations of graduates' schools.



# Principal Preparation at Delta State University: A Bold Strategy to Improve Practice

By Michelle LaPointe, Stephen Davis, and Carol Cohen

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. Historically a white teachers' college, this small public university has become increasingly aware of its ability to leverage change in the largely rural Mississippi Delta region, and the ability of its graduates to make a difference in the lives of children in area schools.

DSU's program for preparing school principals is distinguished by its depth, consistency, thoughtfulness, and applicability to the actual work of leading schools in ways that improve results for



students. Developing this substantial new program was neither easy nor swift. It required seeking significant support from local school districts and the State of Mississippi, as well as gathering evidence of effectiveness from experts in the field and other successful programs.

E. E. Caston, dean of DSU's College of Education in the 1990s, recalls that he and his colleagues concluded that their approach to training K-12 leaders was actually part of the problem: "We found ourselves lamenting that the training program for administrators created an insurmountable stretch from the classroom here to the work environment there," explains Caston. "We came to realize that we didn't want what we had—a traditional program that was predominantly part-time."

With the support of the administration, Dean Caston and his colleagues undertook an ambitious redesign of Delta State's program for training school leaders. At the heart of the program are the requirements of full-time enrollment and an intensive, site-based internship. Since 1999, the college has run a concentrated 14-month program that each year prepares, on average, 15 aspiring principals.

The following pages summarize the conditions that made DSU's program possible and how the program functions. Inevitably, local specifics and dedicated individuals have shaped successes at Delta State. But researchers, teachers, principals, and policymakers elsewhere can find much worth emulating in the bold strategy of a small university in the Mississippi Delta.

## CONTEXT

By many measures, life is not easy in the 18 counties of northwest Mississippi's Delta region. A sluggish economy, high unemployment, low levels of education, and a legacy of segregation characterize the area from which many of Delta State's aspiring principals are drawn and to which its graduates return. Local conditions working against principals, teachers, and students include:

- Nearly one-quarter of the people in the Delta live below the poverty level. The regional average for children living in poverty is 30%, a figure that rises to 40% in some counties. In 1999, average annual income in the region was \$17,625. In 2000, the unemployment rate, which was 10% overall, reached 30% for African Americans.<sup>1</sup>
- In Mississippi as a whole, only 17% of adults have a college education, and nearly 25% of adults over 25 do not have a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup> More than half of fourth-graders scored

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<sup>1</sup>Kersen, T. (2002). *The changing Delta, 1990-2000*. Mississippi State University, Social Science Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.ssrc.msstate.edu/Publications/TheChangingDeltaFinal.pdf#search='poverty%20rate%20Mississippi%20Delta'>

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Census Bureau (2000). *State & County QuickFacts*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09/0937000.html>

**Life is not easy in the 18 counties of northwest Mississippi's Delta region. A sluggish economy, high unemployment, low levels of education, and a legacy of segregation characterize the area.**

below the basic level in reading in a 2003 state assessment, as did more than half the eighth-graders in mathematics. Seven of the ten lowest-performing schools in Mississippi are in the Delta region.<sup>3</sup>

- De facto segregation is common in the Delta. Although the population of the region is 49.9% African American and 48.3% white, public school student populations are typically 90% or more African American.<sup>4</sup>

The severity of these conditions played a part in convincing Dean Caston and other educators of the need for a bold new strategy. The most promising way to improve educational opportunities for children in the Delta, they decided, was to develop school leaders who would transform instruction.

The process of redesigning Delta State's program was thorough and deep. To the faculty's own deliberations and work with leaders of local school districts were added presentations by national experts and visits to programs elsewhere in the country. Concluding that a high-quality program would require expensive fulltime enrollment and site-based internships, program designers realized that state support would be essential.

### Opportune State Conditions

As Delta State was redesigning its program for administrators, the State of Mississippi was reforming its policies on educational leadership to improve instructional leadership.

**State sabbatical program.** In 1994, a task force convened by Mississippi's Superintendent of Education produced *Improving the Preparation of Mississippi School Leaders*. Among the report's influential recommendations were: New principals should be more rigorously recruited and assessed, and money should be made available to prospective principals for full-time study. One substantial consequence of such recommendations, and of lobbying by Delta State and state education officials, was the state legislature's creation in 1998 of the Mississippi School Administrator Sabbatical Program. Each year since then, the state has committed funds for up to 20 teachers to receive regular salaries and benefits for a year as they participate in a full-time program for prospective administrators. In exchange, recipients commit to serve as administrators in their sponsoring districts for 5 years.

Delta State's program is one of six in Mississippi that is approved to participate in this major state initiative for recruiting school leaders. Although a sunset provision requiring renewal of the sabbatical program at 5-year intervals contributes some uncertainty, the program to date has been hugely important to the work of DSU. The state renewed the sabbatical program after the first 5 years, and the program appears to retain strong support in the state legislature.

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<sup>3</sup> *Mississippi Report Card*. (1995). Jackson, MS: , Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Accountability Reporting.

<sup>4</sup> Sharpe, M. (2001). *Racial and ethnic tensions in American communities: Poverty, inequality, and discrimination* (Volume VII: The Mississippi Delta Report). Washington, DC: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Retrieved from <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/msdelta/main.htm>



**Other state initiatives.** Other changes in state policies addressing the preparation of school leaders have occurred since 1994. Many of them are attributable to the task force's report, and all of them appear to shape the context of DSU's program for aspiring principals. One important outcome of the 1994 task force was the state's decision to close all administrator preparation programs and to require programs to re-apply for accreditation under much more rigorous standards. Not a single program in the state earned accreditation on the first round. In addition to a thorough review by the state, in order to maintain its accreditation, 80% of a program's graduates must pass the School Leader Licensure Assessment (SLLA).

## THE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AT DSU

This description of the Educational Leadership Program at DSU was developed from both qualitative and quantitative data. During site visits in November 2004 and April 2005, we conducted observations and interviews. We also mailed surveys to all graduates of DSU's reformed Educational Leadership program and drew a comparison sample of principals in Mississippi and a national sample of school administrators who are members of either the National Association of Elementary School Principals or the National Association of Secondary School Principals.<sup>5</sup> These data document an innovative leadership development program and suggest that the DSU program has a strong, positive impact on its graduates.

### Conceptual Foundations

DSU's program to train administrators has these three major emphases:

1. teaching and learning,
2. organizational effectiveness, and
3. parents and community.

This so-called "Delta Triangle" forms the foundation of a balanced leadership program. Explicitly addressed in seminar discussions and course assessments, these three emphases are infused into the graduates' own perceptions of leadership.

Teaching and learning are, in the view of program coordinator Sue Jolly, the "raison d'être" of Delta's program. The goal is to prepare school leaders who can develop schools that have powerful and equitable teaching and learning. To this end, the program immerses its students in seminar and internship activities that train them in empirically supported principles of effective teaching, in theories of student learning, and in methods of clinical supervision.

As they study organizational effectiveness and develop their leadership skills, Delta students learn how to gather and analyze performance data and how to plan and carry out strategies to increase student learning. They read the literature on exemplary leadership. They reflect regularly on their

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<sup>5</sup>For a full description of the study methodology, please see *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs* (Technical Report) at <http://seli.stanford.edu/research/sls.htm>.



courses and their internships. Because DSU views schools as open systems that serve the community and draw on its resources, DSU students learn and practice ways to involve parents and communities in the work of schools.

In addition to the Delta Triangle, the leadership program is anchored by the standards of administrative practice set by the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). Additionally, DSU is piloting new administrator standards for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

### Program Structure

Candidates begin Delta's 14-month program in June with a 12-credit session of summer school at the university. In each of two 4-week periods, they take one core course (e.g., research methods and statistics or psychology of learning) and one seminar. Candidates are grouped in a small cohort and all courses are taken within that cohort structure.

During the school year, candidates complete three 12-week internships in elementary, middle, and high schools and also a 2-week internship in their district's central office. During these internships, the cohort returns to campus one day a week for a graduate 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 14 months, graduates have taken 48 graduate semester credits in a mixture of university courses and school-based experiences. They receive a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership (Educational Administration and Supervision) and initial certification as an administrator in the State of Mississippi.

### Defining Features

Important features of the DSU program reflect current thinking in the field about the best ways to prepare effective administrators. Integrating curriculum and internships,

for example, is vital to DSU's program. So is using the cohort structure to build and exemplify a learning community.

Several important features distinguish the Delta program.

- Its admissions process is rigorous and highly selective.
- 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.

Taken as whole, Delta's program is notable for the depth of its preparation of school leaders. The structure and characteristics of the program contribute to this result, but the ways in which elements are purposefully integrated are also significant.

**Rigorous recruitment and selection.** Cohorts in the Delta State program typically include 12 to 17 students. Because the goal is to find dedicated, energetic candidates, the selection process involves both broad outreach and high standards.

DSU works closely with local school districts to recruit candidates. Candidates must be nominated by their school district to be eligible to participate in the state-funded sabbatical program. DSU goes further than simply asking districts to recruit aspiring school leaders. The program uses a panel of interviewers made up of program faculty, graduates and local administrators to initially assess prospective candidates. Ultimately, Delta faculty members make final decisions about candidates based on rigorous assessment of GRE scores, transcripts, resumes, and essays about education and leadership.

In its early years, the Delta program accepted only 25% of applicants. As the quality of applicants has risen, with stronger screening and recruitment by the districts, the acceptance rate has risen to about 50%.

According to our survey findings, nearly three-quarters of graduates indicated that they had been recruited into the program, which compares to only about one third of candidates elsewhere in Mississippi and the nation. More than half of program respondents (51%) had been nominated by their principal, the district superintendent, and the DSU program director. Only 6% of other Mississippi graduates and 10% of graduates in the national sample reported such a rigorous process. Where the DSU program set clear requirements for GRE scores and grade-point averages, standards in many other programs were ill-defined.

These findings suggest that students admitted to the DSU program arrive with important personal attributes, leadership potential, and academic proficiency that may not characterize students who have been selected through a less rigorous process.

**Integrated, cross-disciplinary approach.** To teach its core values, the DSU program combines courses on the theory of educational administration with instructional activities related to the day-to-day responsibilities of school leaders. For example, a real problem from a candidate's internship might be the focus of a discussion in a class on "Organization and School Issues," in which students refer to readings in school law, curriculum design, and organizational theory.

**Multipurpose cohort structure.** "I've learned a lot from being a member of a cohort group that I think you wouldn't have in another program," concluded one Delta student.

Energetically encouraged by the program administrator to develop a culture of inquiry, trust, and mutual support, cohorts at DSU become tightly knit. In highly interactive cohort meetings, students share their internship experiences, discuss school leadership, listen to guest speakers, and get feedback from the program director. The result at DSU is a cohort structure that builds teamwork and group problem-solving skills, creates an enduring network of support, exemplifies a learning community, and models the professional collaboration that graduates will go on to create in the schools they lead.

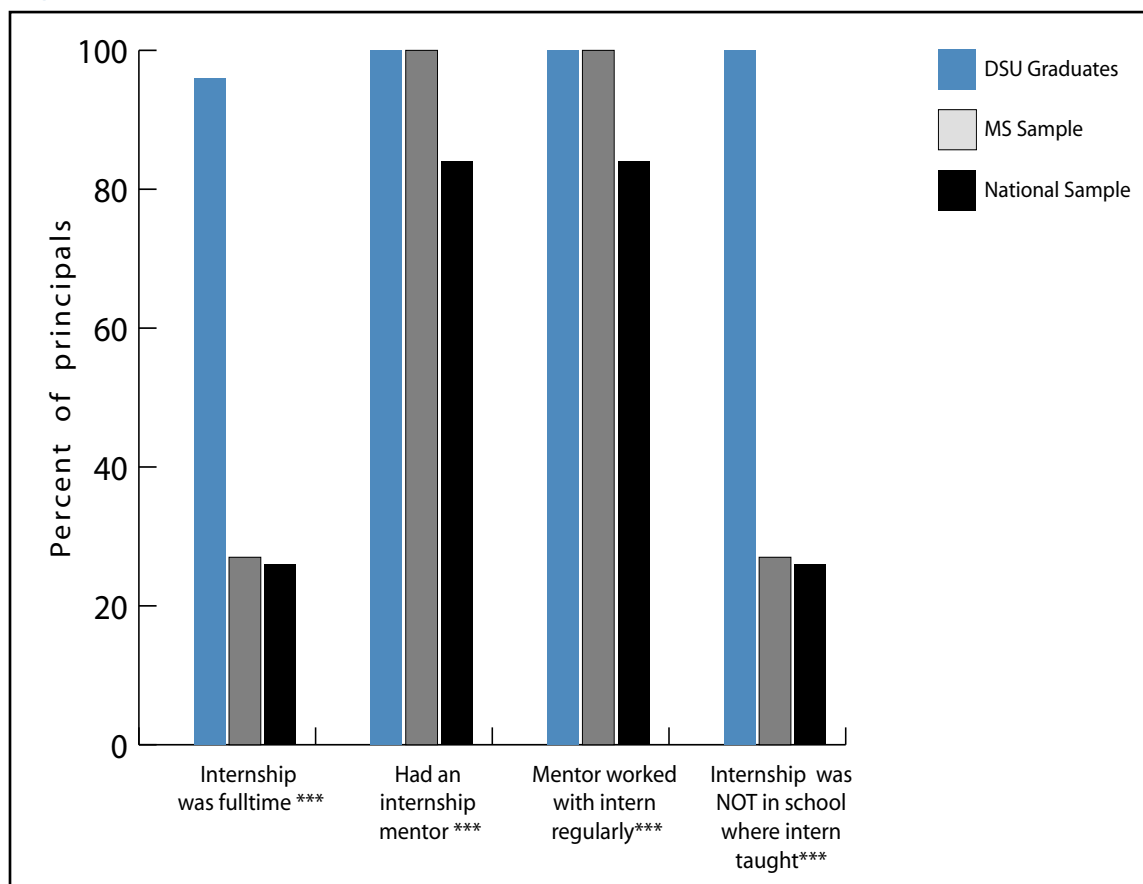
**"Most beneficial" internships.** For many students in the DSU program, internships are a transforming experience: "I think one thing we can all agree on is that our internship has been the most beneficial part of the program for us," said one candidate. "It's hands-on, being involved, doing it on our own."

At each internship location, candidates are mentored by a full-time, certified administrator. Exposed to every aspect of school operations and management except confidential personnel matters, interns undertake such varied activities as observing lessons, conferencing with teachers, disciplining students, meeting with parents, helping develop educational programs and budgets, analyzing student progress, and learning how to operate information systems. The structure of DSU's full-time internship enables a candidate and mentor to develop a relationship beyond what is typical. In the DSU leadership program, mentors are not colleagues at the candidate's home school nor retired administrators, but principals in daily contact with candidates at a shared school site. As a result, candidates get prompt responses and real-time coaching.

In the one- to two-week period DSU students spend on campus between internship assignments, they attend all-day seminars that allow them to integrate their internship experience with academic learning. They also attend talks by guest lecturers and participate in site visits to exemplary schools, the state board of education, the state legislature, and other important institutions.

By the end of the year, candidates report having gained a deeper understanding of what being a leader entails. Able to see schools as complex social systems, they should be better equipped to manage conflict and navigate politically charged school and community environments. Interning in a variety of settings has made them, in general, more aware of the problems facing children in the Delta region and the strategies they can use to reform education in the region. Most candidates report having developed a fuller sense of how principals can leverage school and community resources to manage change that produces powerful teaching and learning. Perhaps particularly important, many

**Figure 1: Features of Principals' Internships**



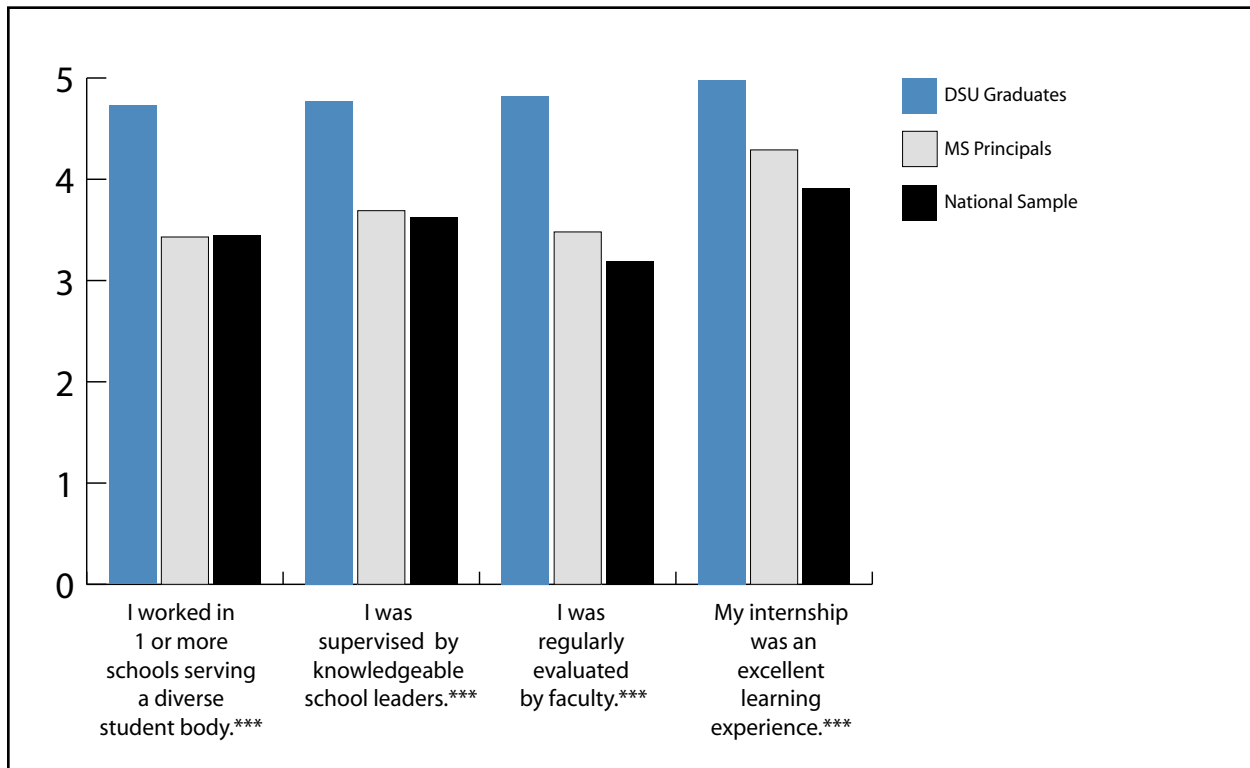
T-Tests of mean differences: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

of DSU's aspiring principals report that their internships have made them more self-reflective and also more confident of their ability to lead.

Delta State requires a full-time internship, at multiple school sites, and places aspiring leaders into new schools, away from their teaching duties. The interns have a school-site mentor, but are also supervised by faculty at DSU. DSU graduates report that their internship experience was an excellent learning experience for becoming a principal. Both surveys and interviews indicated that the DUS internship was much stronger than the norm. First, 100% of DSU graduates reported having an internship, compared with 25% of Mississippi comparison principals and 64% of the national comparison principals.

Of those who had an internship, the experience at DSU was much more rigorous: candidates were much more likely to intern full time, and to intern at a school other than where they taught (see Figure 1). In addition, DSU graduates were more likely to intern in schools with diverse populations and to receive regular supervision and evaluation (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Principals' Perceptions of the Quality of their Internships**  
**"To what extent do you agree with the following statement?"**  
 (1=Not at all ... 5=To a great extent)

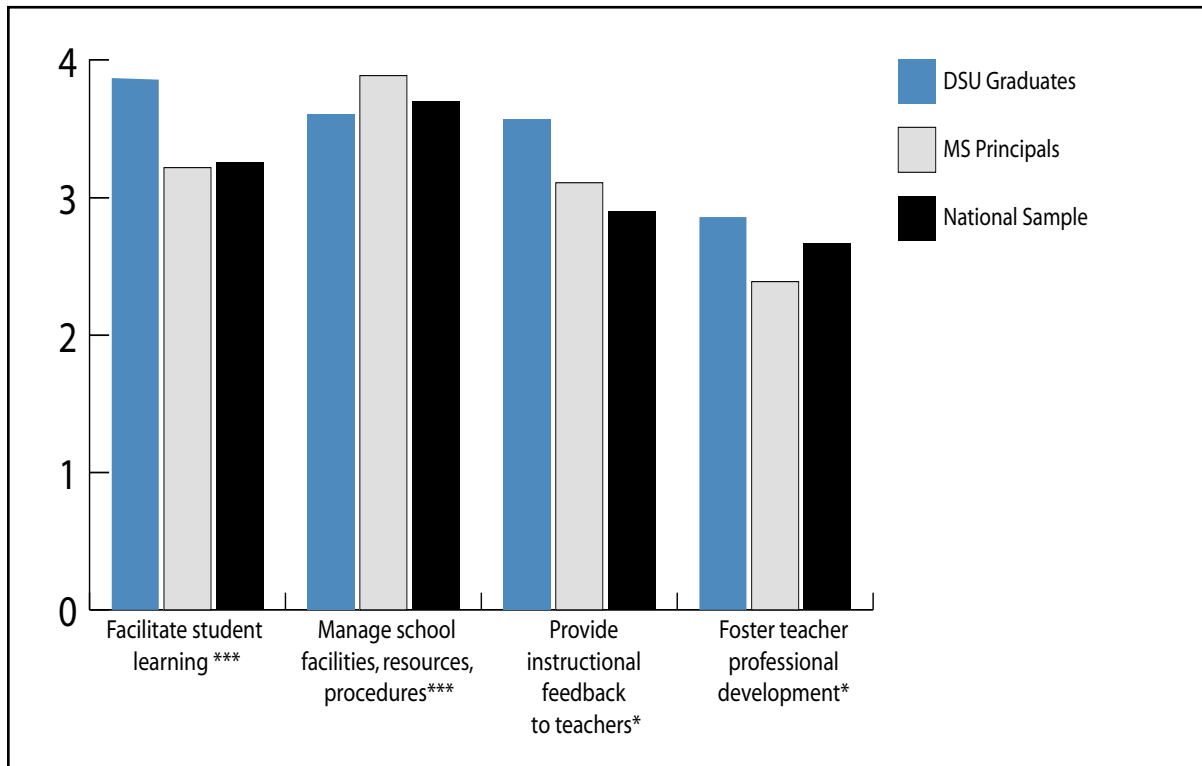


T-Tests of mean differences: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Assessment.** Candidate 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 on-going, and assessment is based on authentic, applied projects and portfolios.

In line with the program’s tight focus on the “Delta Triangle,” a survey of program graduates found that principals who earned their credential at Delta State were more likely to be focused on instruc-

**Figure 3: Principals' Practices:**  
**"In the last month, how often did you do the following?"**  
 (1=Never ... 4=Daily)



T-Tests of mean differences: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

tion, organizational effectiveness, and getting external support for their school (see Figure 3). DSU graduates are less likely than other principals surveyed to report spending a lot of time managing school facilities—and noticeably more likely to spend time giving teachers instructional feedback and facilitating student learning. The principles of the DSU program, fostered through intensive field experiences and reflection, are reflected in the practices of the program’s graduates.

### Program Costs and Financing

Using national average costs, we estimate the total annual cost of Delta State’s program, including administration, coursework, internships, and other activities, to be approximately \$1.1 million, or \$87,000 per participant. Innovative financing and outside support means that the cost to the participants is minimal; we estimate that participants contribute about 5% of the total costs of the program in out-of-pocket costs for educational expenses and foregone earnings beyond what they are paid for the internship. DSU relies heavily on state and federal funding sources.



**Graduates of the DSU leadership program tend to have a strong orientation as instructional leaders and the contextual knowledge and skills to improve high-need schools. Strong state investments, a deep commitment by local districts, and the university's unflagging commitment to improving education in the Delta all support an unusual and innovative program for developing school leaders.**

By far the most costly part of the DSU program is the internship component. Most program participants receive a baseline salary for the internship school year that is paid through the Mississippi School Administrator Sabbatical Program. In addition, many districts pay the interns for the difference between the state-set amount and their actual salary. This is not required, however, and some interns absorb a substantial pay cut. In the study year, program participants who were not paid by the state because their districts did not participate in the sabbatical program were subsidized by the university with federal grant funds. According to a number of the people interviewed in site visits, the sabbatical funding was a major incentive for attending DSU and thus a major tool of recruitment.

## CONCLUSION

DSU's innovative leadership development program appears to prepare its graduates to be effective school leaders. Among the factors contributing to the program's success are its well-designed internship, its successful integration of courses and administrative concepts, and its use of a cohort structure and mentoring. Also essential have been strong partnerships with districts and the alignment of DSU's program with state educational and fiscal policy.

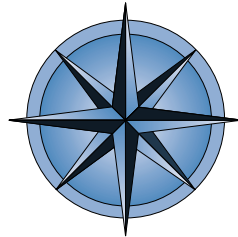
The success of the DSU program is also in no small measure the result of thoughtful, determined leadership. The former dean, E.E. Caston; state superintendent of schools, Tom Burnham; current dean, Lynn House; and former program administrator, Sue Jolly, have worked tirelessly to forge partnerships with local school districts, to seek out best practices and expert advice, and to cultivate the commitment of DSU faculty.

Even in an exemplary program, there is often room for improvement. Tightening some procedures, especially those for assessing student progress and assessing the program itself, could be beneficial, as could a systematic approach for selecting mentors. Fulltime faculty at DSU were playing a limited role in the program at the time site visits were made, which meant the program depended heavily on part-time instructors and Sue Jolly. To improve the program's



sustainability and to avoid burning out the few full-time faculty, it will be important to hire and use more tenure-line faculty and to distribute teaching and coordinating responsibilities equitably.

On balance, however, results to date suggest the considerable promise of DSU's bold strategy to improve the training of principals. Our visits to Delta State, our surveys of graduates, and our interviews with program faculty and staff from local districts all indicate that graduates of the DSU leadership program tend to have a strong orientation as instructional leaders and the contextual knowledge and skills to improve high-need schools. Strong state investments, a deep commitment by local districts, and the university's unflagging commitment to improving education in the Delta all support an unusual and innovative program for developing school leaders.



# Principal Development in San Diego: A Coherent Commitment to Instructional Leadership

By Linda Darling-Hammond, Margaret E. Barber, Jeannette LaFors, and Carol Cohen  
with the assistance of Lisa Marie Carlson and Jason Wingard

The eighth-largest urban school district in the United States, the San Diego Unified School District launched a set of reforms in the late 1990s designed to improve teaching and learning through intensive training and support of a new generation of school leaders. Viewing leadership as critical to translating the district's instructional reforms into practice, San Diego's newly hired superintendent and district chancellor, Alan Bersin and Tony Alvarado, respectively, developed a continuum of supports that included the Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA), a pre-service preparation program launched by the district with the University of San Diego, and developed an extensive set of learning opportunities for in-service principals. This case study describes these initiatives as they operated between 2003 and 2005, when our study ended.

## DISTRICT CONTEXT

With more than 130,000 students, 75% of them students of color, 30% with limited proficiency in English, and 60% from low-income families, the San Diego Unified School District mirrors the instructional leadership challenges of large districts across the country. Concerns about an achievement gap, along with the conviction that expert teaching is at the core of school improvement, drove systemic reform aimed at strengthening the professional expertise of teachers. Central to the 1998 reform (called *Blueprint for Success*) was an effort to focus all decision-making on issues of teaching quality.

The reform featured intensive investment in both teachers' and principals' knowledge about expert practice, first in literacy, then in mathematics and other subjects. The principalship was redefined to focus explicitly on instructional leadership and on supporting the learning of adult professionals. The district aggressively overhauled its recruitment, induction, evaluation, and professional development systems for both teachers and principals in order to attract, develop, and retain more instructionally knowledgeable staff who were skilled at supporting student—and teacher—learning.

The district's central office was also reorganized to support instruction by tightly coupling functions like hiring, budgeting, and management to an equity-focused instructional change process. This meant reallocating funds, and more capable staff, to high-need schools and students, as well as strengthening the district's capacity to guide and improve instruction. It also meant creating mechanisms by which principals could learn how to develop and monitor high-quality teaching.

## PREPARING NEW LEADERS: THE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY (ELDA)

Established in 2000 through a grant-funded partnership between the University of San Diego's School of Education and the San Diego Unified School District, ELDA was designed to meet "the essential need to recognize and build capacity in teachers with demonstrated leadership potential, and to create a more diverse pool of candidates for site leadership vacancies" (San Diego City Schools, *Blueprint for Success*, 1998). Going beyond the connections typical of most partnerships, ELDA was conceived as an organizational blend of the university and the school district, not just a program that cooperated with the district. A unified entity was created to assess, plan, execute, and evaluate the work, using an integrated set of structures, roles and responsibilities, and processes and procedures.

### Program Components

Envisioned as a continuum of development for aspiring and new leaders, ELDA includes two key programs: one for aspiring administrators and one supporting induction for recently credentialed administrators. The Aspiring Leaders program was launched in 2000 as a one-year, cohort-based preparation program. This combined university coursework with a full-time administrative internship that allowed candidates to work alongside principals the district deemed its most effective. In the second year, ELDA launched an induction and support program for newly placed principals and vice principals.

Several core beliefs frame the ELDA program. These include:

- Theory must connect to practice. Students learn best through developing field-based knowledge and skills grounded in research.
- Consistent inquiry, reflection, and critical feedback are essential for adult learning.
- Effective administrators must develop a set of specific educational leadership skills, such as the ability to analyze teaching and design professional learning opportunities for teachers, and the ability to articulate and reflect a set of beliefs in all aspects of their work as site leaders.

Recognizing the importance of connecting theory and practice, the program is designed to immerse candidates in the culture of a school community and to link the daily challenges of school leadership to theoretical knowledge. Candidates are able to apply and reflect on the skills and knowledge they gain from class as soon as they return to the school site the next morning. Because the instructional and teacher-development practices cultivated by ELDA were designed to be consonant with San Diego's instructional reforms, and because interns were placed with strong principals who were committed to these reforms, there was an extraordinarily powerful reinforcement of theory into practice and practice into theory during the early years of the San Diego reform. As one intern put it:

I thought it was just brilliant to combine the theory and practice. I like that the program has been modeled around learning theory. I like the fact that our classes are germane to what is going on daily in our school. It really helps to make the learning deeper and, obviously, more comprehensive.

### The Aspiring Leaders Program

Among the features that distinguish ELDA are its careful recruitment process, tightly focused curriculum linked to a well-developed internship, and strong cohort model.

**Purposeful recruitment and selection.** The program aims to recruit candidates who can be strong instructional leaders and can help diversify the principal workforce. To accomplish this, the district has actively recruited candidates and sought recommendations from principals, asking them to identify instructionally strong teachers who demonstrate leadership capacity. The selection process included observations of candidates' teaching, as well as interviews and reviews of their track records. This process resulted in major changes in the characteristics of prospective principals. As Table 2 illustrates, ELDA graduates were much more likely to be female, Latino/a, or African American than other principals in their district, the state, or the nation. Furthermore, fully 59% had been literacy coaches (as compared to 9% of principals nationally), and only 10% had previously been athletic coaches (as compared to 43% nationally), illustrating the emphasis on instructional expertise as the basis for principal selection.

**Table 2: Principal Characteristics and Recruitment**

	ELDA Graduates n=60	San Diego In service n=80	CA Comparison n=33	National Comparison n=631
Demographics				
Female	81%	75%	58%	48%
Hispanic or Latino origin	24%	7%	20%	2%
Black or African American	8%	14%	3%	5%
Program Recruitment				
Formally referred by school or district to participate in principal training program	66%	13%	18%	10%
Costs of program were subsidized	82%	7%	12%	23%
Was previously a school athletic coach	10%	10%	38%	43%
Was previously a literacy coach	59%	19%	6%	9%
Was previously a grade-level or subject-area team leader/ chairperson	74%	59%	69%	46%

**A tightly focused learning experience.** ELDA’s coursework, closely interwoven with the internships, produces a learning experience that differs significantly from the typical principal preparation program. The 24 units of graduate coursework are co-taught by university instructors and district practitioners, often by the instructional leaders and principals who have been centrally involved in developing the district reforms, as well as the program itself. The content of the program emphasizes knowledge of learning and instruction, professional learning and development, organizational behavior, and school management and change.

ELDA’s founding director, Elaine Fink, identified knowledge about adult learning as the essential link between school leadership and improving student learning: “If we are to improve student achievement, it is the adults’ performance that has to get better. Therefore, it becomes the job of school leaders to create strong, effective, ongoing adult learning within their organizations.” This expectation demands that candidates develop a capacity to understand not only their own strengths, weaknesses, and learning strategies, but also the individual and collective strengths and needs of their staff.

Reflecting ELDA’s emphasis on problem-based adult learning, a core assignment in a course such as “Instructional Leadership and Supervision” might require students to develop a work plan to analyze, improve, and integrate a school’s professional development practices or to monitor student achievement. Candidates would then be required to implement their work plans during their internship.

ELDA students 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 internships. The culminating assessments of a problem-based learning project, portfolio, and professional platform statement are evaluated by a panel of district practitioners and university faculty using rubrics aligned with standards. Candidate progress is carefully monitored through individual meetings with supervisors, monthly site visits, and formal evaluations. Cohort members meet regularly to reflect on their internship experiences and learning. This gives program staff additional opportunities to assess and support candidates’ development.

As a result, ELDA graduates reported a strong emphasis on instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and reflection; these were all less apparent in the views of graduates of other programs in California and the nation. ELDA graduates were also noticeably more likely to describe opportunities for self-assessment (see Table 3).

**If we are to improve student achievement, it is the adults’ performance that has to get better. Therefore, it becomes the job of school leaders to create strong, effective, ongoing adult learning within their organizations.**

**— Elaine Fink,  
ELDA Founding  
Director**

**Table 3: Perceptions of Principal Preparation Program<sup>1</sup>**

Proportion of candidates reporting that the following qualities were true of their educational leadership program (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale of agreement)	ELDA Program n=60	CA Comparison n=33	National Comparison n=631
The program emphasized instructional leadership	98%	85%***	77%***
The program content emphasized leadership for school improvement	96%	67%***	55%***
The course work was comprehensive and provided a coherent learning experience	94%	68%*	68%***
I was in a student cohort, a defined group of individuals who began the program together and stayed together throughout their courses	100%	60%***	34%
Practicing school or district administrators taught in the program	86%	60%**	36%***
The program provided many opportunities for self-assessment as a leader	86%	48%***	44%***
I was often asked to reflect on practice and analyze how to improve it	93%	54%***	52%***
The program provided regular assessments of my skill development and leadership competencies	90%	39%***	40%
The program integrated theory and practice	97%	66%***	61%***
The faculty members were very knowledgeable about their subject matter	96%	84%	81%***
The program gave me a strong orientation to the principalship as a career	90%	57%**	65%***
The faculty provided many opportunities to evaluate the program	81%	36%**	46%***

T tests of group means ~p<.10; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

**Internship and mentoring.** The full-time, year-long internship has been a defining characteristic of the ELDA program. Unlike conventional internships that inject candidates into schools as temporary members without formal administrative responsibilities, the ELDA program typically placed candidates in schools as assistant principals, making them full members of the community and providing rich opportunities throughout the year to develop their capacity for leading teachers, students, and administrative colleagues. Supervised by principals selected for their expertise in instruction and school improvement and their mentoring skills, ELDA participants had the opportunity to observe and emulate strong leadership models. Through the financial support of the

<sup>1</sup>The sample of program graduates includes both practicing principals, who make up a large majority of the graduates, and graduates who have not yet become principals.

Broad Foundation, the school district was able to pay participants' full salaries for a year. Released from teaching responsibilities for that period, participants spent more than 1,200 hours in the internship, gradually assuming greater responsibilities in their host schools.

These responsibilities are outlined in an “internship learning contract” that is aligned with standards set by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The contract identifies activities or projects candidates are expected to carry out to gain requisite skills and knowledge, such as modeling lessons to teachers or designing a professional development plan. The advisor and supervising principal use a rubric to emphasize the attainment of learning and development goals, not just the completion of activities. Candidates meet at least monthly with their university advisors and supervising principals to review their progress toward goals identified in their learning contract and to ensure that they have adequate opportunities to develop their skills. The supervising principals also attend periodic meetings during the year to review their work and discuss common challenges. In addition, the ELDA program director regularly visits candidates' schools to observe them and consult with their principals.

**Most ELDA students identified the internship as essential to transforming them from teachers into future school leaders.**

Most ELDA students identified the internship as essential to transforming them from teachers into future school leaders. Compared to other principals in the state and nation, ELDA graduates were significantly more likely to say they were closely supervised and assisted by knowledgeable school leaders and that they were able to take on genuine leadership responsibilities. An impressive 96% agreed that their internship was an excellent learning experience for becoming a principal.

As one participant summed up her year of interning with an experienced principal, “That was the best, just watching her. . . . I still think of what she would say when I make decisions [now]. . . . It was very powerful.”

**Cohort model.** The program supports cohorts of 15-20 students a year. Effective cohorts provide participants with the type of collaborative learning experiences that leaders will be expected to cultivate in their schools. ELDA graduates identified their cohort membership as an important facet of their experience in the program, recognizing that it provided a supportive network for working through coursework and internship experiences. After completion of the program, cohort connections provide invaluable networks for new principals. As one noted:

The cohort method means you develop a good rapport with a set of people you know you can trust, who will give you . . . a push to move you forward. I think that has always been a rewarding thing in the internship cohort program.

### **New Leaders: Induction and Support**

In 2002, ELDA initiated an induction program to support new principals in their early years, satisfying the state's “Tier 2” requirements for credentialing new principals. As of 2005, 46 students in

three cohorts had completed the program; 23 of them were graduates of the Aspiring Leader program, and 23 were new principals who had followed other routes to leadership.

The job-embedded coursework is designed specifically to meet the needs of new principals and is connected to ongoing support from an experienced school leader who served as a mentor throughout the program. With their mentor, new leaders examine and develop their leadership styles, reflect on the needs of their schools, strengthen their problem-solving ability, design and execute strategic plans, and use data to improve instruction. An “induction plan” tied to the work plan required of all San Diego principals organizes the interactions of the new principal and his/her mentor.

Mentor principals and participants are expected to spend a minimum of three hours together each week on the different elements of the induction plan and the development and reinforcement of leadership skills. These mentoring sessions might consist of reviewing and analyzing student achievement data and developing appropriate strategic plans to improve school-wide teaching. A mentor might observe a principal’s conversation with a teacher and provide feedback based on those observations. As a culminating project, new principals compare a baseline videotape of their performance in a leadership situation (e.g., offering professional development to teachers) with a final videotape, analyzing and reflecting on their development. In the words of a participant who chose ELDA for its rigor, the induction program “actually makes going back to your school site and doing your work easier, because you’re getting support for the work you’re engaged in.”

### **ELDA Costs and Outcomes**

In 2005, the total combined costs of ELDA’s Tier 1 and Tier 2 programs, including the uncompensated time of participants, totalled just over \$2.1 million, or about \$51,714 per participant. With all costs considered—those borne by the school district, the University of San Diego, private foundations such as the Broad Foundation, and participants (including the time of all involved)—the cost per candidate in 2005 averaged \$25,500. Paid internships, estimated at a total of \$877,000 a year, represented ELDA’s most expensive program component.

The benefits of the program are substantial as well. In significant ways, ELDA graduates feel better prepared than most principals, especially for instructional leadership. They are, for example, significantly more likely than principals nationally to report being been prepared to:

- understand how different students learn and how to teach them effectively;
- create a coherent educational program across the school;
- design professional development that builds teachers’ knowledge and skills;
- evaluate teachers and provide instructional feedback to support their improvement;
- create a collaborative learning organization;
- use data to monitor school programs, to identify problems, and to propose solutions;
- lead a well informed, planned process for school change;
- engage in comprehensive planning for school improvement;
- redesign schools organizations to enhance productive teaching and learning;



- collaborate with others outside the school for assistance and partnership;
- develop a clear set of ethical principles to guide decision-making; and
- engage in self-improvement and continuous learning.

One graduate described the program’s powerful overall effect in these words:

I think this program . . . has helped me really examine what I believe is important as a school leader, what I believe about instruction, and then make decisions both instructionally and operationally around what I believe. I think this program has made me really look to others, other principals, other school leaders, or professors to refine what I believe in.

Such positive views are not limited to graduates. For example, a San Diego supervisor who hires principals expressed her enthusiasm about the difference ELDA training makes:

ELDA graduates are more consistently likely than principals from other programs to take hold in a way I didn’t have the confidence others could. They could articulate a belief and build a rationale and justification that encourages others to believe the same thing and hold high expectations for all kids.

ELDA-trained principals, in this supervisor’s experience, have been inclined to put actions behind their words—and disinclined to settle for “practice that didn’t produce a good result for kids.”

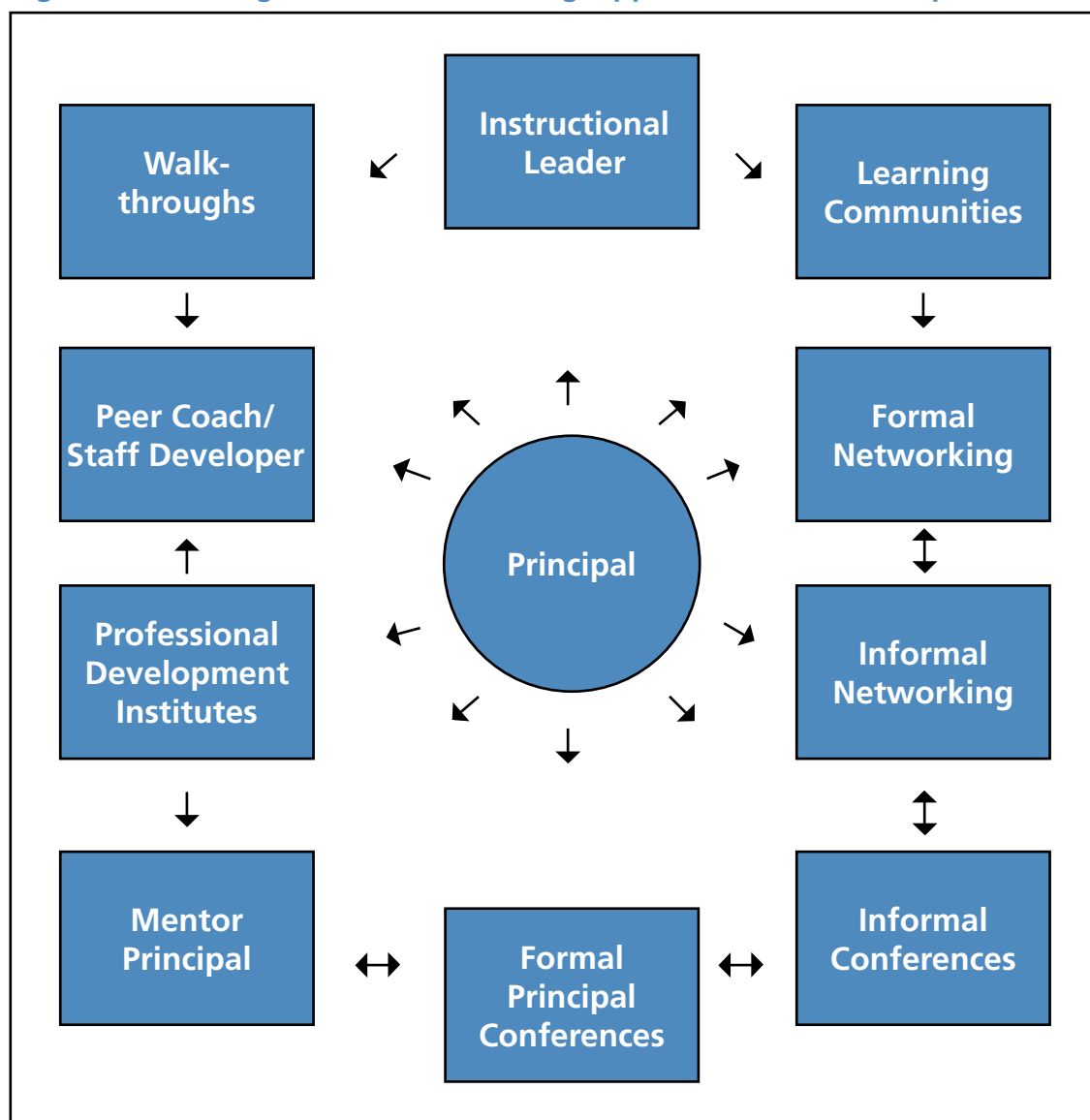
## IN-SERVICE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

All of San Diego’s reforms of schooling and teaching were driven by the district’s top leaders’ convictions that principals must know instruction well if they are to act as effective instructional leaders, and that such leadership is essential to improving student learning. The approach chosen was not an isolated summer institute or set of one-shot workshops, but rather, a tightly woven web of learning opportunities and support for principals. (See Figure 4.)

### A Web of Learning Opportunities

As part of the reform, the city’s 175 principals were divided into seven “learning communities,” each of which was led by an “instructional leader” (IL), who replaced the traditional area superintendent, whose role had been administrative rather than instructional in nature. Each IL was a former principal who had demonstrated high levels of understanding and skill as an instructional leader. These leaders organized principal conferences and networks, visited classrooms with principals, set up professional development that was attended by both principals and their teachers, and put in place resources needed to solve instructional problems. They played a key role in the district’s principal development programs, which became a critical pipeline for transforming the nature of the principalship and reinforcing the district’s focus on instruction.

Figure 4: San Diego In-Service Learning Opportunities for Principals



In a sense, the ILs became the principals’ principals. As one principal explained, her IL supported her in learning about literacy and mathematics teaching and how to implement new instructional strategies:

The opportunity [for principals] to have that more knowledgeable other . . . that person they can ask for support, who [will support] you and your kids . . . navigating the system and taking action for you at the central office level [is invaluable]. . . . It’s absolutely about solving instructional problems and helping me always see, “What’s the next level that we can bring teacher practice to in schools?”

The goal was to make professional learning more evidence-based, focused on examining the relationship between what leaders were learning at the level of instructional leader, the principal, and the teacher level and what students were able to now do as a result of the adults' learning. In framing the problem this way, the reform tackled a significant, usually hidden problem in the organization of large districts: providing high quality professional development to the supervisors of principals, so that these supervisors could guide the learning of principals. The ILs themselves had to develop a more robust command of literacy and mathematics teaching, greater knowledge of instructional improvement, and strategies for developing quality control of the many components of the support structures, e.g., the walkthrough, study groups, the training of district coaches, principal conferences, the effective use of assessments, and so on. They could then develop productive learning communities as a site for much of the principals' professional development, for discussions about practice, and for direct supervision.

In smaller groups, ILs facilitated principal networking and support opportunities. For example, they hosted book clubs where principals met to discuss shared readings. They also coordinated opportunities for principals to learn from one another; these might include a principal-led workshop in which one principal shared her strategies for managing school budgets or a non-evaluative walkthrough that was hosted by one school for other district principals. These regular opportunities created multiple settings for developing instructional leadership. For example, a principal observed that:

We've gone to each other's campuses; we've had wonderful discussions; we've read books together. We've watched each other's staff development tapes and talked about what we could do better [and] what kinds of things we think would help the staff move.

Monthly **Principals' Conferences** were designed to provide a common learning base, using presentations by experts on topics like teaching techniques or theories of school change, mixed with occasional "field trips" to classrooms or sessions to evaluate data on student performance. **Informal principals' conferences**, held two half-days each month, allow principals to meet by school level to address an agenda they choose. Topics cover such issues as math or reading assessments, summer school logistics, teacher evaluation, or a new science curriculum. These structured learning opportunities have led to a variety of **informal networking forums**, such as book clubs formed by the principals and site visits to each other's schools.

Week-long summer principal institutes gave principals opportunities to watch ILs, peer coaches, and teachers work with summer school students. Principals also routinely took part in the **professional development** available to teachers. In fact, 84% of San Diego principals we surveyed had

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*Continued on page 40*

## ELDA TRAINING IN ACTION

Leslie Marks experienced the full continuum of pre- and in-service development opportunities in San Diego, entering the first cohort of ELDA’s “Aspiring Leaders” program in 2000, after more than 10 years as an elementary bilingual teacher. In 2002, after a stint as vice principal at a low-performing elementary school, while participating in ELDA’s Induction & Support program, Marks was assigned to Tompkins Elementary School, a low-income, predominantly minority school requiring a major turnaround.

In the three years during which she had been principal, the school’s state Academic Performance Index (API) had grown by more than 150 points, exceeding state and federal targets and far outstripping the performance of most schools serving similar students statewide. Equally important, the faculty had experienced major breakthroughs in practice and confidence, which were obvious in our observations.

On one of the days we followed her, Marks was visiting 15 classrooms during her regular walkthroughs. With each class she visited, Marks collected notes on the strengths and areas of need she identified during her observation, emphasizing the question she and teachers were working on together: figuring out “how we know what students are learning” so that this knowledge can inform further instruction. As she reflected on her instructional observations, she began to think through the conversations she planned to have with specific teachers about what she had seen. She framed these planned conversations in terms of inquiry—asking teachers for their assessment of what was effective for students’ learning, their rationale for their strategies, and their views about how to improve.

In the school survey, teachers affirmed their sense of Marks’ strong leadership. More than 85% agreed that she had communicated a vision of the school to all staff, was supportive and encouraging, and was very effective at encouraging professional collaboration and professional development for teachers.

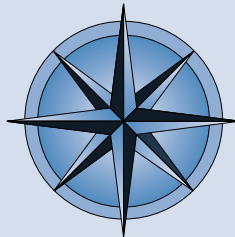
Teachers described her vision as focused on helping all students to meet standards and pushing and supporting all teachers to accomplish their goals for their students. As one noted:

I think that one of Leslie's strengths [is that] she has a really good vision and she sees the big picture. She spends her energy where it needs to be spent. She is going to coach or suggest or push the people who need that. She is going to see the people who are competent and ask them to help other people. She focuses her energy where it is needed. That is what helps the school run effectively.

Marks attributed her leadership skills to what she called the “super powerful” training she received in ELDA. She pointed to the full-time internship as influential “because working side by side with someone for a year is incredible. All of the different situations that would come up . . . learning to be a problem-solver and thinking outside of the box. . . . I still think of what [my mentor] would say when I make the decisions.” She also credited her development as a school leader to readings and discussions from specific courses, which were closely linked to one another and to the internship. She underscored, for example, how the school leadership and management course deepened her understanding of her role as a leader of adult learning:

There are so many different ways to think about being a principal. . . . I would go back and reread people like Sergiovanni, who talked about ways to support the adults so that the adults could support the kids. I think that became my philosophy.

Marks' philosophy and preparation for the principalship were clearly evident in the work she did with her teachers and students, illustrating vividly what instructional leadership should look like and how it can be developed.



**The learning supports developed for principals were also substantively integrated with those developed for central office administrators, teachers, and other staff, so that all educators would be working toward the same goals using the same strategies.**

participated in professional development with their teachers at least seven times in the previous year, as compared to 35% of other California principals and 50% of those nationally.

Structured **walkthroughs**, a technique of classroom observation and analysis formalized by the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Learning, became a cornerstone of professional learning throughout the district. Conversations between ILs and principals, between principals and teachers, and between peer coaches and teachers revolve around the classroom observations. Nearly two-thirds of San Diego principals had visited other schools at least three times in the previous year to support their own learning (as compared to only about 20% in California and the nation). They rated this practice and their other learning experiences more highly than principals elsewhere rated comparable experiences.

Formal **coaching and mentoring** relationships were established to further support both new and veteran principals, with several full-time coaches assigned to six to ten principals to provide advice and counsel on an array of instructional leadership issues. In our survey, 54% of all principals in San Diego reported that they had had some mentoring or coaching by an experienced principal as part of the formal arrangement supported by the district. This compared to only 10% of principals in California and 14% nationally.

The learning supports developed for principals were also substantively integrated with those developed for central office administrators, teachers, and other staff, so that all educators would be working toward the same goals using the same strategies. The initial objectives of the elaborate professional learning system in San Diego were: implementing the district-defined balanced literacy strategies (and later mathematics and other subjects) and raising the achievement of the lowest-performing students. The structures were intended to embed adult learning within schools and to connect it to teachers' daily practice, which required both a large cultural change in school organizations and new structural supports. As one high school principal observed, "I think it's building a culture of learners and letting the staff know that you're a learner, too, and that we're in this together as staff, parents, and students."

These new opportunities for principals helped create profound connections not often found in urban schools. Under the district's theory of change, the expectation that principals were to be instructional leaders at their sites required them to learn in-depth how to teach literacy so that they could facilitate teachers' learning. Many elementary school principals reported that they

learned more about literacy instruction than they had when they were teachers. As one remarked:

I think the district has done an excellent job in teaching us about curriculum and instruction. They are really teaching us how to teach reading. I know more about that than I have ever known. And to imagine 33 [or] 34 years of being in this business [and] just now, I'm really understanding reading? I think the district's done a good job of that.

Another principal explained how uncertain her own knowledge about literacy instruction had been and how it was developing as a result of these opportunities:

Now we're really looking at each of those elements [of balanced literacy]. We're looking at them; we're trying them in our classrooms. We're doing in-service with our staffs, and we're going back and looking for evidence. And I think we're fine-tuning it. I really think that's what's valuable about this whole thing. If you'd asked me a year ago about read-alouds and shared reading, I would have had an answer for you. But . . . shared reading is really not what I thought shared reading [was]. . . . And we're all understanding a little bit more about what that is and how that is a good approach.

Teachers often remarked on the change in principals as they were expected to model the stance of a learner. As one observed:

I think [the principal] has grown as an administrator. I see her as being a learner now . . . with us. . . . Before I always thought of her as up here, as you are my boss kind of thing. . . . I really feel . . . we are learning together . . . so I have seen her change in her expectations, which have become higher, which is good, because it makes my expectations for myself become higher, as well as for my kids.

Survey data bear out 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).

**Under the district's theory of change, the expectation that principals were to be instructional leaders at their sites required them to learn in-depth how to teach literacy so that they could facilitate teachers' learning.**

**Table 4: Principals' Practice**

In the last month, approximately how often did you engage in the following activities in your role as principal of this school?	San Diego Principals n=80	California Principals n=30	National Principals n=551
	Percent reporting daily/at least weekly		
Guide the development and evaluation of curriculum and instruction	50 / 83	20 / 57	21 / 65
Build a professional learning community among faculty and staff	65 / 90	40 / 73	33 / 65
Foster teacher professional development for instructional knowledge and skills	35 / 80	3 / 50	9 / 59
Evaluate and provide instructional feedback to teachers	60 / 92	20 / 70	17 / 73
Work with teachers to change teaching methods where students are not succeeding	78 / 91	3 / 46	14 / 59
Work with faculty to develop goals for their practice and professional learning	9 / 57	3 / 26	8 / 45

## IN-SERVICE COSTS AND OUTCOMES

Including all the costs of all participants' time in the varied in-service activities produces a very high estimate of professional development costs for this program, approximately \$4.3 million in 2004-05, or about \$23,000 per principal. While this figure is sizeable, it amounts to \$33 per pupil, which could be seen as a modest investment to attain much greater expertise among principals and teachers and a more effective system of instruction. Among the benefits of this investment has been the creation of a cadre of leaders intently committed to instruction and able to act on that commitment in ways most principals find difficult. Researchers observed instructional leadership in action in the schools they visited, and they saw how communities of principals and teachers were cultivating a greater capacity based on a growing base of knowledge and a sense of common cause.

Over the period in which reforms were implemented in San Diego, student achievement improved substantially, especially for students of color and low-income students, and most sharply in the elementary grades where the reforms were targeted.

## CHANGE FOLLOWS CHANGE

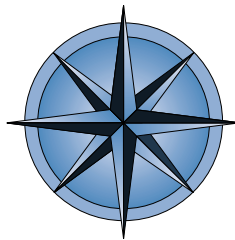
With the departure in Summer 2005 of district leaders closely associated with the reforms described here, and given ELDA's reliance on outside funding for the internship, the future of the reforms described in this case study is uncertain. Massive, rapid reform can be jarring, and only time will tell which changes in San Diego will prove fragile and which enduring.



In Summer 2005, San Diego hired a new superintendent, Carl Cohn, who had previously led the Long Beach, California, school district. Superintendent Cohn indicated that he supports the principal development programs and is interested in seeing both ELDA and the in-service program continue, with adaptations to the evolving district context. During the 2005-06 school year, many aspects of the “Blueprint” reform continued, including the leadership development programs. More conventional assistant superintendents replaced instructional leaders, and principal supports shifted to accommodate the change in structure.

ELDA has sought to maintain internships for its candidates, even without the foundation funds, by encouraging the use of assistant principal positions as the base for the internship experience. It also began to redesign its program to incorporate other districts along with San Diego and to accommodate a broader set of approaches to instructional reform. The University of San Diego’s commitment to the program has allowed it to survive and evolve in response to changing conditions, and the San Diego district has continued to engage in the partnership.

As is true in all districts undergoing leadership change, the future is yet to be determined. Nonetheless, San Diego’s experience demonstrates that a coherent commitment to instructional leadership can give principals and teachers the tools they need to transform teaching, learning, and school organizations on behalf of the students who need good teaching the most.



## Looking at Practice: The Learning Walk

Exemplary professional development for principals is anchored in the instructional work of schools. One increasingly common practice is the use of “walkthroughs”—an activity initially developed in New York City’s District 2 and since introduced into a number of districts as “Learning Walks” by the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Learning. During Learning Walks, participants generally spend 5 to 10 minutes in each of several classrooms. The time is spent looking at student work and classroom artifacts, as well as talking with students and teachers to understand what is going on. Using these systematized observations, walkers collect evidence about learning as well as teaching, and they begin to assess how the teacher’s work impacts student learning. Walkthroughs can also be used to understand a principal’s work as an instructional leader and to help leaders learn together about how to observe and understand practice. Three of the districts in our study—San Diego, Region 1, and Hartford—use this technique.

For many principals, these informal observations provide snapshots of daily activities quickly enough that a principal can stay abreast of what teachers are doing by being in a number of classrooms every day. For example, when we observed Leslie Marks, principal of Tompkins Elementary School in San Diego, we followed as she visited about 15 classrooms one day (see page 38). In each class we visited, Marks wrote notes about instructional strengths and perceived areas of need, mapping out the conversations she planned to have with each of her teachers and planning for grade-level and school-wide professional development that would address common issues and concerns.

Walkthroughs are also used to hold principals accountable for their work as instructional leaders. Principals meet individually with their Instructional Leaders (ILs) a few times per year in school visits. These visits include walk-throughs of most classrooms, along with discussions and debriefings between the IL and the principal about what is seen in each classroom and what the practice represents in terms of individual teacher growth and school progress. As one principal described the process:

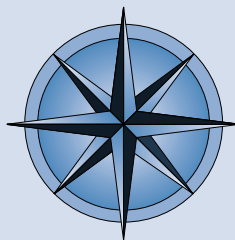
[The IL and I] meet for about the first 45 minutes or so, just going over plans, looking at our teacher evaluations, kind of how we’re keeping track of teachers we’re evaluating. I show her the documentation I have on those and the feedback I give to teachers. . . . She and I will actually do classroom visits . . . and

they're about only 10 minutes each. We get into the classroom, and I always give [teachers] a list of what kinds of things we're looking for: shared reading, stating a purpose, and making connections.

The classroom visits are followed by discussions between the IL and principal about steps for moving each individual teacher and the school further ahead. ILs aim to visit each of their schools three times a year, though some schools have monthly visits.

We observed as Sharon Pierce, principal of Laurel Ridge Middle School, met with her IL for a lengthy conversation in the principal's office to discuss how she was addressing the instructional needs of the school. The two then spent nearly 90 minutes observing 10 to 12 classrooms for 5 minutes each. Between observations they discussed student learning, teacher practice, and potential "next steps" for each classroom. After this physical walkthrough, they debriefed for up to an hour. During that time, the IL asked Pierce to synthesize what she saw across classrooms, and what she planned to do next with her staff. The IL shared her impressions as well and noted items on which she expected Pierce to work.

In San Diego, as in Hartford, New York, and other districts, a key part of the reform strategy has been to ground professional learning in observations and analyses of classroom practice. Conversations between and among ILs, principals, and teachers revolve around the classroom observations. Consistent and frequent observations of classrooms by district administrators and principals have become the foundation for professional discourse throughout these districts, keeping the focus of leadership on instruction and student learning.



# New York City's Region 1: A Continuum of Leadership Preparation and Development

by Margaret Terry Orr, Margaret E. Barber and Carol Cohen

In Region 1 of the New York City Public School District, close to 100,000 students attend 137 schools in the Bronx, the city's northernmost region. Two-thirds of the student population is Hispanic. Many students are recent immigrants—from such disparate places as the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Albania, and Bangladesh. Ninety percent of Region 1 students qualify for free- or reduced-price school lunches. These challenging circumstances have made Region 1's success in establishing a continuum of programs to prepare and train school leaders at all levels both striking and invaluable.

The purpose has been, in the words of Irma Zadoya, the Region 1 superintendent who led the effort for many years, “to create, support, and sustain a continuum of leadership development that begins in the classroom and extends to the superintendency, with career pathways, incentives, and opportunities for growth for all members of the educational community.” The deeper goal is to prepare skilled educators to become effective leaders who can improve student achievement.

**Preparation programs** in Region 1 train new teacher leaders, assistant principals, and principals. **In-service support programs** build the skills and confidence of new and experienced assistant principals and principals. General opportunities for **continuing leadership education** deepen and broaden professional learning for school improvement throughout the region.

From 2003-2005, when programs for leaders have been most concentrated, Region 1 has seen gains in student achievement as measured by standardized tests. Such results suggest that, despite challenges posed by shifts of regulatory context, program leadership, and funding, Region 1's integrated approach to developing and strengthening school leadership has much to offer as a model, particularly one illustrating how professional learning can be made integral to district and school reform.

## CONTEXT

Region 1 serves one of the lowest income communities of the Bronx, which itself is one of the poorest of New York City's five boroughs. Although employment rates have risen in recent years and welfare rates have fallen, the Bronx nonetheless accounts for one-third of New York's welfare cases. Academic performance in mathematics and English language arts is the lowest in the city.

Formed in 2003, when New York schools were reorganized from 32 districts into 10 regions, Region 1 combines what had been school Districts 9 and 10. According to news articles, District 9 brought to this union a troubled organizational history of supervisory corruption and allegations of cheating on standardized tests.

The period since Region 1's formation has been a time of changing city, state, and federal educational requirements and procedures. Many schools in the region have found it difficult to show the achievement test gains demanded by the state accountability system and the federal "No Child Left Behind" act. Centralization and standardization have characterized the school reform initiatives undertaken in New York City following Michael Bloomberg becoming mayor in 2001 and Joel Klein becoming chancellor in 2002. Although these external changes have brought additional resources for professional development, they have also constrained some options for Region 1 and increased demands for planning and reporting.

The turmoil of reorganizing community school districts into regions exacerbated the newly created Region 1's difficulty retaining good teachers and administrators. One-fifth of the region's teachers leave each year and, from 2004 to 2006, the region faced hiring 70 new principals and about 150 new assistant principals from a shrinking pool of qualified applicants. Moreover, despite recent improvements in District 10, women and minorities remained under-represented in leadership positions. The need for developing the available pool of school leaders is increasingly important in the combined Region 1.

Well in advance of these most recent challenges, when she was superintendent of District 10, Irma Zardoya had begun seeking to train and support effective school leaders. In 1994, she sent a first cohort of aspiring school leaders to the Principals Institute at Bank Street College. In 2000, she established the Professional Development Leadership Center (PDL) to support new principals and other school leaders. In 2002, District 10 applied for and received a major leadership preparation grant from The Wallace Foundation, then called the LEAD grant. This grant further supported the district's successful application for a federal leadership preparation grant. These coordinated initiatives and funding support provided a strong foundation for Zardoya's leadership development efforts when she was appointed as Region 1's first superintendent in 2003.

## THE CONTINUUM

"We have to grow our own leaders," one Region 1 official observed, "which means that we have created a continuum. We keep adding steps to it every year, to get people from the classroom all the way up to the superintendency."

Region 1 leaders believe that, to serve students well and improve their learning, principals must be instructional leaders who can both lead the individual and collective improvement of teachers' practice and consistently implement citywide curriculum standards and reforms. To be effective as instructional leaders, they must first have been strong teachers. They must know how to motivate others and how to build a "learning community" that "aspires to research, to study together, to talk," as Zardoya has defined it. The best leaders know Region 1; in the words of its Project LEAD director, "They are ready to step into our schools because they know our instructional initiatives, they know our beliefs, they know our children, they know our teachers, [and] they know our schools."

These linked ideas underlie Region 1's emphasis on the centrality of leadership for school improvement and the programs in its continuum. Effective leadership preparation requires ongoing support across the trajectory of leadership roles, providing meaningful opportunities for leaders across the continuum of development to learn the instructional and leadership demands of the Region. The Region's programs are not only relevant to the schools its program graduates subsequently lead, the programs also respond to national standards set by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and to state and city leadership preparation standards.

### The Programs

Region 1's Leadership Development programs cluster in five areas: cultivating teacher leaders, preparing potential principals, developing new principals, supporting established leaders, and supporting region-wide leadership development. Table 5 shows the array of programs and strategies for leadership preparation and development across levels. Highlights of critical components follow the summary provided in the table.

**Bank Street College Principals Institute.** In an 18-month program designed for and operated collaboratively with Region 1, aspiring principals complete 36 credits of combined coursework, fieldwork, and internship through Bank Street College. Courses are taught by college faculty, regional officials, and experienced practitioners; advisors encourage and closely supervise students. The program graduated 65 students from 2002 to 2005 and 39 students in 2005-2006. Of this most recent cohort, 67% were female and 49% were persons of color. Graduates advance rapidly into leadership positions. Of those graduating between 2002 and 2005, 78% have advanced into leadership positions, including 48% as assistant principals, 22% as regional staff members, and 6% as principals. (For a full description of the Bank Street College Principals Institute, see: *Bank Street College Principals Institute: A Collaborative Partnership in Leadership Preparation for School Improvement* on page 56. The full case study is available on-line at <http://seli.stanford.edu/research/sls.htm> or <http://srnleads.org>.)

**Support for new principals.** Region 1's Professional Development Leadership Center (PDLC) provides a program for new principals that offers a series of bi-monthly seminars and a summer institute on such topics as literacy and mathematics initiatives, budgeting, planning, staff development, and teacher evaluation; these parallel priorities in the school calendar throughout the year. The PDLC provides opportunities for participants to anchor and deepen their skill and knowledge.

New principals also work throughout the year with mentors who are experienced principals. From 2002-03 through 2005-06, mentors worked with 20 to 40 new principals each year, supporting them to experience “Learning Walks,” for example, and helping them in the areas addressed by New York City’s Principals Performance Review.

Added to this array of supports for new principals is New York’s citywide “On-Boarding” program. Its core features include summer sessions, meetings by school-level cohorts during the school year, and mentoring. Region 1 encourages new principals to participate and coordinates its programs with the city’s program.

**Table 5: The Region 1 Continuum of Leadership Preparation and Development**

<b>Principal Preparation</b>
Bank Street College Principals Institute
<b>New Principals Program</b>
New Principals Program, Professional Development Leadership Center (PDLC) Principal mentoring for new principals (PDLC) NYC Leadership Academy
<b>Other Leadership Preparation</b>
Distinguished Teacher Leader through Bank Street College and CC9 Tomorrow’s Principals, PDLC Lead Principal Program, PDLC
<b>Leadership Development Strategies (through PDLC and elsewhere)</b>
Professional development for region staff Institute for new assistant principals, PDLC Principal mentors Assistant principal conferences and cohort support Assistant principal coaching Leadership seminars for principals and assistant principals Principal Coach program Other specialized principal leadership development opportunities Incentives for experienced and effective principals Superintendent professional development Quality-control strategies
<b>Region-Wide Leadership Education</b>
Tier I and Tier II training Network meetings Region-wide principal conferences and professional learning Consultants

**Programs for teacher leaders and potential principals.** Region 1 offers three programs for teacher leaders, two with Bank Street College (one of which is bilingual and citywide) and one with the Community Collaborative to Improve Bronx Schools (CCB).



**When teachers graduate from this program, they can continue at Bank Street in a “Blended Model” Principals’ Institute program, thereby moving toward certification as a building-level leader. Of the 26 teacher leaders who participated in 2002-2004, 92% were women and 69% were from traditionally under-represented racial/ethnic groups.**

principals, combines three days of professional development with monthly meetings that address such matters as the nature of the principalship, developing a vision, distributive leadership, leadership portfolios, and the interview process. In 2005-2006, the program trained 10 individuals, almost all of whom were female and persons of color. Five were promoted to principalships, two enrolled in the NYC Leadership Academy, and one became a regional director.

**Support for established leaders.** There is a variety of support for established principals, as well as for new principals. They are also coached, if needed, by other principals selected by the superintendent and supported by the PDLC. What began in 2001 as four principals coaching in 49 schools had become 64 principals coaching in 127 schools by 2005.

For principals as well as assistant principals, the PDLC offers school-year and summer sessions on both management and instructional skills.

With Wallace Foundation support, Region 1 made funds available to networks in the region to develop local leadership strategies. Grants of up to \$50,000 were used, for example, to send principals to leadership institutes at Harvard and Fordham Universities.

Participants in the Bank Street teacher leaders program have their teaching load reduced by one period a day, and open their classrooms to other teachers as a professional development laboratory. They also complete 18 credit hours of coursework in instructional leadership at Bank Street and take part in an advisor-led conference group. When teachers graduate from this program, they can continue at Bank Street in a “Blended Model” Principals’ Institute program, thereby moving toward certification as a building-level leader. Of the 26 teacher leaders who participated in 2002-2004, 92% were women and 69% were from traditionally underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.

The CCB program pairs teacher leaders in each school in “Network 9” (a division of the region) in a shared classroom. Experienced in teaching either literacy or mathematics, the two teachers teach half time and provide professional development to other teachers half time, for which each receives \$10,000 a year from a discretionary fund of New York’s Department of Education.

“Tomorrow’s Principals,” a PDLC program for assistant principals who are already certified for building-level leadership and demonstrate the potential to become



**Region-wide leadership education.** In addition to programs for individuals, Region 1 offers leadership education for all school leaders through a two-tier process, as well as through region-wide meetings. Every month, experienced principals and superintendents of the 10 regional networks participate in “Tier I” training sessions led by consultants from the Institute for Learning, who address the principles of learning that participants will subsequently replicate in their own networks. One day a month, each network participates in day-long “Tier II” training led by the colleagues who participated in the Tier I training session. This turn-key approach to professional development provides Region 1 leaders with opportunities to share and build on one another’s expertise, as well as be trained in improvement strategies to replicate in their schools.

The monthly regional meetings, led by the regional superintendent, also include a leadership development component that addresses a core, year-long school improvement priority, such as supporting English language learners.

## INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS

What has been the impact of the leadership continuum in Region 1? Data gathered by the region, research into the LEAD programs funded by The Wallace Foundation, and surveys of principals completed for Stanford’s School Leadership Study suggest that Region 1 is meeting its goals for increased quantity, diversity, and quality of its aspiring leaders and has improved the effectiveness of school leaders.

### Influences on the Pipeline of Leaders

There are various indications of success in increasing the quantity and diversity of entering leaders in Region 1. For example, participants in Region 1’s leadership development programs (for teacher leaders, aspiring and new principals) in 2004-2005 totaled 86, a number equal to slightly more than 20% of the region’s principals and assistant principals.

Program numbers show that most participants are female, and about half of them are racial/ethnic minorities.

Also important to supplying schools with leaders is the retention rate: The job retention rate for new principals supported by the PDLC program (from 2002 through 2005) was 86%. Interviews with individual principals suggest that the intensiveness of training in the region and its “cutting edge” focus on learning and growth have encouraged them to pursue careers in Region 1.

### Participants’ Perceptions of their Learning Opportunities

Although small sample sizes limit statistical comparisons, findings from a 2005 survey of Region 1 principals, other principals in New York State, and principals elsewhere in the nation give indications of what Region 1 is accomplishing.

Some results suggest differences in principal preparation and development between those prepared through Region 1 and those prepared elsewhere:

- Principals who are graduates of the Principals Institute and newer Region 1 principals rated the quality of their leadership preparation more highly than did more experienced principals, and more highly than other principals in New York and nationally. They felt better prepared to develop a vision, lead instruction and organizational improvement, engage with parents and community, and manage operations.
- All the Principals Institute principals, 67% of new Region 1 principals, and 33% of other Region 1 principals reported being mentored or coached and sharing practices with other principals three or more times during the year, compared to only 12% of other New York State principals and 12% of principals from a national sample.
- Region 1 principals were more likely than their peers in New York State or the nation to report that they frequently visited other schools to improve their practice, were engaged in peer coaching or mentoring, attended conferences or institutes as a participant or a presenter, and were involved in a principals' network.
- New principals in Region 1 were more likely than their longer-term principal peers within the region to report feeling encouraged to foster change.

Other survey results suggest that Region 1 principals are encouraged to engage in productive leadership practices:

- Region 1 principals were likelier than principals elsewhere in the state or the nation to report frequent engagement in instructional leadership activities such as guiding the development of curriculum, building a professional learning community, fostering professional development, working with teachers to change their methods when students are not succeeding, and working with faculty to develop goals for practice and professional learning.
- New Region 1 principals were more positive than other principals in New York State about their school's accomplishments over the last year, particularly with respect to organizational improvement, teacher engagement, and teacher commitment, although their findings were more mixed with respect to changes in family support.
- Despite the more challenging context of their schools, Region 1 principals were more committed to the principalship than others in New York State and the nation, working longer hours and planning to stay longer in the job.

To look more closely at the practices of five principals participating in varied intensities of leadership preparation, teachers in five Region 1 schools were surveyed. Like their principals, the teachers were moderately positive about the trajectories of their schools with respect to changes in school culture and instructional leadership. They gave the highest ratings to principals who had participated both in the region's Bank Street College Principals Institute and in the region's New Principals Program, suggesting the value of a strong continuum of preparation for new leaders.

## Student achievement

Perhaps the most telling measure of leadership training success is student academic achievement. Region 1 test results for English language arts and mathematics improved steadily from 1999 to 2004 and increased dramatically in 2004-2005, when leadership development efforts were most concentrated. The proportion of Region 1 students who met or exceeded state standards on standardized tests increased from 21% to 40% in English language arts and from 17% to 36% in mathematics between 1999 and 2005. Fewer remained at the lowest level, with a decrease from 31% to 14% in English language arts and from 46% to 26% in mathematics over that period of time. The region also made progress compared to other regions citywide.

## Costs and Funding for the Continuum

We estimate the total cost of the various professional development opportunities for new principals in Region One at approximately \$922,000 in 2004-05, or an average of \$38,800 per participant, plus an additional \$6,600 for each new principal's mentor support. Including the cost of principals' time and that of instructors and coaches, professional development opportunities for new principals through workshops or other training formats are estimated to account for the largest share of costs (39%). The rest of the program budget is allocated as follows: IFL/Tier II training (12%), LIS Network meetings (29%), and regional conferences (6%).

A variety of sources fund Region 1's interlocking programs. The costs of the Principals Institute are paid by district funding, grant funding, student tuition, and Bank Street's reduction of tuition. Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation and the federal School Leadership Program have provided two rounds of significant grant support for many programs and opportunities. The NYC Leadership Academy has provided training for mentors. Region 1 itself contributes funds for professional development and, importantly, allocates substantial administrative meeting time.

## CHALLENGES

Region 1's continuum of leadership preparation and development provides deep and meaningful leadership learning opportunities for developing leaders across the professional span. Participants find their leadership development opportunities strategically useful but also demanding, and those who are new principals may spend as much as 20% of their time away from their schools in professional learning opportunities.

Although the collaboration with Bank Street College has been a productive one, it will require continued nurturing as regional and university leadership changes. A broader challenge will be sustaining

**Region 1 test results for English language arts and mathematics improved steadily from 1999 to 2004 and increased dramatically in 2004-2005, when leadership development efforts were most concentrated.**



**Aspiring leaders who come from a setting in which school improvement is emphasized and whose training gives them first-hand experience in the theory and practice of improving instruction are well positioned to bring about further improvement as leaders of their own schools.**

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, components of Region 1's continuum and the continuum itself seem to have significant potential for replication. In fact, educators from elsewhere often visit the region to learn about its programs and their adoption. The following elements appear central to Region 1's effectiveness:

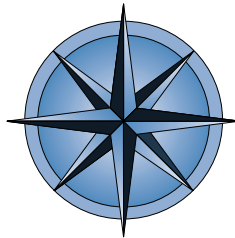
- Leadership development as a systemic endeavor that occurs across a continuum of positions and that emphasizes key elements of transforming instruction and schools, fitting district priorities and reform approaches.
- Recruitment and selection of strong educators with leadership potential.
- Partnership with a graduate institution that integrates preparation with the specific demands and reforms of the region or district.
- Combined preparation of aspiring leaders and support for new leaders.
- Mentoring of aspiring and new leaders.
- Diversification of leadership development opportunities and distributing leadership development among experienced school and district leaders.

many other regional leadership continuum programs and strategies now that Irma Zardoya, whose ardor was vital to their creation, has retired, and New York City public schools continue to be reorganized.

As Region 1 has developed its programs, New York City has also developed new approaches to preparing school leaders and has changed other expectations and requirements for public schools and their leadership. Some changes have clarified the curriculum and instructional reform. The centralization of leadership training has, however, both reduced Region 1's resources in this area and duplicated some of its leadership activities. The city-wide reorganization, including a plan to create a network of "autonomous" schools, also reduced the region's resources. Although Region 1 has contributed administrative time to the continuum and received substantial grant support, these solutions are difficult to sustain. Further citywide reorganization threatens regional programs even further, leaving their future uncertain.

Finally, Region 1's very success has contributed to what is perhaps its broadest challenge, which is that its trained teachers and school leaders continue to be hired away to better paid work in the suburbs.

In summary, Region 1's experience suggests that combining school reform with the development of school leaders is mutually beneficial. Aspiring leaders who come from a setting in which school improvement is emphasized and whose training gives them first-hand experience in the theory and practice of improving instruction are well positioned to bring about further improvement as leaders of their own schools.



# Bank Street College Principals Institute: A Collaborative Partnership in Leadership Preparation for School Improvement

By Margaret E. Barber, Margaret Terry Orr, and Carol Cohen

**B**ank Street College of Education, founded in lower Manhattan nearly a century ago and now located on New York's Upper West Side, offers an array of coordinated programs that prepare teachers and school leaders. One of these programs, the Principals Institute, was established in 1989 to prepare aspiring school leaders from many schools both inside and outside of New York City's Region 1. Despite changes in the political and educational landscape of New York City, the Principals Institute has remained an influential vehicle for the preparation of New York City's principals.

Bank Street's approach to leadership preparation reflects its core beliefs about how to prepare future leaders and the nature of the work for which candidates are being prepared. In contrast to other, more diversified graduate institutions, Bank Street College focuses exclusively on the preparation of teachers and educational leaders. As a result, the institution gives priority to instructional leadership and the role of the school practitioner in fostering quality learning for all children. As one participant describes this focus:

Just the fact that they partnered up with our region, our district previously, in the Bronx, which was the largest district in the city, really shows their commitment . . . the belief in the leveling power of education and how a good education, a solid education, enables one to do whatever they want to do in life. And that no child should be deprived of that right to have a good education.

Region 1, formed when Bronx School Districts 9 and 10 were combined in 2002, strengthens leadership in schools by developing the skills of principals and professionals who occupy a variety of leadership positions. One of Region 1's many programs, its long-standing collaboration with Bank Street College and the Principals Institute, is the focus of this case. The region's commitment to this collaboration has weathered significant changes of context, policy, and funding. The result has been a

leadership preparation program for one of New York’s poorest, most diverse school populations that has been exemplary in its objectives, its resilience, and its impact on school improvement work.

## CONTEXT

When concerned New York educators studied the state of educational leadership in city schools in the late 1980s, they concluded that few women or people of color held leadership positions. As a result of the study, Bank Street College was asked to establish a “Principals Institute” to train a new and more diverse cadre of leaders who could support the complex educational demands of New York City’s schools. Bernard Mecklowitz, former chancellor of New York’s public schools and an author of the study, founded and co-directed the Institute with Nona Weeks. After Weeks left the Institute to assume other leadership roles at Bank Street, former elementary school principal and Bank Street graduate Esther Rosenfeld assumed the co-directorship. During these years, the Institute began its work with District 10, forming the first partnership cohorts.

In its earliest years, the Institute was funded by the New York City Board of Education and drew participants from many of the City’s 32 school districts. Despite the Board’s discontinuation of funding for district-university partnerships in 1999 and the reorganization of New York’s districts into 10 regions in 2003, the ties between the Principals Institute and what was formerly District 10 (now part of Region 1) have remained strong.

The influence of Irma Zardoya, superintendent of District 10 (and later Region 1), is an important reason that the relationship continued to evolve. Zardoya, who participated in the program’s initial study group and taught the first cohort at the Principals Institute, regarded strong leadership preparation as critical to supporting her district/region reform objectives. Convinced that the development of strong instructional leaders was essential to improving student achievement, she proposed that the Principals Institute create a cohort program specifically focused on the particular instructional demands and leadership expectations of Region 1.

When the New York Board of Education withdrew financial support from other leadership programs and established its own privately funded Leadership Academy, Zardoya sought federal and foundation funds to continue Region 1’s relationship with the Principals Institute. Bank Street College reduced tuition for Region 1 candidates and expanded into leadership development for all levels of school leadership.

Despite changes in Region 1 and the Principals Institute’s leadership, as well as in New York City’s support, Bank Street College has remained deeply committed to the preparation of aspiring leaders in Region 1 and throughout New York City. Central to this success has been the deep engagement by both partners in the development and maintenance of this relationship. The college’s president, Augusta Souza Kappner, and its Board of Trustees agreed to continue support for the Institute by reducing tuition, collaborating on district/regional grant requests, and providing other support. This institutional commitment reflected Bank Street College’s mission-driven focus on serving high-needs public schools that provide high-quality education for all children.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM

At its heart, the Principals Institute/Region 1 collaborative program reflects the shared vision and beliefs of both its partner institutions. At Bank Street, mentoring, advising, and reflection are seen as essential to developing the competencies school leaders need. As part of Region 1's aligned approach to school reform, leadership development is implemented as an ongoing process; one in which sustained commitment to reflection and learning allows leaders to grow their ability to meet the needs of diverse students while supporting and contributing to the region's school improvement work.

Representing the views of both partner organizations, the Principals Institute program emphasizes lifelong learning, reflective practice, inquiry, and advocacy. The program focuses on developing candidates' individual leadership voice and identity as well as their ability to lead school communities in sustainable and systemic improvement. It uses courses, action learning, fieldwork, advisement, and individual reflection to develop leaders who can learn from experience and cultivate constructive relationships with others. The Principals Institute program prepares its candidates for the specific context, school reforms, and leadership demands of New York City's schools, particularly those in Region 1.

### Organization

The Principals Institute is led by a director and an assistant director, both of whom have been New York City principals. There are six instructors: three Bank Street core faculty and three adjunct instructors drawn from Region 1 and other New York City schools. There are also three advisors. One advisor is also a Bank Street faculty member, and all are former school leaders with New York City experience.

Although the Institute is housed within a Bank Street College site 10 blocks north of the main campus and differs in some of its calendar and tuition arrangements, it operates under the same college policies as other Bank Street programs. The Institute follows the college's model for intensive ongoing advisement. Candidates from Region 1 sometimes participate in the Institute's other two leadership programs, but they remain with their cohort for advisement and program-specific conference groups.

Because no formal governance structure links the Institute to Region 1, the program's collaborative structure remains informal. Both partners participate in the selection of instructors and candidates, the arrangement of internships, and recent program redesign efforts. Some aspects of the program, however, remain under the auspices of one partner or the other. For example, curriculum and candidate evaluation are the responsibility of Bank Street. Despite the many strengths of this collaboration, the lack of more explicit role definitions in some aspects of the program's governance surfaced as a potential shortcoming.

**Degree/Certification.** Candidates who complete 36 credit hours receive either a Masters of Science in Education (MSE) or a Masters of Education (EdM). They are then eligible for provisional state certification as building-level leaders. As of Fall 2007, a state policy requires that candidates also pass a state leadership assessment test.



**Recruitment and Selection.** Principals Institute and Region 1 staff together recruit and select candidates who have strong instructional experience and demonstrated leadership potential. Their selection process reflects a shared core belief that program recruitment and selection, course experiences, and expectations for graduate competencies must be aligned. Program graduates and candidates also help with recruiting.

The two-stage selection process begins with evaluating individual applications that supply transcripts, reference letters, and an autobiography. Two readers drawn from Bank Street and Region 1 assess each application, with veto power resting with the region. The second stage occurs as a filmed group interview in which five or six applicants address a problem collaboratively. The superintendent and deputy superintendent make final decisions about selection.

Partly through its recruitment and its selection, the Institute demonstrates its commitment to developing the leadership capacity of educators who reflect both the teaching corps in Region 1 and the demographics of the student population. According to our survey data, a higher percentage of women graduated from the Institute than are found in regional and national comparison groups. As summarized in Table 6, the Institute also graduated a higher percentage of racial/ethnic minorities than were present in the state and national groups.

**Table 6: Demographic Characteristics of Bank Street Graduates and Comparison Principals in the Region, New York State, and Nationally**

Bank Street graduate and principal comparisons	N	% Female	% Racial/ethnic minority	Average age	Mean years of teaching	Mean years in any leadership position
Bank Street graduates 2000-2002	8	87%	88%	47	12	7
Bank Street graduates 2003-2005	17	87%	53%	39	13	2
New Region 1 principals	12	67%	50%	41	10	5
Other Region 1 principals	22	50%	50%	52	19	11
Other New York State principals	34	46%	3%	49	13	12
National comparison principals	537	49%	17%	50	14	16
Total	630	51%	16%	50	14	15

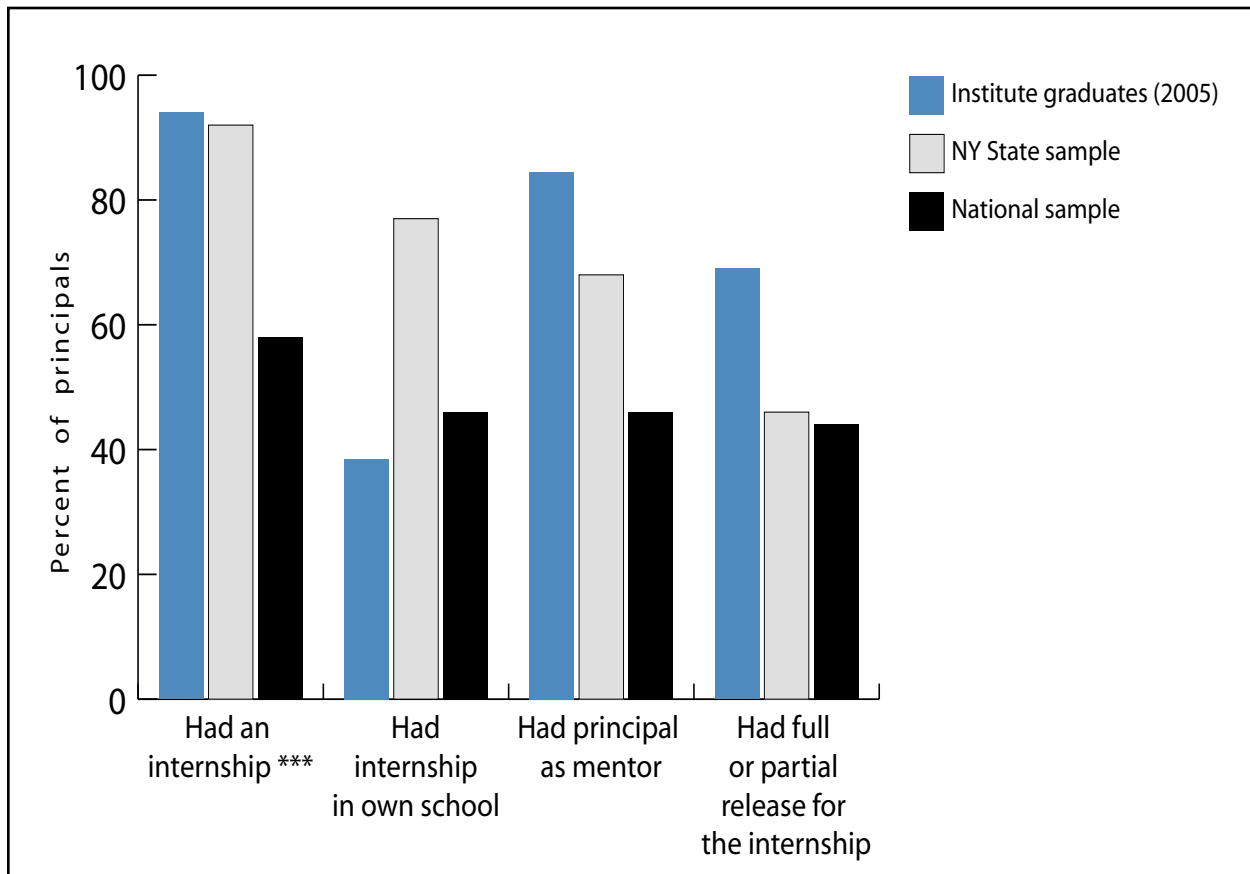
**Curriculum.** To prepare school leaders, the Principals Institute uses coursework that is aligned to New York City school leadership requirements and delivered through practices and pedagogies that

encourage active learning; these include a cohort structure, internships, advisement, conference groups, seminars, and school visits.

**Coursework.** The Bank Street Principals Institute program offers a fall-spring-summer-fall sequence for full-time Region 1 teachers. During the academic year, candidates attend classes two nights a week and meet with their advisors one night per week. They also attend classes in July. Organized around a progressive vision for schooling, the courses emphasize teaching and learning as well as school reform and redesign. Classes cover such areas as adult learning, staff and curriculum development, team-building and collaborative decision-making, school change, and the role of the transformational leader. The courses also deal with practical matters like supervision, law, budget, and technology.

**Pedagogical approach.** The Institute’s program integrates practical skill development with deep inquiry and data-based decision-making. Inquiry, research, and discussion are used to link education theory to the practice of leading schools.

**Figure 5: Principals’ Descriptions of their Internships**  
Percent of principals reporting



\* p<.05; \*\* p,>.01, \*\*\*p<.001

An emphasis on individual discovery and reflection encourages candidates to focus on their particular needs and interests, often using their school experience as the basis of their research. This differentiated learning, aided by their internship advisors and mentors, allows them to learn “at their own level and at their own pace,” as one candidate recalled. Reflection is emphasized through journal-keeping and other means. Technology experiences that are integrated into the course sequence help candidates develop technical skills, which are further bolstered by the program’s adoption of an electronic portfolio system.

**Cohort structure.** Candidates take their courses together as a cohort that meets outside of classes once per month in the first semester. The cohort structure fosters collegiality and collaboration during the program and can serve as a useful professional network for graduates long after they complete their preparation program.

**Internship.** The internship experience expands across the course of the program in order to support a gradual acquisition of responsibility that immerses candidates in the daily challenges and work of principals while supporting them with reflective inquiry. As a current participant explained, “I am starting to be more aware of why things are the way they are and more aware of how a school functions. So I am gaining a lot of insight and value.”

As fieldwork has recently been redesigned to meet new state requirements and adapt to changing district support, the nature and span of internship experiences have evolved to give candidates increasing leadership responsibilities across the duration of the program while balancing full-time teaching responsibilities.

Candidates spend the internship’s first semester observing and reflecting. With their advisors, they develop an internship plan based on a “School Planning, Implementing, Observation, and Reflection” protocol (SPIOR) that helps candidates develop and reflect on the leadership perspectives operating in their schools.

In the second semester, the core internship experience begins with a three-day orientation. An “Intern Program Plan,” which is aligned with the candidate’s earlier plan as well as with the region’s principal evaluation form and the standards set by the state and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), guide the experience. In this internship, candidates move from the observation phase of the first semester into a series of leadership activities that promote and develop candidates’ competencies.

Because internships at schools other than the candidates’ home schools can no longer be funded, the quality and scope of the internship experience depends heavily on candidates’ flexibility during the school day and the strength of their mentor principals. Advisors intercede as necessary to ensure the consistency and depth of internship opportunities.

**The internship experience expands across the course of the program in order to support a gradual acquisition of responsibility that immerses candidates in the daily challenges and work of principals while supporting them with reflective inquiry.**

**Although topics emerge as candidates raise them, advisors find the same themes recurring: leadership, self-management, conflict resolution, dealing with ambiguity, crisis intervention, and communication.**

During the summer, interns often serve in paid positions as assistant principals at schools other than their home schools. According to a regional official, they are “deliberately placed with a leader that we think they can learn from, [and] deliberately placed in a level different from the one they have experience in because they need to be stretched.” This summer internship offers candidates an opportunity to extend their leadership experiences outside of the daily demands of teaching they face during the school year.

At the time of the study, the third semester of the program was being redesigned to strengthen its connection to new state standards and to foster greater independence among candidates. Through its innovative placement design and collaborative relationship with Region 1, Bank Street has managed to provide internships for most candidates outside of their own schools and under the guidance of a mentor principal, with some released time to focus on learning to lead. These are opportunities fewer comparison principals had had in New York or the nation (see Figure 5).

**Mentors and advisors.** Candidates are supported by both internship mentors and faculty advisors. Internship mentors, who are principals or other administrators in the candidates’ home schools, attend a Principals Institute orientation as well as several New York City Leadership Academy training sessions. They provide day-to-day support and supervision and serve as an active leadership model from which candidates can learn. Faculty advisors, the majority of whom are retired principals, play a particularly vital role in the internship and throughout the program. Advisors meet with mentors throughout the internship experiences.

**Conference groups.** Advisors also lead conference groups that bring together six to nine of the candidates they are advising individually. The groups draw from a variety of schools and levels, which exposes participants to the distinct demands each candidate faces. Meetings, which take place at least three times per semester, provide forums for shared experiences and reflections. Although topics emerge as candidates raise them, advisors find the same themes recurring: leadership, self-management, conflict resolution, dealing with ambiguity, crisis intervention, and communication. Participants describe conference group meetings as a powerful vehicle for supporting their development as leaders:

We come up with collective shared solutions; that is really the most valuable experience that this program has to offer. Because it is not only practice, it is the state of mind. It is a way of thinking about how to solve problems. They are training us through modeling.

**Seminars and school visits.** Each month of the second semester, the cohort meets for a seminar on a special topic, such as emotional intelligence, diversity in schools, literacy education across grades, or strategic planning. Site visits to different schools give candidates the opportunity to talk with school leaders at a variety of sites and expose them to the different ways schools are attempting to meet the needs of New York City students.

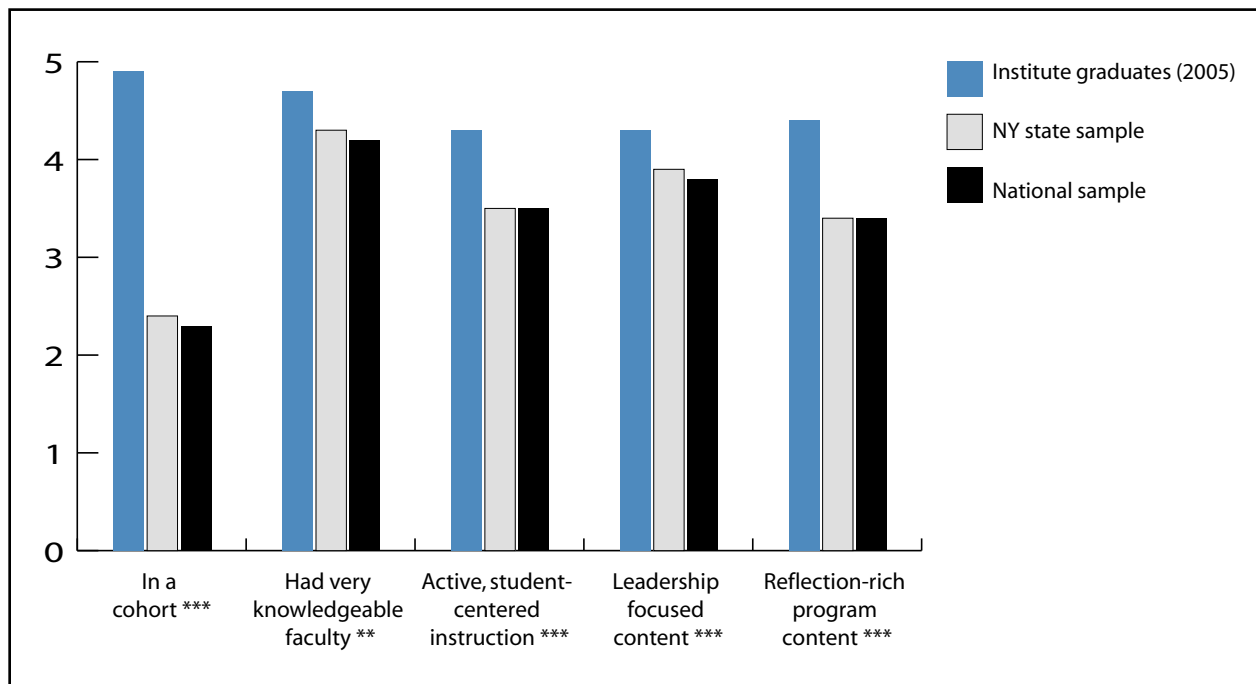
**Assessment.** The final evaluation of the internship and other fieldwork is based on a portfolio that candidates present to their peers and advisors. They select artifacts that represent defining moments in the internship, explain their reasons for choosing them, and reflect on their meaning. Assessments occur throughout the span of the Principals Institute program, whether through candidates’ coursework or in their individual or collective advisement meetings.

**Graduate Perceptions of the Program**

Institute graduates were more likely than members of the state and national comparison groups to have been part of a cohort and to have had student-centered instruction, i.e., content focused on leadership, rich opportunities for reflection, and a positive internship experience. Recent institute graduates rated their preparation more highly than earlier graduates and more highly than the comparison principals in New York and the nation (see Figure 6). In addition, recent institute graduates rated the quality of their programs more highly than members of the comparison groups across the five core areas of leadership practice — leading teacher and student learning, leading with vision and ethics, leading organizational learning, managing operations, and engaging parents and community.

**Career path of program graduates.** Graduates advance rapidly into leadership positions, with 74% of the 2001-2004 graduates having become administrators or specialists by 2006, including six who are principals.

**Figure 6: Principals’ Perceptions of their Preparation Programs**



\* p<.05; \*\*p,>.01; \*\*\*p<.001



**The deep commitment of the program's partners has combined with their shared values and leadership to create and sustain a program that has helped prepare school leaders for the instructional demands and priorities of Region 1.**

## Financing

The Principals Institute/Region 1 program is funded primarily through two sources: tuition support and Bank Street College's reduction of tuition. Bank Street College subsidizes half the tuition costs, reducing the tuition rate from \$895 to \$430 per credit unit. The remaining costs of tuition are split between Region 1 and the candidates, with the region drawing upon its federal and foundation grant resources. In addition, students pay registration fees, which range from \$50 to \$100, depending on the number of credits taken.

In the past, the Principals Institute has benefited from corporate and foundation support, including the Hearst, Ford, Annenberg, J.P. Morgan, Chase, Rockefeller, Time Warner, New York Community Trust, and Aaron Diamond Foundations.

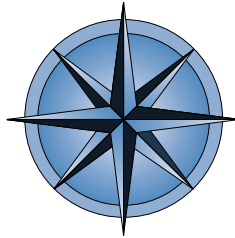
## CONCLUSION

The Principals Institute/Region 1 program continues to evolve as it responds to the changing organization of New York City schools, external policy and certification requirements, competitive programs, new leadership in the region and Bank Street College, and the availability of funding support. Despite these pressures, the deep commitment of the program's partners has combined with their shared values and leadership to create and sustain a program that has helped prepare school leaders for the instructional demands and priorities of Region 1.

There are several defining elements that appear to contribute to the effectiveness of Bank Street/Region 1's Principal Institute. These include:

- Consistent commitment from both Bank Street College and Region 1 leadership;
- Alignment between the program and the city and region context;
- Rigorous recruitment and selection that identifies, prepares, and supports individuals with strong instructional expertise and leadership potential;
- Intensive field experiences that use release of responsibility over successive semesters within the context of Region 1 to prepare candidates for the specific leadership expectations of the region;
- A cohort structure that provides a professional network beyond the scope of the preparation program;
- A mentoring and advisement model that facilitates reflective practice and combines individual and group inquiry and discussion; and
- Courses aligned with region-specific realities and that integrate theory and practice.

These elements, taken together, have produced reflective, problem-solving graduates committed to continuing growth as leaders. The strong collaboration between Bank Street College and Region 1 to prepare candidates through a program immersed in the authentic challenges of school leadership within the region has created a cadre of instructional leaders with the capacity to support school change within the context of the region's reform priorities.



## Putting Leadership Learning Into Practice

As students file out of their buses and off the sidewalk into PS 999, the vice principal stands at the door, greeting students and their parents by name. Meanwhile, the principal, Norma Acosta, meets teachers as they arrive. A message board in the school office greets teachers with the daily messages and reminders. Hallways depict organized groupings of student work, presenting in-progress and completed versions of student projects accompanied by teachers' standards-based assessments.

When classes begin, Acosta sets out on her daily rounds, visiting classrooms and making mental notes about issues or themes that emerge. To support teacher development, she will observe a full lesson to identify strengths and weaknesses and to develop an individualized approach for targeted improvement. She emphasizes the observations as ongoing opportunities for learning, not for catching teachers at weak moments. In addition to these observations, Acosta offers multiple opportunities for feedback and discussion with teachers about student learning and their own practices.

Acosta is in her sixth year as principal of PS 999, a K-6 school serving approximately 500 students in a largely Spanish-speaking community in one of the lowest-income sections in New York City. More than 70% of the students are Hispanic, about 22% are African American, and fewer than 2% are white. About 27% of the school's students are identified as having limited English proficiency, and 88% are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunches. When she assumed the principalship, achievement levels at PS 999 were extremely low, and Acosta, her assistant principal, and 84% of her teachers were new to their roles. In 2001, only about 15% of students met the state standards in English language arts and mathematics. By 2004-05, more than 50% met the standards in English language arts and nearly 45% met the standards in mathematics, in both cases nearly reaching the citywide averages, which reflect a much more advantaged student population.

How did this school accomplish such remarkable progress in such a short period of time? Acosta, a graduate of Bank Street College's Principals Institute and a participant in the intensive professional development offered by Region 1, describes her work to develop teaching and learning in the school as growing from what she has learned through these opportunities.

Acosta was part of a citywide cohort at Bank Street's Principals Institute, graduating in 1994, when the program had funding to provide full-time internships. She credits much of her initial learning to that intensive, school-based time, which allowed her to put her developing leadership skills and learning from the coursework into practice. She also attributes much of her personal vision and leadership practice to the "modeling of teaching and practice" that emerged from the program's em-



phasis on vision and culture building, enhanced by opportunities to visit other principals at their schools. Acosta characterized her Bank Street experience as transformative, pushing her to reflect on and confront her practice and “make a shift ... towards a deeper learning place that’ll move you to do something. It’s always in the reach for better.”

She also describes the cohort model as providing a supportive professional network, regarding her former and current colleagues as a critical professional resource in her work. She notes, “I call a lot on the cohort friends from Bank Street, and on some others that I’ve made along the way, so that we bounce off each other frustrations as well as successes and questions.”

After completing the Bank Street program, Acosta sought a position in Region 1 (then District 10) because of its strong reputation for providing professional development support and promoting ongoing learning. She assumed her principalship before the current New Principals program was initiated, but participated instead in a citywide program for new principals that facilitated school visits throughout the city. Acosta reported that while she did not have the benefit of the Professional Development Leadership Center (PDLC) in her first years as a principal, she now actively uses the PDLC resources and meets with its director to support her development. She also regards her collegial relationship with new principals in the region as part of her responsibility as a more experienced principal.

Because of the professional development she has experienced in Region 1, Acosta notes that she has linked high expectations for teacher improvement with resources and targeted support to facilitate that improvement. Her instructional leadership practice focuses primarily on developing her teachers’ capacity through individualized and collaborative professional development. In order to promote an environment focused on ongoing learning, Acosta cultivates relationships with her teachers around their work. In addition to her regular classroom observations, each year she identifies a school-wide instructional focus that is addressed throughout the year in both staff development and individual work with teachers.

Acosta indicated that she frequently encourages teachers to work with or observe strong teachers as a way of reinforcing good practice and promoting collaboration. She is using what she calls “teacher buddies”—the pairing of teachers skilled in particular domains with those needing to develop these skills—to mentor and support skill development and collaborative practice. When teachers are hesitant to turn to the principal, they readily collaborate with their fellow teachers. As one noted:

The staff in this school is fantastic, and I feel like I really could ask anybody, “How do I do this? What have you done that’s worked? What have you done that hasn’t worked?” I’ll always get a straightforward answer, and I think that there is a lot of support amongst the teachers about how to go about improving our own classrooms.

Their efforts are clearly paying off. PS 999 is now a school focused on learning and the improvement of teaching, as Norma Acosta has begun to put leadership learning into practice.

# University of Connecticut's Administrator Preparation Program: Continuously Improving the Development of Principals

By Michelle LaPointe, Ray Pecheone, Joseph Flessa, and Carol Cohen

Since its creation 16 years ago, the University of Connecticut's Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP) has earned a reputation as the top administrator preparation program in the state. Even beyond the state's boundaries, UCAPP represents a strong model of what a university can do to prepare principals within a conventional program structure and with limited resources. Not willing to rest on its reputation within the state, however, the UCAPP program is working to integrate coursework and field experiences to develop school leaders who are better prepared to use data in order to organize change and improve instruction.

UCAPP is a 2-year program designed for working professionals who aspire to positions in school leadership. The program has operated at the Hartford/Storrs campus since 1990; it was expanded to include a cohort in Stamford in 1995 and subsequently added a third cohort in Southeastern Connecticut. The program is designed around a blend of course work and an internship experience. The UCAPP theory of action is based on the belief that students aspiring to leadership positions must integrate academic knowledge with real-world experiences in actual educational settings. Candidates who successfully complete the 32-credit program are awarded a "Sixth-Year Diploma" in Educational Administration, and they are eligible for endorsement for Connecticut's State 092 Certification as Intermediate Administrators.

Based on its alumni's track records, the program has developed strong support from local districts and state educator associations. The program has also earned programmatic and financial support from both the School of Education and the University, which has consistently subsidized program operations. These external supports allow the program to provide ongoing support to its candidates during their coursework and internships. As UCAPP evolves from a program that had relied primar-

ily on coursework to one that balances coursework and fieldwork organized around a cohort model, it offers an excellent example of continuous improvement in the training of school leaders.

## CONTEXT

The UCAPP program has enjoyed not only the strong support of the university and the education community, it has also benefited from Connecticut's favorable education policy framework. Although educational administration was not an explicit state priority until 1999, the genesis of current reforms can be traced back to the early 1980s.

**State policy context.** Connecticut has been called the “state of steady habits,” which is an apt description of its educational reforms. Reform efforts in this state are unusual in that changes in the political leadership have not derailed ongoing initiatives. Beginning as early as 1981, Connecticut initiated a long-term, comprehensive and multi-pronged education reform strategy. In 1981, a state committee on professional development identified several teacher issues, and this work laid the foundation for the 1985 Equality and Excellence in Education proposal to reform teacher standards. These teacher-centered initiatives were coupled with the development of an accountability and assessment system to measure student learning. The subsequent Enhancement Act of 1986 authorized statewide reforms to standards and assessments as well as teacher certification. It also ratcheted up educator pay and principal pay. The Act helped to create Connecticut's comprehensive system for preparing and developing teachers: the highly praised Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program. While the early reforms did not address principals directly, they did rely on the ability of Connecticut principals to help prepare and develop exemplary teachers. The BEST initiative included funding for professional development designed to cultivate the skills principals need to evaluate teachers under the state's new system. The tight alignment between all these education policies provided a strong framework to guide the development of principal preparation programs such as UCAPP.

**Reforming administrator credentialing.** In 1999, the state adopted a set of principal preparation program standards for principals based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards,<sup>1</sup> but it did not begin to implement these standards or other initiatives in earnest until 2002. Much of Connecticut's progress can be traced to its Wallace Foundation-funded State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) initiative, launched in 2001. The SAELP grant



**The UCAPP theory of action is based on the belief that students aspiring to leadership positions must integrate academic knowledge with real-world experiences in actual educational settings.**

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<sup>1</sup>Connecticut State Department of Education. (1999). *Standards for School Leaders*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/EducatorStandards/standards\\_for\\_school\\_ldrs.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/EducatorStandards/standards_for_school_ldrs.pdf).



**The use of practicing and retired administrators as program faculty and intern supervisors respectively, as well as the cultivation of relationships with superintendents, has further strengthened the program's ties to the practice of educational administration.**

was critical in focusing the state's education department on leadership issues and allowing it to implement recommendations made by various state commissions.

A major reform in administrator credentialing was the requirement that candidates pass the Praxis I Exam and the Connecticut Administrator Test (CAT) or School Leader Licensure Assessment (SLLA) before earning their 092 certification as an Intermediate Administrator. The CAT, which emphasizes the use of data in decision-making, curriculum, and instruction, was instituted as a requirement in 2001. Two of its four modules require the test-taker to make recommendations in response to a lesson plan, videotaped lesson, and sample of student work. The other two modules give the candidate a school and community profile and ask the candidate to describe a process for improving the school. Candidates must receive at least 7 out of 12 points total (based on maximum of 3 points per module) and at least 2 points or better on at least three modules to pass. A candidate who fails the CAT twice may take the SLLA.

In the first year of the CAT test, nearly 30% of prospective principals failed the test. Currently, about 20% fail it each year. Each university is judged on its pass rates, and its state accreditation depends, in part, on how well its students do on the test. In this way, the adoption of the CAT test, through the standards and priorities it emphasizes, appears to have shaped the implementation of educational administration programs in Connecticut.

**University support.** In addition to high expectations from the state, the UCAPP program benefits from consistent support from the University of Connecticut and its Neag School of Education. According to outgoing program administrator George Drumm, "The support has been unwavering; whatever we've needed, we've received."

**External support.** As UCAPP alumni have gone on to leadership positions, many have actively recruited applicants for UCAPP or served as mentor principals. The use of practicing and retired administrators as program faculty and intern supervisors respectively, as well as the cultivation of relationships with superintendents, has further strengthened the program's ties to the practice of educational administration.

## UCAPP CHARACTERISTICS

UCAPP training is based on the theory that educational leadership is a multi-dimensional process involving the interactions of many individuals and groups at various levels, from the classroom and

school to the district and state. At each level, principals should be able to set a vision for their school, align school goals with state and district requirements, and work with individuals and teams to build the school's capacity to meet these goals. The program is constantly evolving to better develop school leaders who can manage this dynamic process.

### **Program Structure**

The UCAPP program has integrated various high-quality program components. These include a rigorous process for recruitment and selection, graduate coursework, and a 2-year internship. All program activities take place within a cohort.

**Recruitment and selection.** One of the strengths of the UCAPP program is the extensive pre-application recruiting that effectively pre-screens for desirable applicants. School administrators and UCAPP faculty recruit teachers for UCAPP individually, but they also make presentations to the public to provide information about the program. The program coordinator pre-screens potential applicants to UCAPP, often directing them to less rigorous programs or suggesting that they reapply when their experience and circumstances are better suited to a demanding 2-year program, undertaken while applicants still hold full-time positions in schools.

This informal screening process helps assure that UCAPP students will meet the program's expectations of a high level of commitment and professionalism. Only qualified candidates complete the multi-staged application process. Once they make it through the initial screenings and submit a written application, 90% of applicants are interviewed. Eighty percent of those who are formally interviewed are accepted into the program.

Due to the effectiveness of this recruiting and admissions process, a surge in well qualified applicants led UCAPP to expand from one cohort of approximately 15 candidates to three cohorts with roughly the same number (15) of candidates but serving three regions of the state. As the reputation of the program grew, so did interest in the program; as the number of qualified applicants grew, the program expanded to accommodate them.

**Program requirements.** UCAPP is a 2-year program with two summer sessions. Completing the program requires 32 hours of graduate credits, including 11 credits (or 80 days) of internship. There are several major program requirements that must be met in order to complete the graduate program. With their academic advisors, new students create a plan of study that lays out how they will meet program and personal goals. Students document completion through a portfolio, including a school/community analysis project. The latter is a written project that begins in their first summer session as research to inform their internship, but they continue to revisit the analysis throughout their internship.

**Graduate coursework.** Candidates take courses on campus for 2 years, beginning in their first summer session. During that first summer, candidates complete two courses: Introduction to the School Principalship and Contemporary Educational Policy Issues. During the school year, candidates complete five other graduate courses: Administration of Educational Organizations, Supervision of Educational Organizations, Curriculum Laboratory, Program Evaluation for School



**Graduate courses are taught by both full-time faculty and adjunct professors who are also administrators, many of them district superintendents who can draw on their experiences to ground the coursework. Faculty members report sharing course syllabi with one another and working together to create continuity within and across courses.**

retired administrators who are full-time UCAPP employees, match interns with mentors, guide the interns' progress, and help address any issues that arise in either the district where a candidate teaches or the district where he or she interns. In addition to informal communications, supervisors, mentors, and interns meet each semester for a formal "triad meeting" to allow three-way reflection on each intern's progress. This also helps to cement a link between fieldwork and coursework.

Because UCAPP students also teach full-time, most program supervisors try to be flexible about internship arrangements, seeking to arrange meaningful experiences that support candidates' growth as administrators. Ideally, candidates do not intern in the school where they teach, and UCAPP tries to place them in another district. The varying vacation schedules of districts sometimes enable candidates to spend full days at the internship site during their own vacations. "I think that's valuable," commented a 2004-2005 candidate. "At times, it's difficult with scheduling, and initially, it's hard to walk into that new environment. But I think it's really useful to be able to come into a building [where] no one sees you as the sixth-grade teacher. You are just a totally separate person."

Improvement, and Legal Aspects of Education. During the second summer session, candidates complete 20 days of guided, supervised internship.

Graduate courses are taught by both full-time faculty and adjunct professors who are also administrators, many of them district superintendents who can draw on their experiences to ground the coursework. Faculty members report sharing course syllabi with one another and working together to create continuity within and across courses.

**Internships.** The 80 days of required internship take place during the school year (30 days each year) as well as during the second summer session (20 days). Generally, students earn summer credits by running a summer school program for a school district, which exposes them to administrative duties and gives them experience in a new setting with a targeted group of students and teachers. One candidate summarized the importance of the internship: "I just felt from the very beginning how important that real-world experience is. . . . I think having the experience almost from day one has been critical and fabulous, very enriching, realistic." Another explained, "It's authentic: an authentic experience that helped us learn. We had not only an opportunity to discuss it through classes but we experienced it through doing."

Candidates spend 2 years at their internship sites, experience that allows them to build a relationship with a mentor principal at that site. Internship supervisors, generally

Difficulties securing release time and substitute teachers mean that candidates sometimes complete a portion of their required internship hours at the school where they teach. In such circumstances, they may shadow their principal, serve as an assistant principal, or add administrative duties to their teaching responsibilities. UCAPP does, however, require that a significant portion of internship time be spent outside the school where a candidate teaches.

**Cohorts.** The UCAPP program is structured around cohorts of learners. UCAPP students stay in the same cohort throughout the program, taking courses together and joining each other in Saturday sessions. In addition to fostering collegiality and professional discourse, the cohort experience models a distributive leadership approach and helps candidates build a professional network that will, for many candidates, serve them well beyond their UCAPP years.

Candidates appreciated the relationships they developed with their peers through this structure. As one explained, “I will say that one of the things I really enjoyed about UCAPP was the cohort we had. . . how much you can learn from somebody who may be coming from a different point of view. . . . Sometimes, that changes your whole point of view, but I think it was really a lot of those debates that got me to understand how I want a school to look.”

An adjunct faculty member who is also a superintendent also saw great value in this structure: “I think one of the real strengths is the cohort model. It’s amazing how these people function as a team and help one another. I think that’s important, because if you’re going to be an educational leader in this day and age, you can’t function in isolation.”

**Graduate perceptions of the program.** In contrast to the survey responses of national and Connecticut comparison principals, UCAPP graduates gave their program high marks, concluding that it emphasized leadership for school improvement and did a good job of integrating theory and practice. They reported especially high regard for UCAPP faculty and the program’s focus on instructional leadership (see Figure 7).

Respondents also reported that they had many opportunities for self-assessment and reflection. As one graduate put it, “We used to tease the professors because all the time they talked about the word ‘reflection.’ . . . We were to figure out how you look back, see what you’ve done, how you make changes, how to make decisions based on what you’ve seen. . . . It sounds trivial when you talk about it, but it made a really big impact.”

**Influence of the UCAPP program on its graduates.** Our research suggests that UCAPP-trained principals report engagement in important areas of leadership practice at rates as high or higher

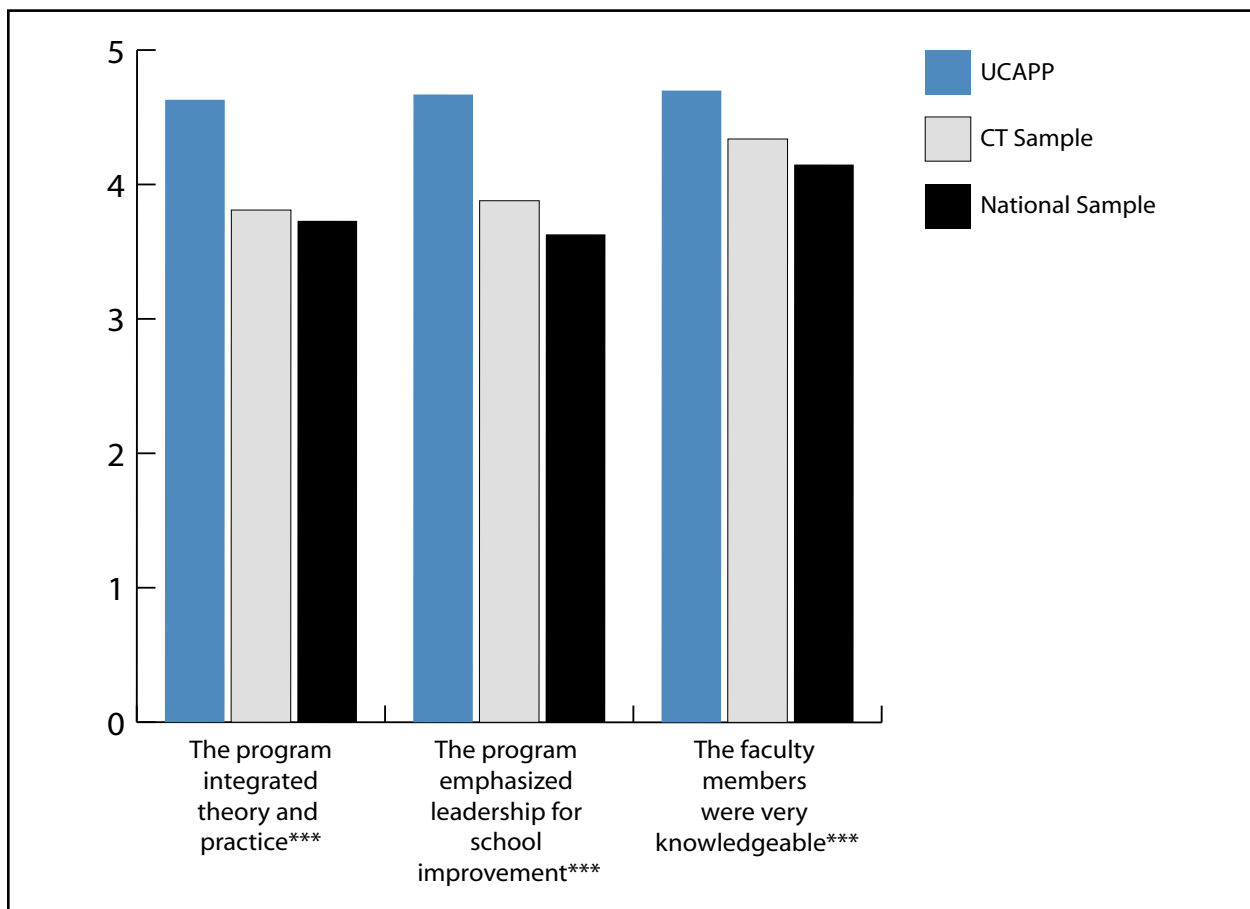
**“One of the real strengths is the cohort model. It’s amazing how these people function as a team and help one another. I think that’s important, because if you’re going to be an educational leader in this day and age, you can’t function in isolation.”**

**— Connecticut Superintendent**

than comparison principals in Connecticut and the nation. These include the frequency with which they facilitate student learning, build a professional learning community, foster teacher professional development, and help teachers whose students are not succeeding. Because of small sample sizes, and because Connecticut principals as a group are also much engaged in instructional leadership, most of these reported differences between UCAPP principals' responses and those of comparison principals are not statistically significant. However, the high rate of engagement in these leadership activities is corroborated by our interview and observation data.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, UCAPP graduates are also distinctly more positive about their jobs than principals included the survey of principals nationwide, and in some instances more so than the principals

**Figure 7: Principals' Perceptions of their Preparation Programs**  
(1=Not at All ... 5=To a Great Extent)



T-Tests of mean differences: \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

<sup>2</sup>The small sample sizes for UCAPP principals are due largely to the fact that, although nearly 60% of UCAPP graduates completed our survey, the sample includes only 17 practicing principals. Most UCAPP graduates are initially hired to work as assistant principals, and a number of more experienced UCAPP graduates are serving as assistant superintendents or in other central office positions. These factors considerably reduce the number of current principals trained by UCAPP.



included in the Connecticut survey, who are generally positive about their jobs in this well-supported state.

**Outside appraisals of program graduates.** To date, virtually 100% of UCAPP’s graduates have passed the CAT test—90% of them on their first try. Data from the State Department of Education show that UCAPP has the highest pass rate of any educational administration program in the state. In addition to their relative success on the CAT assessment, our interviews indicate that UCAPP graduates are also actively recruited and hired by local superintendents. According to David Larson, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, “I can say that from a superintendent’s perspective, UCAPP graduates are highly sought after. It is by far the best program in the state of Connecticut, and I’ve seen most of [the programs] for principal preparation.”

### Program Costs and Financing

In the 2004-05 school year, the estimated total cost of UCAPP was \$3.7 million, or about \$31,000 per participant, most of it (77%) in the form of uncompensated candidate time. The direct costs per participant, not including candidate time and tuition costs, were \$6800. Personnel costs accounted for \$219,000 of the total \$286,000 spent on administration and infrastructure. The entire \$294,000 cost of internships went to salaries for intern supervisors.

UCAPP is fully funded through tuition payments.

Overall, candidates pay for 90% of the costs of UCAPP. Districts also contribute space at UCAPP’s satellite locations; this contribution is valued at an estimated \$10,000 per year.

## CONCLUSION

UCAPP’s strength as an exemplary program may be in how it has used its limited resources to develop a program that grounds coursework in practice in the context of a traditional graduate program. In several areas, this program appears to merit a mix of praise and recommendations for improvement.

- **Adjunct faculty.** UCAPP appears to use adjuncts in a thoughtful way, although such heavy reliance can often contribute to the marginalization of a program in an academic setting.



**“I can say that from a superintendent’s perspective, UCAPP graduates are highly sought after. It is by far the best program in the state of Connecticut, and I’ve seen most of [the programs] for principal preparation.”**

**— David Larson  
Executive Director, Connecticut  
Association of Public School  
Superintendents**

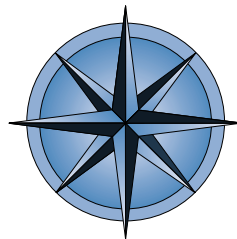
In this case, hiring practitioners as course instructors appears to have tightened the applied focus and produced a close collaboration of adjunct faculty, full-time professors, and internship supervisors.

- **Part-time internship.** Because most UCAPP candidates teach full time, finding release time for the internship remains a challenge. While candidates appreciate what they learn in these experiences, and the internship serves to ground their graduate coursework in practice, UCAPP candidates are less likely to report that they had responsibilities for leading, facilitating, and making decisions typical of an educational leader than are students in the other exemplary programs we reviewed. Nevertheless, the economic reality is that these aspiring administrators must continue to work full time in their current jobs. This part-time model is challenging, but typical of programs that do not have the resources to subsidize internship salaries. Finding time for the internship is among the greatest issues facing most university-based programs, and UCAPP has explored creative uses of time.
- **Limited connections to high-need schools.** The generalized leadership preparation that UCAPP provides, although appropriate for many schools in a prosperous, suburban state, may fail to prepare candidates to work in the state's disadvantaged urban districts. To this end, UCAPP is working with the state principals' association to expand UCAPP placements across the state and is also attempting to improve its program to put greater emphasis on urban leadership.

Aware of these challenges and the program's shortcomings, UCAPP leaders are constantly trying to improve their program. Acknowledging the need for full-time internship opportunities, the program



has recently partnered with districts in Southeastern Connecticut to provide paid administrative internships. These allow candidates to focus on their professional development experiences rather than having to negotiate between their teaching duties and their graduate program.<sup>3</sup> UCAPP is a strong example of how a traditional program committed to improvement can use its limited resources to prepare aspiring principals effectively.



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<sup>3</sup>This collaboration began after the time of this study, so it was not examined in depth. It does, however, provide additional evidence of UCAPP's commitment to continuous improvement.

# Hartford (CT) Public Schools: Paving a Pathway to the Principalship

By Michelle LaPointe, Joseph Flessa, and Ray Pecheone,  
with assistance from Carol Cohen

The Hartford Public Schools (HPS) in Connecticut have faced challenges common to cities across the United States. An urban district of 25,000 students, HPS has faced chronic challenges of low student achievement, high teacher and principal turnover, budgetary problems, and governance struggles. In the 1990s, the district had five superintendents in six years. It was also the target of a landmark school desegregation case. In 1999, these issues came to a head, and the State of Connecticut took control of the district. Although it has embarked on an ambitious initiative to turn around the school district, HPS remains in a period of significant transition and change. It is, in part, this transition and change that make Hartford an interesting case study.

Although it is located in a state known for its commitment to improving public schooling, Hartford continues to lag behind the state averages in various student outcome measures. These deficiencies are not just in educational achievement, but in economic security as well. While the 2000 U.S. census data indicate that the state of Connecticut has the second highest median household income nationally, the same data rank Hartford second in the percentage of children living in poverty. Educators in Connecticut refer to the two Connecticuts: one that is affluent and suburban, and another that includes some of the poorest urban communities in the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics for HPS are even more extreme. While over 40% of all children in Hartford live in poverty, 95% of HPS students are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunches. In contrast, only 25% of students in all of Connecticut's public schools are eligible for subsidized meals.<sup>2</sup> In addition, over 50%

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau (2000). *State & County QuickFacts*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09/0937000.html>

<sup>2</sup>Connecticut Department of Education. (2005). *Report on Progress in the Hartford Public Schools*. Hartford, CT: Author.

of the students in Hartford schools do not speak English at home; many of them are recent immigrants whose families are negotiating a new culture in search of a better economic situation.

We selected the Hartford leadership development initiative as an affiliated site for study because of its emphasis on leadership development as a means of leveraging change. Hartford's initiative has sought to create a leadership pathway—from the classroom, to instructional coaching, to the principalship—that will both align the work of all the district's instructional leaders and deepen the pool of potential principals. The district supports an on-site administrator-credentialing program and on-going professional development for its current school leaders. Realizing that school leadership is vital to reforming schools and improving student achievement, Hartford has made leadership development a focus of its effort to reshape the district since the state take-over. Hartford's journey out of state control was not an easy one, but its story provides a realistic view of how a troubled urban district can use leadership development to influence reform, both across the system and in individual schools.

## CONTEXT

Failing infrastructure, limited economic opportunities, migrant populations with limited proficiency in English, families caught in a cycle of poverty, and the flight of affluent white families to suburbs are some of the challenges facing Hartford. Ranking near the bottom on the state's measures of accountability, Hartford's schools have faced severe consequences.

When the state took control of the district in 1999, it did so with authorization under Special Act 97-4 and State Statute 10-4b. The resulting "Hartford Improvement Plan" laid out 48 goals for improvement in 10 categories and served as a road map for a return to local control.

Research suggests that state takeovers of schools or districts rarely improve student achievement and do not necessarily resolve other issues.<sup>3</sup> Because cross-site research on takeovers has been limited, the reasons for these outcomes are still speculative. Yet, it appears that earlier district takeovers did not focus on student achievement, but rather, addressed finance and governance issues. In Hartford, however, the takeover focused on improving student achievement, which appeared to make some headway, based on student test scores. By the end of 2003, the district had made progress toward reaching the goals in the improvement plan. During the time of this study, Hartford was in transition from state control to local control, and by December 2005, the Hartford School Board had reassumed authority over the district.

Based on our observations of the district, we suggest that the following conditions may have contributed to Hartford's ability to avoid common pitfalls of state takeovers:

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<sup>3</sup>Seder, R. (2003). *Balancing accountability and local control* (Policy Study 268). Los Angeles, CA: Reason Public Policy Institute; Wong, K. K. & Shen, F. X. (2001). *Does school district takeover work? Assessing the effectiveness of city and state takeover as a school reform strategy*. Paper presented at the 97th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA; Ziebarth, T. (2001). *State takeovers and reconstitution* (Policy Brief). Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

- The state intervention was a comprehensive takeover that addressed not only organizational issues, but also student achievement.
- During the takeover, there was continuity in the superintendent's office. The new superintendent, Tony Amato, served until 2002, and his successor Robert Henry, who had been Dr. Amato's chief of staff, served from 2002 until 2006.
- As superintendent, Dr. Amato focused on changing and strengthening leadership throughout the district.
- To catalyze its efforts to recruit, prepare, and support school leaders, HPS sought outside resources. In 2001, the district was awarded a Wallace Foundation LEAD grant. This grant has enabled the district to develop an initiative, "Linking Leadership with Learning for ALL Learners," which is discussed in more detail below.

Despite the return to local control, major challenges remain for Hartford Public Schools. In 2005, for example, the plaintiffs in the *Sheff v. O'Neil*<sup>4</sup> desegregation case returned to court, alleging insufficient progress in improving opportunities for Hartford students. In 2006, there was additional turnover in the superintendent's office. Yet in the context of these challenging conditions, the initial results of the district's initiatives to strengthen school leadership appear promising.

## LINKING LEADERSHIP WITH LEARNING FOR ALL LEARNERS

In 2001, Hartford secured a LEAD (Leadership for Educational Achievement in Districts) grant from The Wallace Foundation. This has provided the district with the funding needed to develop a leadership preparation program and to support an initiative that the district calls "Linking Leadership with Learning for ALL Learners." With this funding, HPS created a five-tiered plan to develop the leadership capabilities of classroom teachers and to support the leadership practice of school leaders, principals, central office administrators, and senior/executive leaders. In all of these efforts, Hartford is seeking to create a focus and a common language around instructional leadership to leverage reform.

Hartford's initiatives are grounded in research that suggests that different types of administrative competence are needed to lead different types of schools.<sup>5</sup> Because Hartford schools differ from the affluent suburban schools typical in Connecticut, the development of school leaders must also be

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<sup>4</sup>Sheff v. O'Neil was a landmark desegregation case not only in Connecticut, but is a notable precedent for the U.S. legal system. The decision by the Connecticut State Supreme Court ordered an inter-district desegregation remedy. Until this point, courts had ruled that when school segregation was caused by residential segregation, there were few if any strategies available to a school district or community seeking to integrate its schools. As a result of the Sheff decision, Hartford created a cadre of magnet schools, which are designed to encourage students from white, well-resourced, suburban districts to enroll in Hartford's public schools.

<sup>5</sup>Leithwood, K., Seashore-Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning* (Executive Summary). New York: Learning From Leadership Project, The Wallace Foundation; Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals* (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

different. HPS sought to offer its school leaders (and aspiring leaders) contextualized support that is relevant to addressing the economic, linguistic, and developmental challenges faced by its students.

Rather than wait for teachers to self-select into administrative positions, Superintendent Amato began to recruit teachers for these positions. From January to May each year, the district offers a five-session “Teacher Leader Academy” to inform teachers of opportunities and to recruit them into leadership programs. HPS has actively sought out teachers with leadership potential and is working to develop their capacity as instructional leaders.

## STRUCTURE OF THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

With an understanding of the importance of effective school principals, the Hartford Public Schools created a continuum to enhance the leadership potential of classroom teachers and groom them for positions of leadership. The formal leadership pathway begins with master teachers coaching other teachers in their schools. Master teachers may be tapped to be “Turnaround Specialists,” who are employed by the district’s central office to guide a few schools in improvement efforts. In addition, the “Aspiring Administrators Academy” helps school leaders earn their administrator certification, and Institutes for Learning (IFL) workshops encourage the continuing development of instructional leadership skills.

**Table 7: Components of the Hartford Public Schools Leadership Initiative**

Program	Content	Duration	Provider
Aspirant Program	Fulfills the requirements for CT administrator certification	Two years/part-time	Central Connecticut State University
Pathways to Principalship	Develops leadership positions (coaches, Turnaround Specialists), and provides professional development to enhance instructional leadership for coaches	Ongoing professional development	District Central Office Staff
<i>Principles of Learning</i> Workshops	Based on IFL’s <i>Principles of Learning</i> : <sup>6</sup> Organizing for Effort Clear Expectations Recognition of Accomplishment Fair and Credible Evaluations Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum Accountable Talk Socializing Intelligence Learning as Apprenticeship	Contracted for eight one day sessions/year for instructional leaders	University of Pittsburgh Institute for Learning

<sup>6</sup>Resnick, L. (1999, June 16). Making America Smarter. *Education Week Century Series*. 18(40), 38-40. Available at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/vol-18/40resnick.h18>

**Turnaround Specialists.** According to outside evaluator Gene Hall, the creation of this unusual specialty role may be one of the most “powerful” and “original” aspects of Hartford’s approach. The specialists are master teachers who have been relieved of classroom duties and reassigned to the central office. Each Turnaround Specialist serves as an expert staff developer and instructional coach for a small number of schools with high need levels. By having them work with multiple schools, the district leverages the Specialists’ expertise and grooms them for further leadership positions in the district. District administrators see this position as a gateway to the principalship and encourage Turnaround Specialists to earn their administrator credentials.

**Aspiring Administrators Academy.** The “Aspirant” program, which leads to the State of Connecticut’s 092 administrator credential, was one of Superintendent Amato’s earliest initiatives and predates Hartford’s LEAD grant. This 2-year program is offered in partnership with Central Connecticut State University, also located in Hartford.

Although the courses in this 30-credit graduate program are offered on-site in the offices of the Hartford Public Schools, they are nonetheless the same courses that are offered on campus and taught by the same faculty. Practicing administrators from Hartford co-teach some units to better tailor the program to the context of that district. Although candidates must pay tuition out-of-pocket to attend the program, the district reimburses candidates for the cost of 6 credits each year (for a total of 12 of the 30 required credits).

Although the program is structured around a cohort and requires internship hours, neither component appears to be as robust as those in the exemplary programs examined in our larger study. Cohort members do not appear to have formed the bond we observed in other programs. In fact, individual conversations with candidates revealed a lack of trust among cohort members. Completing the required 300 hours of internship also appeared somewhat problematic. About half the candidates are classroom teachers and have little release time to complete their fieldwork. They must therefore fit their internship around an already packed schedule, and thus the internship often involves assisting with administrative duties in the school where they teach, rather than a focused administrative experience in another school. The candidates themselves must often negotiate substitute time with their principals, rather than having program faculty facilitate release from classroom duties on behalf of candidates. Due in part to its limited support for securing respite from candidates’ teaching duties, the internship appears to offer restricted opportunities to experience the day-to-day realities of a school leader. As a result, the program seems to serve best those educators, such as the Turnaround Specialists, coaches, central office staff, and school counselors, who have already left the classroom.

Among the program’s strongest elements, however, are its convenience and its tight focus on the context and administrative processes of an urban school district. In the words of one graduate, “I got what I wanted—leadership experiences in Hartford.” And, for those who are already working as instructional leaders, the Aspirant program offers an opportunity to reflect on and deepen their capacity to work as a principal in an urban district.

We sent surveys to every principal in Hartford and received responses from half of them. Among other questions, we asked where they completed their administrator credential. The most common



credentialing programs were the Aspirant program (43%) and at the University of Connecticut's Administrator Preparation Program (24%).

Surveys of Hartford principals indicate that graduates of the Aspirant program have a strong focus on instructional leadership and organizational effectiveness. Although Aspirant graduates felt less positively about their preparation than graduates of the highly regarded University of Connecticut's Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP),<sup>7</sup> they rated their preparation for redesigning schools to enhance teaching and learning more strongly than a comparison sample of Connecticut principals. They also reported feeling better prepared to provide instructional feedback to teachers. Not only did principals credentialed through the Aspirant program feel relatively well prepared, they also reported strong leadership practices. Aspirant graduates were more likely than other Hartford principals and state and national comparison principals to report that they regularly work with teachers to change methods when students are not learning and that they spend their time guiding curriculum and instruction.



**The creation of the unusual turnaround specialist role may be one of the most powerful and original aspects of Hartford's approach.**

The disconnect between what we observed in the Aspirant program and these survey results may be due, in part, to the nature of the leadership pathway in HPS. As noted earlier, the district is recruiting effective teachers with leadership potential and grooming them for the principalship. Aspirant program graduates who eventually became principals were generally recruited into formal roles as instructional leaders (e.g., instructional coaches, Turnaround Specialists) before being assigned to their own school. The district is not placing all Aspirant program graduates as principals, but carefully promoting those with previous experience as instructional leaders.

In addition to producing instructionally focused leaders, the Aspirant program appears to be filling the district's need for administrators. According to an outside evaluation of the LEAD grant, about 40% of the 70 people who have completed Hartford's Aspirant program now hold leadership positions in the Hartford Public Schools.<sup>8</sup> Nine have become principals, and 11 are assistant principals. All but 3 of 24 administrator vacancies in Hartford in 2004 were filled from existing staff within the district, providing further evidence that Hartford is creating a pool of administrative expertise.

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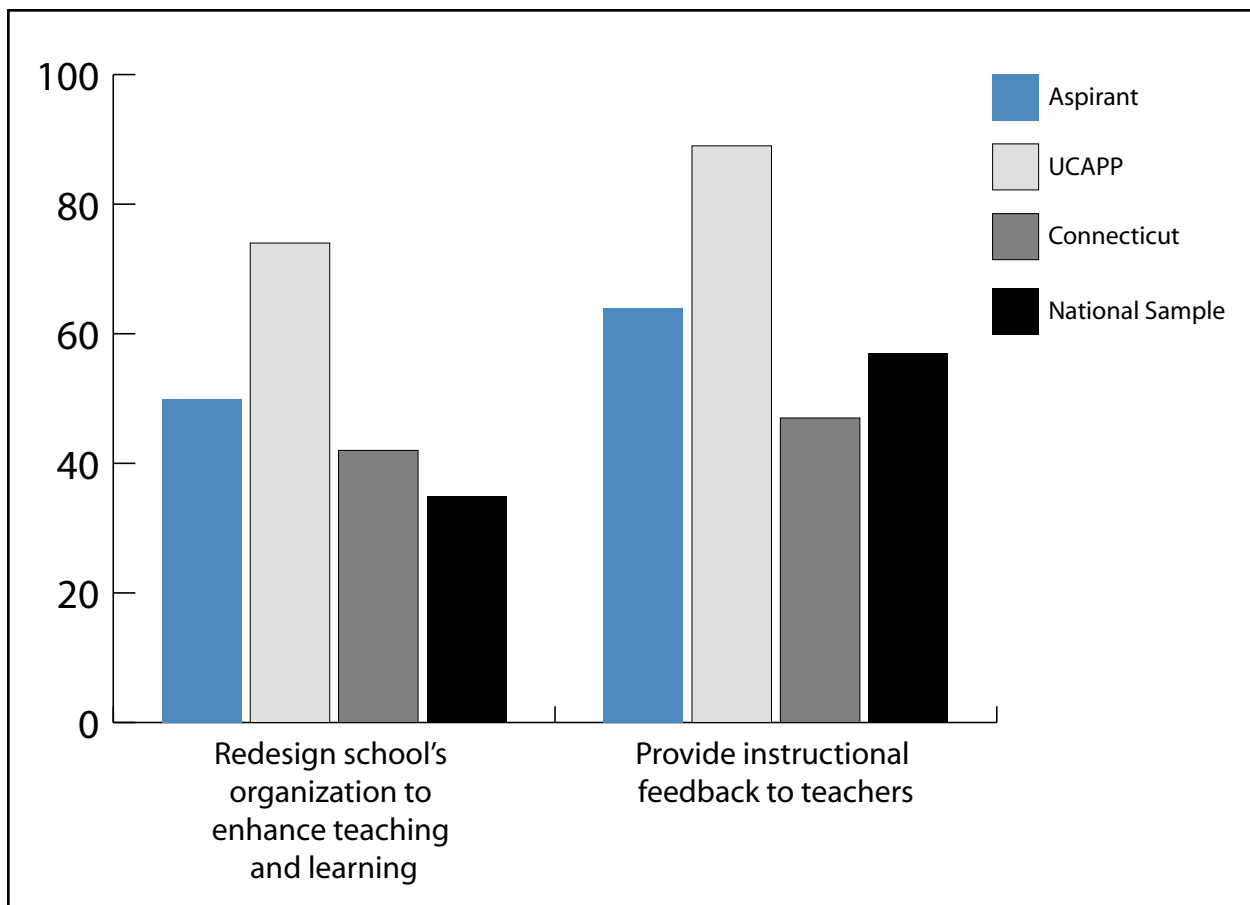
<sup>7</sup>See: *University of Connecticut's administrator preparation program: Continuously improving the development of principals*, abstracted in this volume. The full case study is available on-line at <http://seli.stanford.edu/research/sls.htm>

<sup>8</sup>Hall, G. (2006, April). *Developing and sustaining leadership capacity in the Hartford schools: Fourth year assessment of implementation of the LEAD project*. Las Vegas, NV: Concerns Based Systems International and University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**Institute for Learning Workshops.** As noted earlier, financial support from The Wallace Foundation LEAD grant allowed Hartford to contract with the University of Pittsburgh for professional development based on IFL’s *Principles of Learning*. IFL specialists provide full-day sessions on these *Principles*, and offer multiple workshops in a sequence throughout the year. The goal is to give Hartford’s school leaders a richer philosophy about learning and to build a common language around school improvement. For example, prior to the IFL workshops, most schools in Hartford were expected to implement the “Success for All” (SFA) literacy program. The *Principles of Learning* provided a language and a philosophy that support SFA, which has allowed for a more comprehensive use of that literacy program.

**Principal Practice.** A strong district focus on professional development appears to have influenced Hartford principals to get ongoing support for their work. Survey results suggest that Hartford principals are more likely than comparison principals to avail themselves of professional development opportunities such as visiting other schools, mentoring, attending conferences and workshops, and keeping up with research in their field. Although personal interest was the strongest motivation for principals in all three categories, district policy was also a strong motivator for HPS principals (cited

**Figure 8: Participants’ Perception of Preparation Program Quality**  
 Percentage of principals reporting their program prepared them to:



by 69%). Given that these are the two most common preparation programs for principals in the Hartford Public Schools — and that UCAPP has a strong reputation within the state — we examined perceptions of both programs in an effort to assess the quality of the preparation sponsored by the district.

The influence of district policy may prove to be an important intermediate factor. An outside evaluation of the LEAD initiative found a positive relationship between the amount of professional development attended by the principal and a school's student achievement on the state test.<sup>9</sup> Requiring participation in instructionally focused professional development may help shape principals' practice and the learning culture in their schools. Creating the expectation or requirement for professional development may help foster a district culture where continual professional learning is the norm.

Overall, survey results for principals in Hartford suggest that they have practices similar to other principals in Connecticut. For instance, similar percentages of principals in both groups reported that at least once per week they guide the development and evaluation of curriculum and instruction (about 70%), build professional learning communities among faculty and staff (65%), work with teachers to change instructional practices when students are not succeeding (about 70%), foster teacher professional development (60%), and use data to monitor school progress and propose solutions to challenges (60%).

Hartford principals did not engage in effective leadership practices as often as others in the state in every category. Hartford principals spent less time facilitating student learning (83% reported doing this at least weekly vs. 100% of principals in the state) and using student performance data to improve instruction (86% vs. 93%). They also portrayed the context for change as less supportive, both within and outside the school. They were less likely to feel that their teachers support the changes in their school (56% vs. 71%) or that their district supports their efforts (68% vs. 85%). They were also less likely to agree with their district's policies regarding teachers: 30% disagreed with district policies, as compared with 17% of other Connecticut principals.

On the other hand, Hartford principals were more likely than other Connecticut principals to report efforts among teachers to share practices with each other, to report they frequently provide instructional feedback to teachers, and to note the increased use of performance data for instructional improvement. All of these are practices supported by the professional development offered in Hartford.

**Student Achievement.** In 11 Hartford schools, scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test have risen to the state average. Other schools now have test scores that are on par with schools in similarly poor and urban districts. Although the scores of Hartford students across the entire district are still less than half the state average, overall scores have risen dramatically.

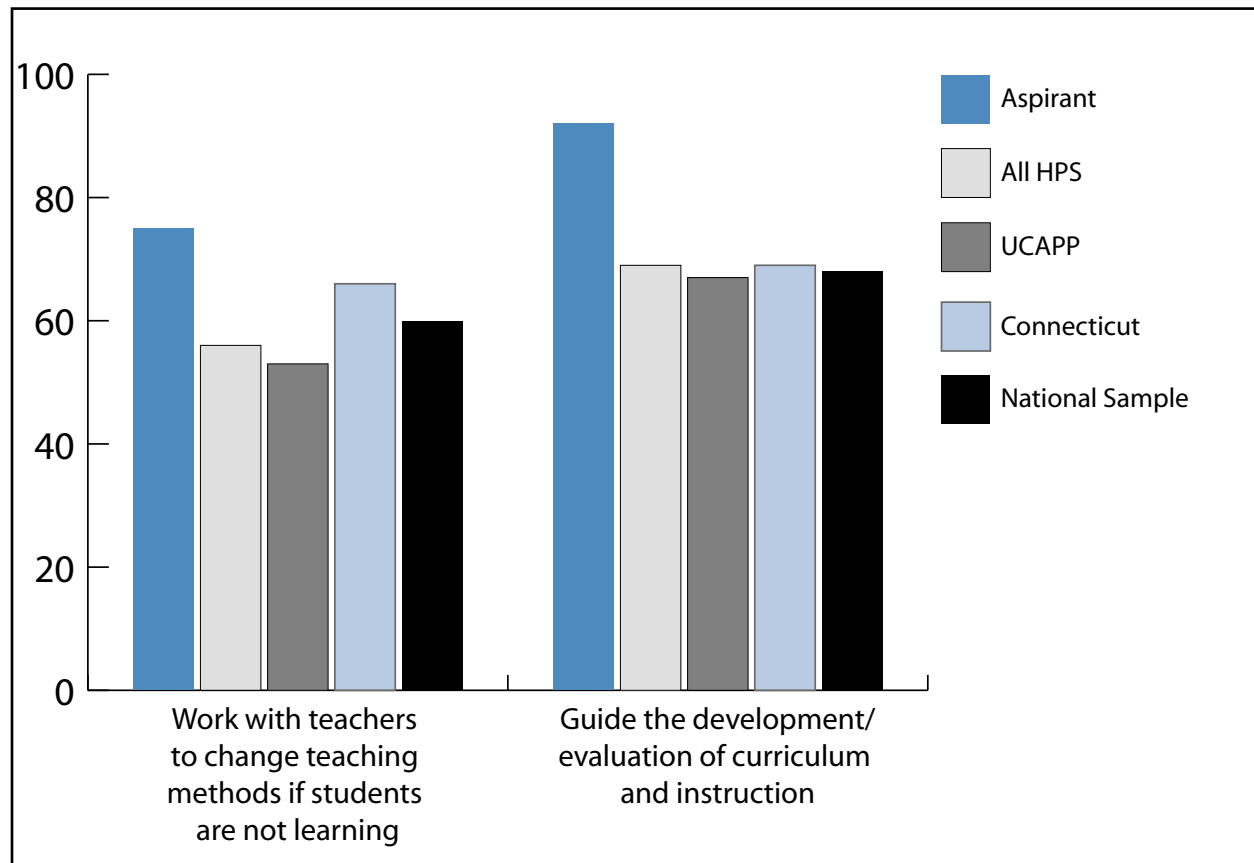
**Hartford principals are more likely than comparison principals to avail themselves of professional development opportunities such as visiting other schools, mentoring, attending conferences and workshops, and keeping up with research in their field.**

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<sup>9</sup>Rouse, C., & Markman, L. (January, 2005). *Leadership Evaluation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

**Figure 9: Principals' Practice**

Percent of principals reporting that they engage in specific practices “more than once per week”



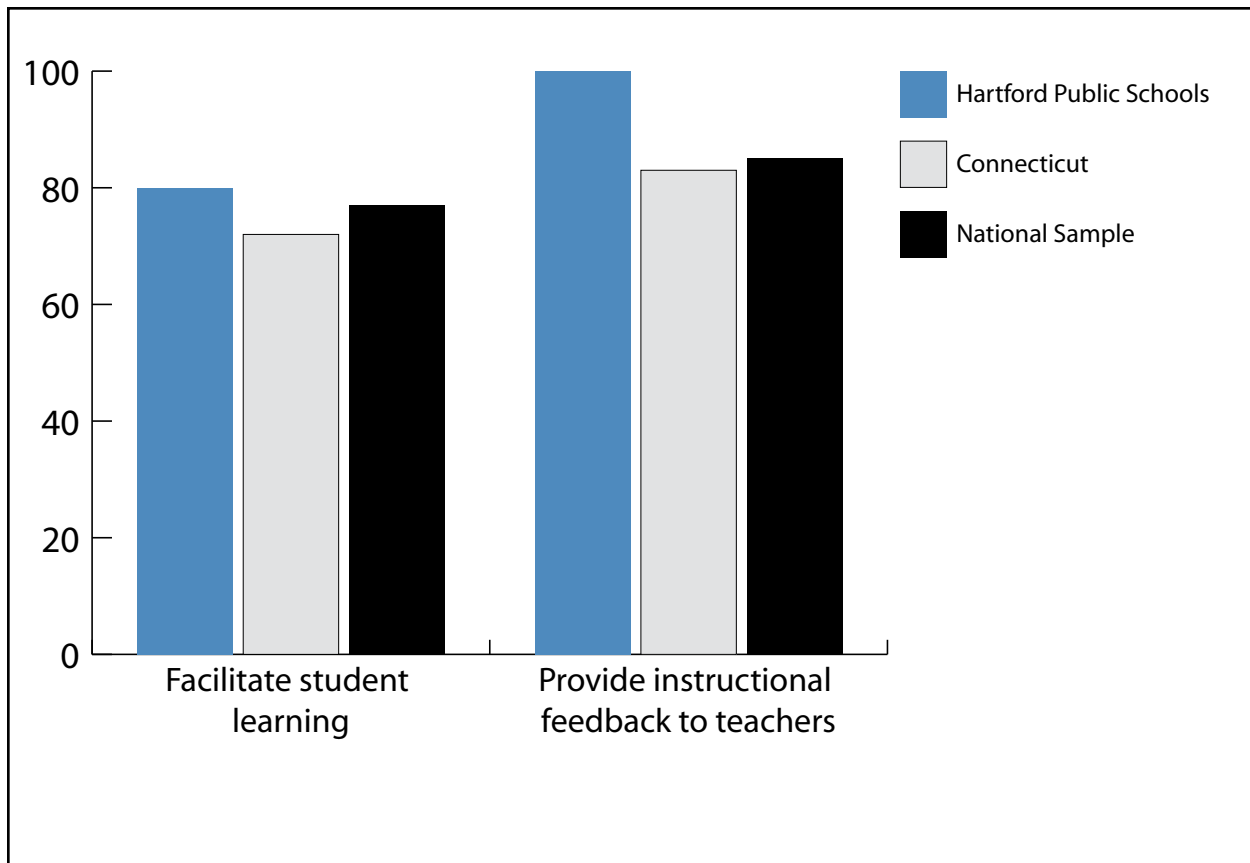
### Program Costs and Financing

We estimate that the total cost of Hartford’s initiatives during the 2004-05 school year were \$1.3 million. The largest portion, about \$1.074 million, supports the Aspiring Administrators Academy. The uncompensated time candidates spend studying or pursuing internship hours accounts for about a quarter of this sum; faculty salaries total \$136,000, and a comparable sum covers the cost of substitute teachers to allow teachers release time for their internships. The IFL program costs the district \$135,000 (about 10% of total costs).

The cost of the leadership initiative is subsidized by participants in the Aspirant program, who pay a portion of their tuition and also contribute uncompensated time, and by the grant from The Wallace Foundation. Again, the entire HPS Leadership Initiative budget is covered by the grant from The Wallace Foundation. It is not clear how the district would sustain the leadership initiative in the absence of this grant.

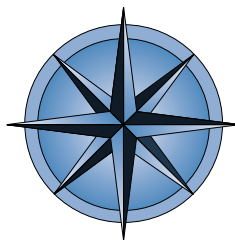
**Figure 10: Principals' Practice**

Percent of principals reporting that they engage in specific practices “more than once per week”



## CONCLUSION

Hartford’s efforts to use school leadership to leverage reform show initial promise: test scores in Hartford have increased in recent years, and there is evidence that principals who participated in the district’s LEAD activities are more likely to improve their school’s achievement scores.<sup>10</sup> Hartford has also demonstrated success in developing the leadership potential of people already working within the system. Having earned back local control of its schools, Hartford provides an example of how a district-based leadership initiative can be launched in a high-need district that had previously lacked capacity, and how it can be leveraged to initiate reform.



<sup>10</sup>Ibid. Rouse, C., & Markman, L. Leadership Evaluation.

# Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools: Creating a Leadership Pipeline

By Joseph Flessa, Joseph Murphy, Michelle LaPointe, and Carol Cohen

Located along the Ohio River in western Kentucky, the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) district encompasses the city and suburbs of Louisville, the 16th largest metropolitan area in the country, and has an enrollment of approximately 88,000 students. This county-wide school district serves a racially diverse group of students that is about 57% white, 35% African American, and 8% a mix of other ethnic groups; students come from both high-poverty and middle-class communities. As in most other large urban school districts in the United States, schooling outcomes in JCPS reflect a legacy of unequal educational opportunities for racial minorities and the poor as well as the contemporary impact of race and poverty. JCPS has prioritized school site leadership as a critical means of addressing these academic achievement gaps and improving educational opportunity for all students in Jefferson County's public schools.

Reflecting that vision, JCPS has developed an exemplary principal preparation initiative. In Jefferson County, we found a long-standing leadership initiative initially created to recruit and prepare more minority administrators, which is now composed of almost two dozen different elements addressing a variety of needs for leadership learning. Working in partnership with local institutions of higher education, this set of programs has successfully addressed the principal shortage affecting many urban districts and has a positive reputation for rigor and usefulness.

## HISTORY OF JEFFERSON COUNTY'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

The district's long history of leadership development initiatives dates back to the late 1970s, when county-wide desegregation took place. As one central office administrator put it, "It's unusual to see a district that's invested so much in leadership development over a long period of time." Another administrator explained, "We've had a history over time with the philosophy of 'grow your own.'" In addition to the influence of desegregation, the district was profoundly affected by the statewide educational reforms embedded in the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of the early 1990s.

The 1975-76 school year brought the merger of the Louisville and Jefferson County school districts and court-monitored school desegregation. Although the district was initially focused on compliance with student placement regulations, along with merging and consolidating programs, in later years the lack of African American school site administrators required a focus on recruitment and development. As a long-time district veteran described the program:

At the beginning, it was a very different program from what it is today. It started out basically as a minority recruitment program for administrators in the district, and then it evolved into assigning interns to schools of greatest need. Now it's totally a different program. We're looking at an actual medical model of preparation.

Although the JCPS initiative has shifted its emphasis, district officials continue to articulate an enduring commitment to recruiting and preparing African American principals.

In the past decade JCPS has expanded its involvement in leadership preparation, initiating and coordinating a variety of leadership programs to “grow its own” pipeline of leaders and to support school improvement. The current portfolio of 24 programs is best characterized as a leadership *initiative*, or, as one of the district planning documents states, “a system of leadership development,” rather than as a single entity. The span of the enterprise runs from a teacher’s or counselor’s initial interest in administration to his or her support and engagement through retirement. For some, the program span extends even into retirement, since many of the leadership instructors, coaches, and mentors are retired JCPS administrators. Recruitment, selection, and preparation are closely aligned in JCPS; they work together to such an extent that the recruitment pipeline and the training pipeline are almost the same. As one district administrator put it, “We specifically have built these programs around what we’re looking for in candidates.” In fact, according to JCPS central office administrators, very few principals, assistant principals, and counselors—perhaps only one or two per year—are hired from outside the district or from a preparation program not connected to JCPS.

## THE JCPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Although the number of distinct strategies for recruiting, preparing, and supporting leaders in JCPS creates complexity, most respondents did not consider this to be a weakness. In fact, their comments suggest a characterization of the program’s multiple interventions as a leadership tapestry. According to this logic, the fabric of the tapestry is stronger because it weaves together a variety of different threads and does not rely on a single approach to improving school site leadership. The program pieces, whether tightly or loosely coupled, flow from the same theory of action, which might be summarized as follows: “Leadership matters at all levels, and we’re going to invest in it in lots of different ways.”

The language used by respondents—words like “systems” and “multiple pathways” and “program alignment”—was consistent throughout our interviews with program instructors and administrators. (Administrator candidates, not surprisingly, were more knowledgeable about their particular program experiences than the pipeline overall). Many acknowledged, though, that aligning the set of programs with a systematic vision was a relatively recent occurrence. Much of the effort aimed at

alignment occurred when JCPS secured a Wallace Foundation LEAD grant several years ago. As one respondent explained:

There really wasn't "a program" until LEAD came in, and I'm not sure we're there yet. We're still looking for that seamlessness, if there is such a thing. . . . We're getting close, but before they were separate programs.

The central idea that holds the system of leadership preparation together is the notion that leaders must put instruction first. In a recent report written by The Wallace Foundation, observers of JCPS programs noted:

JCPS has narrowed their focus. They have created a sequential program for leader development, and identified the barriers and strategies to achievement. Their initiatives are now directly tied to improving student achievement.

One tool that program administrators use to maintain this focus is the Content Guide, a lengthy matrix that tracks all district leadership preparation, professional development, and change initiatives; identifies what is taught in each initiative; describes how participants show mastery of content; and finally connects all of this information to the district's "seven systems." The seven systems are planning, assessment, curriculum/instruction, interventions, professional development, structure/culture, and leadership/quality staff.

JCPS provides programs for aspiring leaders, programs for new leaders, and programs for current leaders, all of which are coordinated by the district office.

## PROGRAMS FOR ASPIRING LEADERS<sup>1</sup>

As part of a deliberate strategy to identify and develop a deep pool of prospective leaders, JCPS provides a variety of professional inquiry and development opportunities for educators within the district who are interested in exploring leadership and administration. There are four programs for aspiring leaders in JCPS. These opportunities range from a new, open-to-all course called "Introduction to School Leadership" to the more selective and established "Principals for Tomorrow" to the highly competitive, medical model "Internship" experience. The programs are rooted in the belief that school site leadership is a crucial component of school improvement, and that the district's responsibility is to recruit, select, and prepare site leaders to take on the tasks of school improvement. As a Principals for Tomorrow (PFT) graduate explained about the unique character of JCPS leadership initiatives:

I think there has been a culture here of commitment to students, and a pride within the school system. . . . There is a lot of loyalty that's bred within the school system.

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<sup>1</sup>The descriptions in this and the following sections are based on a central administration program tracking document called "LEAD Year 3 Initiatives." Direct quotations are from this document unless otherwise noted.



**Table 8: Programs for Aspiring Leaders**

Program Name	Purpose/Focus	Participants	Structure
Introduction to School Leadership	A preliminary opportunity for teachers to show interest in becoming administrators; an opportunity for teachers to learn and develop collaboration and facilitation skills.	24 teachers interested in future roles as instructional leaders	Yearlong program, one session a month, co-taught and co-designed by JCPS and the teachers' union.
Principals for Tomorrow I & II	Programs that provide district-specific professional development and networking opportunities for aspiring leaders.	PFT I: 15 teachers; PFT II: 10 assistant principals or counselors.	Yearlong program that utilizes case studies and simulations.
IDEAS (Identifying and Developing Educational Administrators for Schools)	University-based graduate preparation program co-taught by JCPS administrators.	16 participants	Graduate coursework and practicum.
Internship	Hands-on, field-based preparation for the principalship. Highly selective "boutique" program for leaders being groomed by the district for administration. "A year-long paid internship is the capstone of the district's principal preparation program." <sup>2</sup>	8 participants released full time from their teaching roles	Yearlong, paid field experience using a "medical model." "Picture eight principal interns questioned by district experts about a school they have studied for the last two weeks. They are asked to assess the school's literacy program, level of effectiveness, and suggest improvement. As with the medical interns, the Socratic method helps the principal intern understand what they know and what they need to learn." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>LEAD, 2004, p.15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



**“We know that job adjustment and transition into leadership is a process, not an event. District leaders want to provide a meaningful and intentionally delivered entry experience for all new principals and assistant principals.”**

**— Jefferson County Public Schools**

Many candidates for the principalship come through Identifying and Developing Educational Administrators for Schools (IDEAS), a preparation program run by the University of Louisville in partnership with JCPS. The program was jointly designed, and courses are co-taught by JCPS administrators. Candidates’ fees are partly subsidized.

Those who have completed a university preparation program are eligible for one of the two PFT programs, which serve K-12 teachers and assistant principals or counselors, respectively. The program has both development and recruitment purposes. While it helps participants “increase [their] knowledge of the JCPS organization and build peer networks,” it also allows district personnel to become acquainted with the pool of candidates who are interested in administration in the district. One PFT graduate described the curriculum as both practical and rigorous, using problem-based learning case-study exercises and simulations to emphasize both “how to work with other people who are resistant to change,” and “getting back into the most recent instructional processes.”

A smaller number of candidates, deemed eligible for principalships, are selected for a yearlong internship experience and released from duties at their school sites. The eight participants from the year under study had all previously served as instructional coaches at school sites. The district recently restructured the internship experience around what it calls the “medical model.” In this model, the eight students rotate in teams through different school sites, develop case studies of specific issues, and recommend treatments and specific localized interventions. Participants work closely with district officials during the internship year and are provided with both a mentor principal who is currently working at a school site and a retired principal who serves as a professional coach. One instructor described the strengths of the internship program this way:

I think the hands-on experience, that they get to actually go into schools, is transformative. . . . They look at the seven systems and break those down by hearing from experts in that field of each one of those systems and then go out to schools. . . . They go back and they study that system in the school, and then they come back and report on it. But they not only report on what they found, they report on what they think that particular school should do to make that system more effective and more efficient for student achievement. Then they get feedback from those experts and from our staff on where you hit it and where you didn’t hit it. I think those field experiences and having a variety of learnings in all seven systems is something that makes them very prepared for going in and dealing with those [issues] as they become principals or assistant principals in the schools.

These programs not only build the knowledge of aspiring leaders, they also build their social capital and a professional learning community. As one graduate of Principals for Tomorrow and the internship noted:

I think the main thing [about these programs] is that they close gaps that I think you would have if you had not participated in the program. It is not a surprise. Once you get in there you know: this is the lingo, these are the expectations. It builds relationships with district officers; I have those relationships with various people that I don't mind calling for help.

## PROGRAMS FOR NEW LEADERS

There are three district-run Induction Support Programs for new school leaders in Jefferson County, which provide required professional development and mentoring to assistant principals, principals, and counselors. During the 2004-05 school year, each had between 12 and 14 participants. The programs consist of two summer meetings and five meetings during the school year.

**Table 9: Programs for New Leaders**

Program Name	Purpose/Focus	Participants	Structure
Induction Support Program for Assistant Principals	To provide new assistant principals with support in their transition to the job and to require principals to provide them with instructional leadership responsibilities.	Approximately a dozen.	Yearlong program with district-led professional development workshops and meetings; participants are provided a mentor and advisor.
Induction Support Program for Principals	To provide new principals with support in their transition to the job.	Approximately a dozen.	Two year program similar in structure to the ISP for assistant principals.
Induction Support Program for Counselors	Not the focus of this case study.		

As stated in district documents, the rationale for these programs is as follows: “We know that job adjustment and transition into leadership is a process, not an event. District leaders want to provide a meaningful and intentionally delivered entry experience for all new principals and assistant principals.” The induction programs for principals and assistant principals have a particular emphasis on instruction, deriving in large part from the influences of the state’s test-based accountability system. In the words of one program instructor:

If your test scores are not rising, then you end up with a pretty significant amount of scrutiny. So, it is imperative that you focus on getting into classrooms, knowing instruction, providing resources to help your teachers get the skills necessary, make personal adjustments that have to be made in order to get the best people doing the job that will lead to higher test scores, in addition to providing them with access to the resources they need to get it done. That is the primary thing we focus upon.



**Structured training in teacher-evaluation strategies is an important part of preparing principals and assistant principals as instructional leaders.**

JCPS interviewees expressed satisfaction with the mentors and advisors provided by the programs. Having a person to turn to for advice was significant, particularly to the Induction Support Program participants. The survey results echo some of this sentiment: 95% of pre-service graduates indicated that they received regular support from a mentor, and more than half of all Jefferson County principals indicated that district-sponsored mentors had visited them, as compared to only 20% of other Kentucky principals.

## PROGRAMS FOR CURRENT LEADERS

The assortment of programs available for current leaders in JCPS is diverse, ranging from technological support to professional development associated with a specific classroom-management curriculum. These types of programs are best understood as discrete, focused, professional development in-service opportunities for specific needs of school leaders. Although representative of the type of ongoing support JCPS school administrators receive, the individual professional development offerings listed in Table 10 are less significant investments than the preceding programs. Structured training in teacher-evaluation strategies is an important part of preparing principals and assistant principals as instructional leaders, as is professional development for leadership focused on literacy and classroom management. It is worth noting that a number of these programs offer follow-up site visits and coaching.

Overall, JCPS principals are more likely than comparison principals to participate in many forms of in-service professional development, including visits to other schools, peer mentoring or coaching, principals' networks, and professional development with teachers. They were less likely to participate in traditional forms of professional development, such as workshops or conferences. (See Figure 11.)

**Table 10: Programs for Current Leaders**

Program Name	Purpose/Focus	Participants	Structure
Leadership Bits and Bites	Informal professional development for K-5 teachers. The 2004-05 topic was “literacy.”	87 participants	Monthly before-school meetings (nine times annually).
Certified Teacher-Evaluation Training and Advanced Teacher Evaluation	Training for new administrators on effective teacher-evaluation strategies.  The Advanced program is “a one-year project designed to assist a select group of principals in the use of the formal teacher-evaluation system with struggling teachers.”	29 participants: assistant principals, deans, principals, and other coordinators	18 hours of professional development.
CHAMPS/ Foundations Teams	“CHAMPS/Foundations creates school-level work teams at middle schools led by assistant principals to improve classroom instructional and student management.”	54 participants: assistant principals and deans	16 four-hour meetings, two site visitations per school, and other work conducted at the school sites.
Focused Literacy Teams I and II	The goal of the program is “to help assistant principals develop instructional leadership skills, begin Literacy Leadership Teams, and increase literacy knowledge.”	64 participants.	In addition to several four-hour workshops (eight meetings for Level I, five for Level II) participants are visited at their school sites six times. Progress is assessed through these site visits and through literacy teams’ work at setting student achievement benchmarks.
Counselor Institute	The goal is “to increase the skills and readiness of aspiring counselors.”	23 participants	Yearlong program; eight three-hour evening meetings, August-June.
Fred Jones Tools for Teaching Program	Classroom management and student motivation program for high school teachers. The program is named for its creator, author of Positive Classroom Discipline and other titles. Training paid by the district.	68 participants	A Fred Jones program coordinator visits each participant in the training program; these participants are part of a school leadership team.
Pocket PC PDA for principals and support staff	District’s interest is “to see if handhelds could be used to improve instructional management.”	13 participants	Tailored professional development for effective use of technology.

More than twice as many JCPS respondents (42%) reported they had had three or more opportunities for peer coaching and observation in the past year than was true for other principals in the state or the nation. Nearly all (88%) had participated in a principals' network three or more times, a significantly higher rate than indicated by others. JCPS respondents were also more likely to participate in professional development with teachers from their schools; 74% of JCPS principals had participated in professional development activities with teachers seven or more times, compared with about 60% of Kentucky comparison principals and 50% of national comparison principals. JCPS principals were also more likely than the comparison groups to say they were motivated to undertake professional development as a result of district policy. They were also more likely to find the professional development they experienced helpful; however, those differences were not statistically significant.

## PROGRAM COSTS AND FINANCING

Of the 24 distinct programs operating in JCPS during 2004-05, this study focused on estimating the costs for 10, not including the individual professional development offerings for in-service principals. These included:

- Principals for Tomorrow (PFT) I and II
- IDEAS and University Collaboration/University Program Redesign
- Internship
- Induction Support Program, Principals
- Induction Support Program, Assistant Principals
- A set of four activities operating under the LEADS grant with the purpose of exploring "Condition Change." These included activities in producing the LEAD Kentucky newsletter, participating in two statewide forums, and developing content guides as well as university programs aligned with the LEAD initiatives.

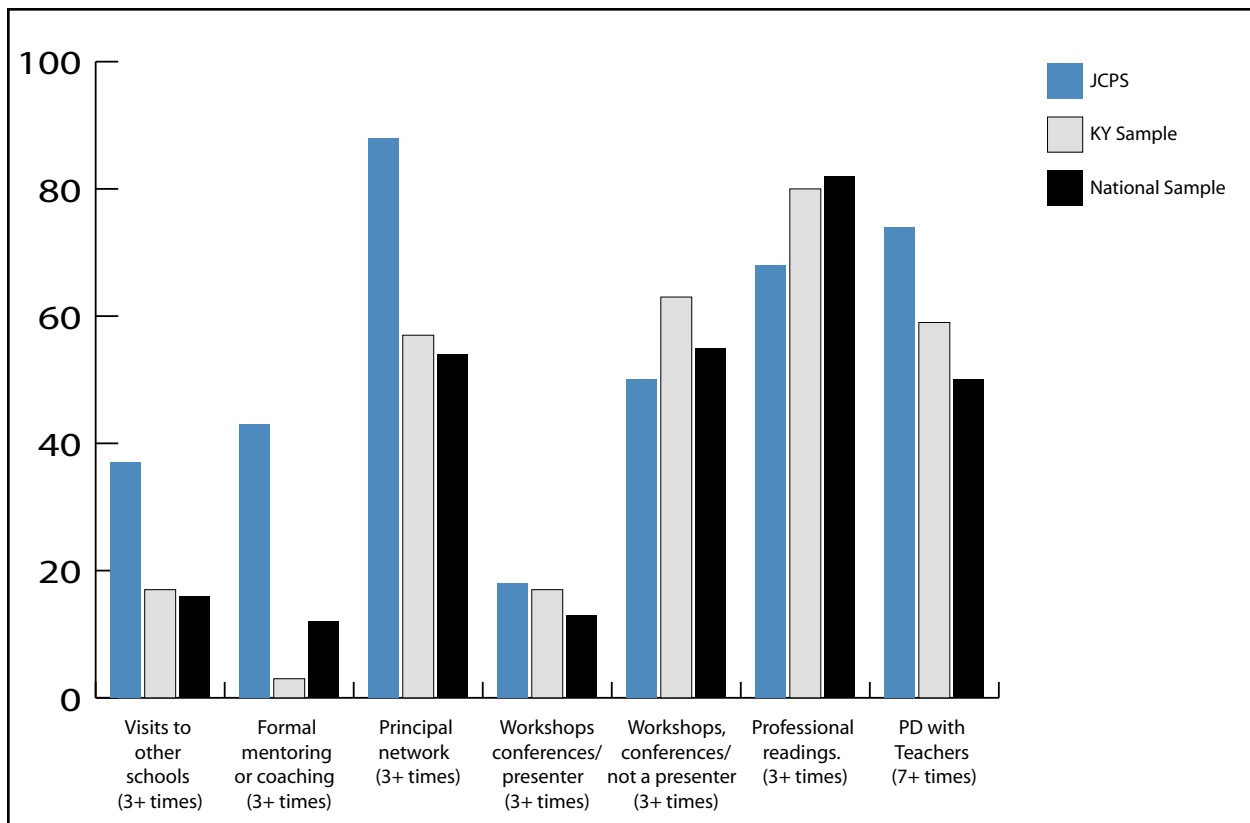
We estimated the total costs for these components of the JCPS leadership development initiative to be \$1.9 million. Most costs were for personnel time and salaries; the largest single program budget was that covering the salaries of interns. These programs shared funding from a \$1 million Wallace Foundation grant, which was combined with other district and federal funds, as well as contributions from the University of Louisville.

## WHAT WE LEARNED AND WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

We learned that JCPS leadership initiatives have benefited from a stable district culture that has supported a long-term investment in leadership development. We heard many district officials express strong faith that the leadership programs are paying off in ways that matter, including gains in student learning. However, at the time of our visits, JCPS had yet to collect empirical evidence that described the relationship between observed improvement in student achievement and the district's leadership development efforts.

District decisionmakers are aware that evaluations of program effectiveness have historically failed to collect this type of data. For example, a self-assessment submitted to The Wallace Foundation states, “Our first drafts [of program plans] reveal heavy concentration in the areas we wanted to focus on: distributed leadership, role changes, instructional improvement, but little in the way of assessing participant mastery of content and/or measuring the impact on student performance.” In an interview, JCPS’s superintendent, Stephen Daeschner, acknowledged that he was unable to determine whether candidates prepared in-house were better on the job than other candidates. “I don’t know that we have hard evidence, and I apologize for that because I am one who believes in hard data,” he said. The point here is two-fold: that the connection between claims and evidence could be stronger, and that collecting data on effectiveness during program evaluations is relatively recent. Finally, the search for evidence of effectiveness is further complicated by the fact that the district’s investment in leadership preparation consists of 24 different pieces. So, while the district sees student achievement outpacing state gains in some areas, and while the district is investing in noteworthy and commendable ways in leadership preparation, just what connects these two phenomena is not self-evident. We know that leadership matters, but which elements of the 24-item portfolio—or interactions of elements—are most influential in JCPS?

**Figure 11: Principals’ Reports of their Professional Development Activities in the Past Year**



## CONCLUSIONS

### What makes the JCPS leadership development model exemplary? What does it exemplify?

Leadership development in Jefferson County, Kentucky, is provided through a variety of pre-service and in-service learning opportunities coordinated and delivered by the school district. The Jefferson County initiative exemplifies the potential inherent in a well-coordinated, well-funded, well-established recruitment, selection, and preparation pipeline. We identified four characteristics central to Jefferson County's leadership development program:

**1. Leadership matters in JCPS.** Central office efforts to support school site improvement emphasize the crucial role of the principal and, correspondingly, the importance of district-provided professional development for school site leaders. Members of the JCPS central office, starting with the superintendent and reaching to the retired administrators who teach in the program, explained that their work in district-led leadership development was to ensure that JCPS principals were well-versed in the district's expectations for principal leadership and well-prepared for the job. As Superintendent Daeschner explained, "We're strong believers that the principal is everything. If we want to do one thing to change a school, that's it—it's the principalship. The time, the effort that you put into the training, the selection, the recruitment pays off like nothing else I know about."

**2. Leadership preparation efforts have had a chance to take hold and grow.** Whereas district-run leadership reforms in other districts must often contend with budget instability and frequent turnover of central office administrators, stable leadership from the superintendent's office has allowed JCPS to invest time and money in leadership development over a period of many years. Stephen Daeschner's more than decade-long tenure as Superintendent in JCPS has been remarkable for its duration, as superintendent tenure in urban districts averages less than 3 years. His predecessor also had a long tenure at the helm of the district. Stable and consistent administrative leadership has meant that JCPS leadership development initiatives have enjoyed favorable conditions for implementation and program development. JCPS leadership programs have changed from year to year in response to feedback and internal assessments of program effectiveness; however, the district's investment in the programs has not wavered, and the programs have been able to balance innovation and consistency.

**3. The different program pieces are intentionally aligned, and participants recognize a leadership development pathway.** There is consensus in Jefferson County that the district-sponsored leadership development programs are the road to becoming a principal. This was stated by central office staff and echoed by program graduates. District administrators indicated that the different program components were designed as both recruitment and preparation tools for leadership positions, and for that reason ranged from programs for teachers initially considering outside-of-classroom leadership roles to induction support programs. Graduates explained that participation in the JCPS-led programs not only provided them with the kind of context-specific leadership curriculum, mentoring, and advising that they found useful, participation also helped them earn recognition from central office administrators responsible for developing interview

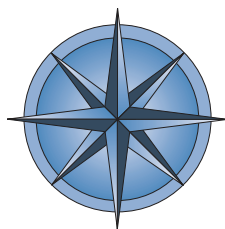


“slates.” In short, the JCPS leadership development pipeline helped to ensure that when new administrators were hired, they were as close to being a known quantity as is possible for people entering new positions.

**4. Use of retired personnel in all aspects of the program serves an important socializing role for new administrators.** Interview respondents regularly remarked that the JCPS leadership initiative began with initial interest in leadership and continued through retirement. Retired administrators represent the district’s institutional memory and its most experienced experts on the ground. Current principals reported positively on the mentoring and advising they had received from these veterans.

The Jefferson County Public Schools have devoted resources to the preparation, professional development, and support of school leaders for many years. Several aspects of the JCPS initiative make it exemplary. Because JCPS has designed and implemented a leadership pipeline with a diverse set of programs for prospective and current leaders, the district is able to “grow its own” leaders for school improvement. In part because of its long commitment to developing school leaders, JCPS does not face a shortage of high-quality applicants for its school leadership roles. This is in marked contrast to many other urban school districts. Because JCPS has maintained a district-wide leadership focus over time and has been able to count on the direction provided by a superintendent who consistently emphasizes leadership, the district is able to offer coherent preparation and support of school site leaders and shape program components to meet district needs.

With the benefit of time and stable investment, JCPS can also make incremental program improvements and demonstrate program impact in ways that surpass most districts whose initiatives may be newer or less coordinated. Because JCPS has worked closely with partners in higher education while also cultivating the expertise of its own in-house leaders, JCPS programs bridge theory/practice divides that often negatively characterize leadership programs. Our research in Jefferson County confirms that the leadership initiatives are well supported with district resources and are guided by a widely shared vision that emphasizes the importance of effective school site leadership. Survey responses show that the initiatives are well respected by both participants and future employers and compare positively to other programs in the state and the nation. The recent history of school improvement in JCPS suggests that the leadership programs are having a positive impact. JCPS has matched a consistency of vision with a diverse portfolio of learning opportunities, exemplifying a well-run district that has begun to institutionalize structures that enable it to address its leadership needs and school improvement vision.



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Michelle LaPointe is currently a Senior Research Associate with the Northeast and Islands Regional Education Lab at the Education Development Center. Previously, she was Research Director of the Stanford School Leadership Study. Dr. LaPointe has spent a decade analyzing educational policies and evaluating programs to support youth. Before going to Stanford, she was an analyst at the U.S. Department of Education (ED), where she coordinated national evaluations of school choice initiatives, comprehensive school reform, and bilingual education. While at ED, she co-authored the *2004 Report to Congress* on the Implementation and Impact of the Comprehensive School Reform Program, and contributed to the 2001 Title I report *High Standards for All Students*.

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### **Stanford Educational Leadership Institute**

The School Leadership Study is being conducted through the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (SELI) — a joint partnership of the Stanford University Graduate School of Business and School of Education. SELI's mission is to improve student achievement by providing education leaders with the means to create effective change in their districts and schools, integrating cutting-edge knowledge from the education and business fields. Financial support for SELI is made possible by a grant from the Goldman Sachs Foundation. For more information, visit: <http://seli.stanford.edu> or <http://srnleads.org>.

### **The Finance Project**

The Finance Project is an independent nonprofit research, consulting, technical assistance, and training firm for public- and private-sector leaders nationwide. It specializes in helping leaders plan and implement financing and sustainability strategies for initiatives that benefit children, families, and communities. Through a broad array of tools, products, and services, The Finance Project helps leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships. To learn more, visit <http://www.financeproject.org>.

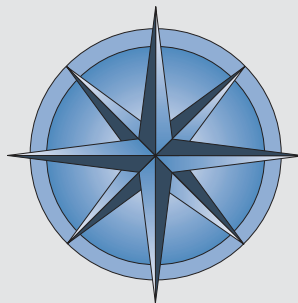
### **The Wallace Foundation**

The Wallace Foundation seeks to support and share effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people.

Its three current objectives are:

- Strengthen education leadership to improve student achievement
- Enhance out-of-school learning opportunities
- Expand participation in arts and culture

For more information and research on these and other related topics, please visit The Wallace Foundation Knowledge Center at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org>.



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