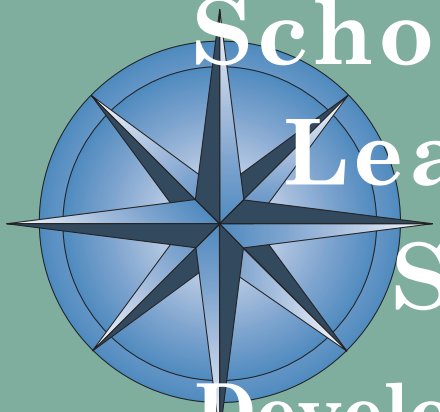
Review of Research



# School Leadership Study

## Developing Successful Principals

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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? How are successful leadership development programs designed? What program structures provide the best learning environments? What governing and financial policies are needed to sustain good programming? "School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals" is a major research effort that seeks to answer these questions. Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and undertaken by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute in conjunction with The Finance Project, the study will examine eight highly developed pre- and inservice program models that address key issues in developing strong leaders. Once effective processes have been identified they can be replicated, ensuring that more and more schools become vibrant learning communities under the direction of outstanding leaders.

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## Getting the Facts on School Leadership Preparation

More than ever, in today's climate of heightened expectations, principals are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs.

While that job description sounds overwhelming, at least it signals that the field has begun to give overdue recognition to the critical role and mounting demands on school principals. But are present and future principals getting the professional preparation they need to meet them?

A range of critics, including principals themselves, raise a litany of concerns about the quality and effectiveness of the leadership preparation typically provided at university-based programs and elsewhere. That it is disconnected from real-world complexities. That the knowledge base is weak and outdated. That curricula often fail to provide grounding in effective teaching and learning. That mentorships and internships often lack depth or opportunities to test leadership skills in real situations. That admissions standards lack rigor and, as a result, too many graduates will eventually be certified, but not truly qualified to effectively lead schoolwide change.

These criticisms are hardly new. What's desperately needed, however, is not just another indictment, but a deeper analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these programs and what can be done to improve them. We need a clearer picture of what is and is not known about the specific features and program attributes that can influence leaders' beliefs and behaviors in ways that improve student learning. We need to better understand the costs and relative benefits of the different types of programs proliferating around the country, and how to identify and sustain the most effective ones. And we need a clear-eyed examination of how evolving local and state-level regulations influence, for better or worse, what leader-preparation programs deliver.

In the coming months, researchers from Stanford University and The Finance Project will be conducting an in-depth investigation of these and other unanswered questions about improving the preparation of school leaders so that the field can move from criticism to knowledge and effective solutions. Better training alone won't solve America's mounting school leadership challenges. Well-trained leaders placed in near-impossible job conditions aren't likely to succeed in improving learning. But if better training isn't the whole answer, it is surely a big part of it. That's why this first report on what is and isn't known about improving the preparation of school leaders, and the reports in the months ahead that will deepen our knowledge about what works, are so timely.

M. Christine DeVita
President, The Wallace Foundation

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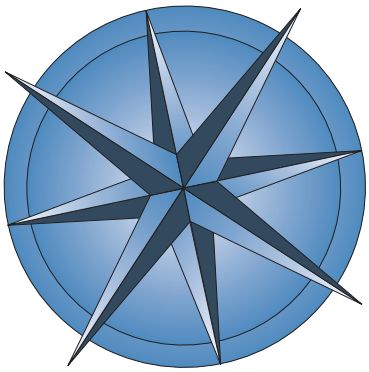


# Overview: The School Leadership Study

Principals play a vital and multifaceted role in setting the direction for schools that are positive and productive workplaces for teachers and vibrant learning environments for children, but existing knowledge on the best ways to develop these effective leaders is insufficient.

The need to identify and replicate effective pre- and inservice programs and program structures that produce the most highly qualified school leaders has motivated a major research study commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and undertaken by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute in conjunction with The Finance Project. This study — "School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals" — conducts a series of in-depth case analyses of eight highly developed pre- and inservice program models in five states, and tracks the graduates into the schools they lead. The study not only examines the conduct of the programs and the perceptions of participants, but it also interviews and surveys graduates — along with a comparison sample of principals — about their preparedness and practices. The study also follows a sub-sample of program participants into their schools, examining school operations, teachers' views of the school leadership, and trends in student performance. Cost analysis of case studies is conducted by The Finance Project, a Washington, DC-based, nonprofit research organization. The Finance Project also explores the state policy and finance structures that foster effective programs.

To launch the study, this review of existing research and literature has been conducted. Following are the key findings of the review.

### Key Finding 1: Essential Elements of Good Leadership

Growing consensus on the attributes of effective school principals shows that successful school leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways — the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of effective organizational processes. This consensus is increasingly reflected in preparation and licensing requirements, which generally subscribe to a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school leaders. Even with the growing body of evidence, additional research is necessary to determine the impact and relative importance of leadership in such key areas as curriculum, assessment, and adaptation to local contexts.

### Key Finding 2: Effective Program Design

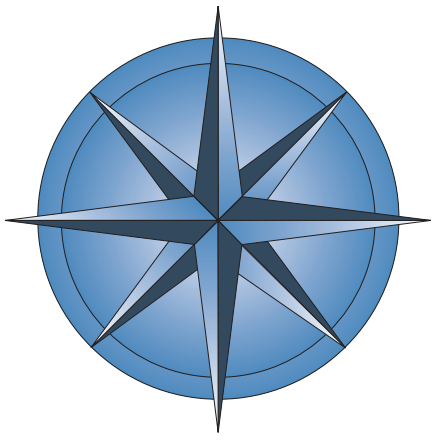
Research on principal preparation and development programs suggests that certain program features are essential in the development of effective school leaders. There is also little discrepancy between guidelines for pre- and inservice programs. Evidence indicates that effective programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools. Despite existing consensus, empirical evidence for the impact of these features is currently minimal.

### Key Finding 3: Multiple Pathways to High Quality Leadership Development

As the focus on principal preparation and development has intensified, innovations in both leadership development programs and program structures have proliferated. Programmatic approaches to leadership development vary, with some reformers emphasizing leadership and management skills over academic proficiency while others support the cultivation of teachers who understand instruction deeply and demonstrate leadership potential. Structurally, most preparation programs fall under one of four categories while a diversity of inservice programs exist. Differentiating these programs requires in-depth research into the implementation and coherence of program features.

### Key Finding 4: Policy Reform and Finances

Effective policy reform is aligned with knowledge of program components and the systems that support their implementation and sustainability. Additional research is needed to examine how various programs are implemented, governed, and financed.



# Introduction

Public demands for more effective schools have placed growing attention on the crucial role of school leaders — a professional group largely overlooked by the various educational reform movements of the past two decades. Evidence suggests that, second only to the influences of classroom instruction, school leadership strongly affects student learning. Principals' abilities are central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students.

**Increasing demands.** As the impact of leadership on student achievement became evident, policymakers placed greater pressures on principals. Rewards and sanctions affecting principals are increasingly common. California law threatens to fire principals as one possible consequence in low performing schools (Public Schools Accountability Act, Senate Bill 1x, 1999). In Portland, Oregon, a small portion of a principal's salary is based on a set of professional standards theoretically linked to student outcomes (Jaquiss, 1999). These trends indicate an increasing acceptance that principals play a significant role in affecting student achievement and should be held accountable for it.

Meanwhile, the role of principal has swelled to include a staggering array of professional tasks and competencies. Principals are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. In addition, principals are expected to serve the often conflicting needs and interests of many stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies. As a result, many scholars and practitioners argue that the job requirements far exceed the reasonable capacities of any one person. The demands of the job have changed so that traditional methods of preparing administrators are no longer adequate to meet the leadership challenges posed by public schools (AACTE, 2001; Peterson, 2002; Elmore, 2000; Levine, 2005).

**Leadership crisis.** In recent years, a number of reports depict the principalship as being in a state of crisis largely precipitated by two troubling factors:

(1) School districts are struggling to attract and retain an adequate supply of highly qualified candidates for leadership roles (Knapp, Copland & Talbert, 2003); and

(2) Principal candidates and existing principals are often ill-prepared and inadequately supported to organize schools to improve learning while managing all of the other demands of the job (Young, 2002; Levine, 2005).

**Dearth of qualified school leaders.** A shortage of highly qualified principal candidates has been reported by school districts across the nation. In some parts of the country nearly sixty percent of principals will retire, resign, or otherwise leave their positions during the next five years (Peterson, 2002). In other parts of the country the issue has less to do with dwindling supply than with the inequitable distribution of qualified candidates in suburban and affluent communities. In California, for example, the problem is not a shortage of certified administrators, but a shortage of highly qualified administrators committed to working in underserved communities and schools.

**Limited capacity to lead.** Despite the principal shortage, educational administration programs are graduating an increasing number of certified school leaders. Unfortunately, the processes and standards by which many principal preparation programs traditionally screen, select, and graduate candidates are often ill-defined, irregularly applied, and lacking in rigor. As a result, many aspiring administrators are too easily admitted into and passed through the system on the basis of their performance on academic coursework rather than on a comprehensive assessment of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully lead schools (NPBEA, 2001). Although these aspiring administrators are certified, they may not be equipped for the shifting role of the principal from manager to effective instructional leader. As a result, an increasing number of districts are creating intense support systems for principals to build the skills they need to effectively lead schools.

While there is increasing research on how principals influence school effectiveness, less is known about how to help principals develop the capacities that make a difference in how schools function and what students learn. In an effort to inform policymakers and program administrators, this review summarizes the findings of prior research on the design of principal preparation and ongoing development programs. We then outline additional research that is needed to better inform the field about how to support the development of leaders who can promote powerful teaching and learning.

# Key Finding 1: Essential Elements of Good Leadership

*Growing consensus on the attributes of effective school principals shows that successful school leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways — the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of effective organizational processes. This consensus is increasingly reflected in preparation and licensing requirements, which generally subscribe to a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school leaders. Even with the growing body of evidence, additional research is necessary to determine the impact and relative importance of leadership in such key areas as curriculum, assessment, and adaptation to local contexts.*

Reviews of research suggest that successful school leaders influence student achievement in several important ways, both through their influence on other people or features of their organizations, and through their influence on school processes. Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) outline three sets of core leadership practices:

- Developing people — Enabling teachers and other staff to do their jobs effectively, offering intellectual support and stimulation to improve the work, and providing models of practice and support.

- Setting directions for the organization — Developing shared goals, monitoring organizational performance, and promoting effective communication.

- Redesigning the organization — Creating a productive school culture, modifying organizational structures that undermine the work, and building collaborative processes.

In recent years, research has converged on the importance of three aspects of the principal's job:

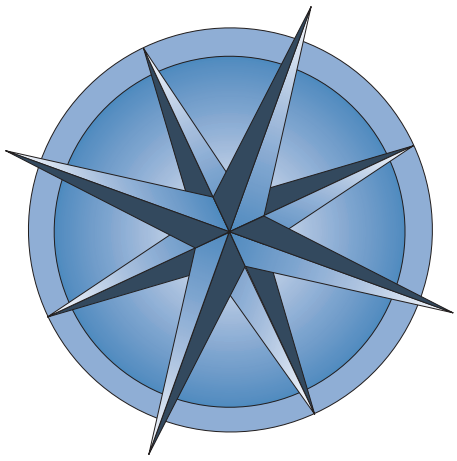
1) developing a deep understanding of how to support teachers

2) managing the curriculum in ways that promote student learning and

3) developing the ability to transform schools into more effective organizations that foster powerful teaching and learning for all students.

For the most part, these findings are reflected in standards for the professional practice of school leaders established in 1996 by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). These standards provide a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school leaders grounded in principles of powerful teaching and learning. Currently, more than forty states have adopted the ISLLC standards (or a slight variation) into their administrative certification program requirements (Murphy, forthcoming). ISLLC standards have increasingly influenced the design of administrator preparation programs; however, the degree to which they have been incorporated into state statutes, policies, and credential programs varies. California, Delaware, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina and Connecticut have encouraged standards-based program development by framing their principal licensure criteria around the ISLLC standards. Several other states are following suit (Murphy, forthcoming).

While the advent of professional standards for school leaders has been helpful in moving the field forward, a meta-analysis of research that examined the features of leadership associated with student achievement suggests that the ISLLC standards may underemphasize some features of effective leadership practices. These include the ways in which leaders directly participate in curriculum design and implementation; support and promote effective instructional and student assessment practices; recognize individual and school accomplishments; and adapt their leadership to address the context-specific needs of teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Waters & Grubb, 2004). While empirical reports of what effective principals do have expanded, many questions remain about the relative importance of different leadership strategies on student achievement. As more becomes known about school leadership development and effective principal practices, it will be critical to apply that knowledge to refine standards and licensure criteria.



# Key Finding 2: Features of Effective Programs

*Research on principal preparation and development suggests that certain program features are essential for developing effective school leaders. There is also little discrepancy between guidelines for pre- and inservice programs. Evidence indicates that effective programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools. Despite existing consensus, empirical evidence for the impact of these features is currently minimal.*

There is widespread agreement within the literature and in professional standards and guidelines about the essential features of principal preparation programs. In addition, a set of recommendations pertaining to principal inservice programs published by the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) aligns closely with the essential features of preparatory programs in all but one area. The NCAELP recommendations also call for inservice programs to promote lifelong learning activities tailored to meet individual needs at various stages of a principal's career (Peterson, 2001; Young, 2002).

These guidelines for programs appear to be aligned with the research on effective principal practice and are consistent with literature on executive development and adult learning theory (Orr, 2003). However, there is strikingly little evidence demonstrating whether and how the kinds of learning opportunities provided by program features enable principals to become more effective in their practice. Much of the empirical support for the most popular program components consists of self-reported candidate perceptions and experiences and there is virtually no evidence for how graduates of different kinds of programs perform on the job. In short, the development of principal knowledge, skills, and dispositions lacks a strong and coherent research base. As a result, programs are experimenting with various combinations of curriculum, methods, and program structures hoping to enhance principal practice without the solid base of empirical research to inform their design.

With this caveat, the following discussion summarizes the features of principal development programs most frequently identified in the literature as being essential to the development of effective school leaders. The impact of these features is more likely to hinge on their quality, coherence, and implementation than on their existence within

programs. Unless noted, these features are seen as important to both pre- and inservice programs.

## Content

The content of principal preparation and professional development programs should reflect the current research on school leadership, management, and instructional leadership. In addition, the content should be aligned with the program's philosophy, and courses should build upon each other by integrating important disciplinary theories and concepts and linking them to internship experiences. Program content in preparation programs should also be linked to state licensing standards.

**Research-based.** Program content should incorporate knowledge of instruction, organizational development, and change management, as well as leadership skills. Standards for leadership programs as well as research on leadership behaviors that influence school improvement support the need to change and/or re-prioritize the content of many preparation and development programs (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003). Such changes include developing knowledge that will allow school leaders to better promote successful teaching and learning. They also include the development of collaborative decision-making strategies, distributed leadership practices, a culture of collegiality and community, processes for organizational change and renewal, and the development of management competence in the analysis and use of data and instructional technologies to guide school improvement activities (Waters et al., 2003; Knapp et al., 2003). The literature also points to an expanded interest in ethical leadership practices and for a deeper understanding of the social and cultural influences that shape schooling (Murphy, forthcoming). Concern with values and social contexts provokes greater attention to issues of diversity, race and gender, and equity. Finally, the literature reveals that programs are seeking to inculcate in participants habits of reflection and critical analysis that will allow them to learn from practice.

**Curricular coherence.** The most reputable programs are described in terms of their vision, purposes, and goals, and the degree to which they are internally and externally coherent (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). A well-defined and coherent program is one that links goals, learning activities, and candidate assessments around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge about effective administrative practice (Knapp et al., 2003). Highly coherent programs offer a logical, often sequential array of coursework, learning activities, and program structures that links theory and practice and are framed around the principles of adult learning theory. The learning activities provide a scaffold on which new self-directed knowledge is constructed, foster deep

self-reflection, link past experiences with newly acquired knowledge, are problem- rather than subject-centered, and offer multiple venues for applying new knowledge in practical settings (Granott, 1998; Lave, 1991). In addition, the knowledge base upon which the program is grounded, as well as instructional strategies, are closely aligned with professional standards such as those offered by ISLLC.

## Methods

Program content should be delivered through a variety of methods to best meet the needs of adult learners and to allow principals or aspiring principals to apply the curricular content in authentic settings and toward the resolution of real-world problems and dilemmas. There is therefore the need to create real and simulated leadership experiences for participants in preparation programs who would otherwise lack the experiential base.

**Field-based internships.** There is a sizeable body of research that suggests most adults learn best when exposed to situations requiring the application of acquired skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within authentic settings, and when guided by critical self-reflection. Cross-disciplinary studies on experiential learning show that exposure to concrete elements of real-world practice can increase a leader's ability to contemplate, analyze, and systematically plan strategies for action (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1999). Professional internships in the fields of medicine, engineering, and, more recently, educational administration are consistent with this premise (Baugh, 2003). Today, more than 90 percent of all administrator credential programs require an internship experience of some kind (Murphy, 1992). Ideally, strong internships provide candidates with an intense, extended opportunity to grapple with the day-to-day demands of school administrators under the watchful eye of an expert mentor, with reflection tied to theoretical insights through related coursework (Daresh, 2001).

**Problem-based learning.** Most educators agree that effective preservice programs feature instructional activities and assessments that focus on problems of practice and stimulate effective problem-solving and reflection. As Hallinger and McCary (1992) state, "It is not enough for principals to have a repertoire of behaviors; they must know how and when to use them, and they must be careful to monitor their effects on student learning." For these reasons, over the past decade the use of problem-based learning (PBL) has become increasingly popular in principal preparation programs (Bridges & Hallinger, 1993). PBL activities simulate complex real-world problems and dilemmas, promote the blending of theoretical and practical knowledge, improve problem-solving capacity, and help enhance candidates' self-concepts as future school leaders. By participating in challenging and relevant simulations,

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students develop new attitudes and skills, experiment with various leadership roles, and, ideally, practice the discipline of self-reflection. PBL methods also provide opportunities for candidates to test newly acquired leadership skills and receive feedback through authentic demonstrations and assessments.

**Cohort groups.** The grouping of administrative candidates as well as experienced school leaders into cohorts has become increasingly popular. Proponents of cohort grouping strategies maintain that adult learning is best accomplished when it is part of a socially cohesive activity structure that emphasizes shared authority for learning, opportunities for collaboration, and teamwork in practice-oriented situations (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000). The positive effects of cohort structured learning experiences include enhanced feelings of group affiliation and acceptance, social and emotional support, motivation, persistence, group learning, and mutual assistance. Cohorts can help learners build group and individual knowledge, think creatively, and restructure problems from multiple perspectives. Cohorts model the type of team building that is increasingly encouraged among school faculty (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001). There is also evidence that cohorts can foster improved academic learning and program completion rates among administrative credential candidates. Because teachers give higher ratings to the leadership practices of principals who participated in cohort training structures, it may be that cohorts not only benefit aspiring and practicing principals, but the faculty in the schools they ultimately lead (Leithwood et al., 1996).

**Mentors.** The use of mentors in educational administration training programs has become increasingly popular in recent years. Typically, mentors are practicing administrators within the school in which the candidate works, although other models are possible. In well-structured mentoring programs, the mentor and mentee make a mutual commitment to work collaboratively and toward the accomplishment of an individually tailored professional development plan (Daresh, 2001). Mentoring relationships should serve to reduce the distance between a learner's independent problem-solving performance and his/her potential developmental level achieved through problem solving with guidance from an expert. The primary role of the mentor is to guide the learner in his or her search for strategies to resolve dilemmas, to boost self-confidence, and to construct a broad repertoire of leadership skills. Competent mentors do this through modeling, coaching, gradually removing support as the mentee's competence increases, questioning and probing to promote self-reflection and problem solving skills, and providing feedback and counsel (Lave, 1991).

## Structure

Regardless of the curriculum content and methods used, programs reflect a variety of structures, collaborations, and institutional arrangements.

**Collaboration between university programs and school districts.** Traditional principal preparation programs often fail to seek out or establish interdisciplinary links within the university or to fully utilize potential outside resources in schools and other organizations. Likewise, many district-based professional development efforts have failed to benefit from the intellectual resources available in their local universities. The need for stronger clinical training has encouraged a growing number of universities to collaborate with districts and schools as equal partners in the design, implementation, and assessment of preservice principal preparation programs. Proponents maintain that close collaboration enhances program consistency and helps to develop a sense of shared purpose and a common vocabulary between districts and local colleges of education. In such collaborative programs, practicing administrators are commonly used to mentor administrative interns, assist university faculty in the assessment of candidates in the field, participate in university screening and admissions processes, serve as members of the university's program advisory committee, and sometimes teach courses (Norton, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2002).

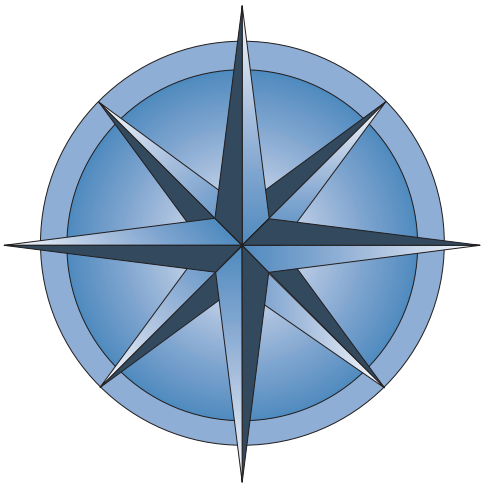
The structuring of inservice professional development programs also reflects a trend toward closer collaborations between universities and districts. University faculty serve as advisors to districts developing inservice programs and sometimes offer tailored university courses on-site in local districts. Such collaborative efforts are thought to support and sustain both university-based programs and district initiatives.

## Summary

While there is little empirical evidence on how specific program components influence leadership behaviors, on-the-job performance, or student outcomes, there is some promising research seeking to understand the outcomes of preparation. For example, a recent study found that principals who participated in a preparation program that is concept driven, cohort based, and consisting of a yearlong and carefully mentored field-based internship scored higher on the newly developed ISLLC performance assessment test, received higher performance evaluation ratings by supervisors, and were perceived by teachers as being more effective in managing their schools (Valentine, 2001).

One theme that has begun to shape the dialogue on program design is the idea that

professional development activities should be ongoing, career-staged, and seamless (Peterson, 2002). That is, training activities should build on prior learning experiences and continue throughout the stages of a principal's career. Some have argued that closer links should be made between teacher preparation, administrator preparation, and administrator professional development in order to provide a continuity of learning experiences framed around the principles of effective teaching and instructional leadership. Indeed, the design of innovative pre- and inservice development programs has become more similar over time, with some districts launching mentoring and coaching models alongside institutes and other professional learning experiences that are more extended than the traditional one-shot workshops often criticized for their limited impact (Peterson, 2002).



# Key Finding 3: Multiple Pathways to Leadership Development

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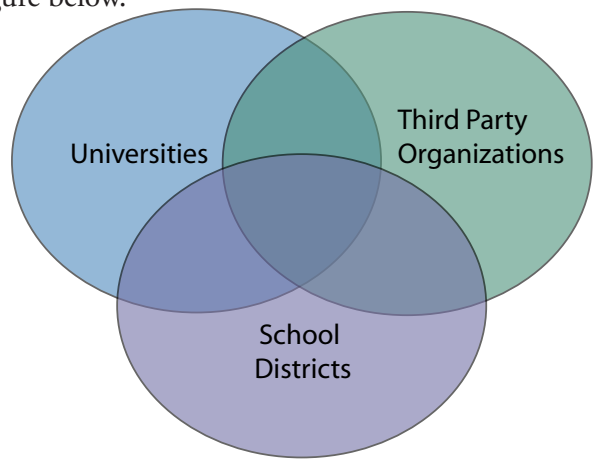
Ideas for increasing the quality of administrative candidates range considerably and sometimes conflict. For example, some reformers advocate the recruitment of talented leaders outside of education while others advocate the cultivation of strong teachers who understand instruction deeply and demonstrate leadership potential. Alternative principal credentialing has become an issue in California (where passing a state exam is sufficient for licensure) and New Jersey (where a masters in business administration, public administration, or management science qualify a candidate for provisional licensure). Some maintain that effective programs should weigh a candidate's leadership potential more heavily than his/her academic proficiency (the traditional criterion), and some maintain that programs should use a simpler array of criteria to increase the pool of eligible candidates while others call for more stringent selection criteria (Hess, 2003). Despite the growing interest in recruiting non-educators into principalships, some studies have found that these initiatives have typically focused on recruiting leaders with strong instructional backgrounds and further developing their knowledge of teaching, learning, and professional development (Elmore & Burney, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Ort, 2002).

Evidence suggests that there are indeed differences in the administrative competencies needed to lead different kinds of schools and that selection procedures should match candidate characteristics and qualifications with the context in which they will be working, including the type of school as well as the school-community demographic, cultural context, and economic stability (Leithwood et al., 2004). For example, the skill set required to lead a small, suburban, middle-income elementary school is distinct from that needed to lead a large, urban, low-income high school, and there may be differences as well in the cultural and technical knowledge base required of leaders in different kinds of communities.

In part because of the recognition that the context matters to the types of competencies and situational knowledge required of school leaders, new approaches to principal development often emphasize strong relationships with specific school districts and preparation for specific leadership expectations. The notions of generic leadership that once dominated the field are being replaced by more contextualized notions of leadership. Context is found to be important for key functions of schools, such as instruction, community-building, and change management — and for particular school contexts, e.g., urban districts serving students with particular backgrounds or needs.

## Institutional Arrangements

Reforms in leadership development have come in a variety of forms reflecting new sponsoring organizations and institutional collaborations. Most preparation programs fall under one of four general types and should therefore be assessed relative to other programs within the same category: university based programs, district initiated programs, programs run by third parties, and programs run through partnerships between stakeholders. The sponsoring organizations and potential collaborations are depicted in the figure below.




In contrast, inservice training is provided through many disparate sources, including universities, school districts, county and state departments of education, professional associations, comprehensive school reform programs (e.g., Accelerated Schools), regional laboratories, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and independent consultants. The diversity among these inservice programs raises serious questions about how to evaluate and compare program effectiveness given variations in clientele, training design, underlying learning theories, and specific learning objectives.

The following section describes each of these institutional types, and includes examples of programs within each category.

### University Based Programs

Programs established by higher education institutions typically offer courses for prospective administrators framed around discrete subjects (e.g., school law, budget management, personnel management) rather than interdisciplinary themes and are tied to state credentialing requirements. Participants in these programs may include individuals interested in a graduate degree but not committed to becoming a principal. For instance, teachers or other district employees may be interested in taking graduate courses for salary scale advancement rather than pursuing a career as a school leader. Such programs often have minimal admission standards, are open to anyone who wants to enroll, are not targeted to meet the needs of specific populations, and are not sensitive to the variations in school-community settings.

In a nationwide examination of pre- and inservice programs, we found a number of innovative university based programs that incorporate many of the elements described earlier, including clinical internships with strong mentoring relationships, collaborations with school districts for high quality placements, and cohort groups engaged in studying a tighter, more coherent and more relevant curriculum. Examples of this approach can be found in programs offered by the University of Connecticut and Delta State University in Mississippi.

While most universities focus on preparation programs, the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership supports school leaders at various stages of career development. The center brings leaders together to develop their capacities through a variety of programs including the three-tiered School Leadership Program series, the District Leaders Seminar Series, and the Summer Leadership Institute. The program emphasizes social justice and equity for all students and features the use of cohorts, learning institutes during the summer and throughout the school year, action research projects, small group coaching, individual mentoring, and courses that satisfy requirements for the Ed.D.

### School Districts

Some programs are developed and operated by school districts, sometimes in collaboration with third-party professional development organizations. Many large urban districts provide inservice professional development, but only a few offer preservice preparation programs or wrap-around programs that help teachers prepare for the principalship and then support their practice once they become school leaders.

In the wake of liberalized policy developments and certification requirements in

**In the wake of liberalized policy developments and certification requirements in some states, the emergence of district owned and operated programs has become an increasingly attractive way of supplying the administrative pipeline with qualified candidates.**

some states, the emergence of district owned and operated programs has become an increasingly attractive way of supplying the administrative pipeline with qualified candidates who are well-versed in the needs, structures, and cultures of the sponsoring district. Within a continuum of professional development programs for principals, the Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools provides an introductory program for teachers considering the principalship, and will pay for three credentialing courses at the University of Louisville. Recently, the New York City Department of Education established a Leadership Academy, partly funded with private monies, that organizes most preservice principal development for the city's schools as well as coaching for existing school leaders.

School districts more commonly provide inservice professional development for principals. Research points to a variety of approaches to inservice development that are attempting to create lasting infrastructures for sustained learning for principals extending beyond the periodic workshop or week-long institutes that are typically available. The St. Paul, MN, public school system operates a program for people holding a principal certificate who have not had any experience as an administrator. The University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Leadership provides some support for the district's inservice program for principals and often ties their inservice development with a district's own programs.

In addition, district-based professional development academies for teachers and principals are being operated as part of comprehensive district professional development initiatives tied to school reform. These initiatives, like those launched in New York City's former District #2, and in San Diego, CA, and St. Paul, have frequently involved intensive year-round training of principals alongside teachers in instructional strategies; additional training in how to support, coach, and evaluate teachers; problem-solving dialogues through ongoing principal networks and coaching arrangements; and mentoring for both inservice and preservice principals. With this approach, the principal becomes the critical linchpin in district-led school reform efforts and is characterized as an instructional leader-in-continuous-training.

### Third-Party Organizations

Programs operated by third-party organizations, including nonprofits, for profits, and states, are relatively new. These typically serve multiple districts and focus on a particular theory of leadership that they aim to develop.

**Nonprofits:** An example of third-party nonprofit is the Big Picture Company, which operates The Principal Residency Network (PRN). PRN works in partnership with several Rhode Island school districts, Johnson and Wales University, Providence College, and Rhode Island College to prepare a cadre of principals who champion educational change through the leadership of small, innovative schools focused on students' personal growth. Candidates are awarded a Rhode Island principal certificate upon completion of a 12-month internship. Program features include an individualized learning program for each candidate and a personal mentor/coach. Another example of this genre is the New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) program, which recruits educators and non-educators to become urban school principals. NLNS provides coursework and a yearlong internship with a mentor principal, as well as ongoing networking with peers after graduation. The NLNS program works in collaboration with universities located in or around urban locales to fulfill state certification requirements. The emergence of such nontraditional programs underscores recent concerns about the ability of traditionally structured higher education programs to meet the needs of schools seeking principals who are trained in particular ways. However, most programs in this category are so new and have so few graduates that there is a limited basis from which to judge their effectiveness.

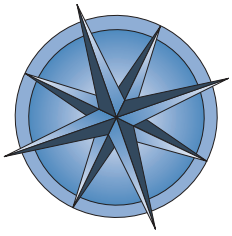
**Statewide leadership academies:** In addition to nonprofit organizations, states are also providing professional development activities. Several states have developed leadership academies to support the ongoing development of principals and, in some cases, superintendents and other leaders as well. These academies often provide a range of programs for leaders, or leadership teams, at different stages of their careers and facing different challenges. Their strategies include workshops and institutes that occur throughout the academic year and can be organized as part of a long-range professional development plan, as well as principal networks and, in some cases, coaching or internship models. Academies often partner with local universities and districts to meet particular needs. Examples include the Missouri Leadership Program, Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), and North Carolina's Principal Executive Program. In Georgia, GLISI provides various professional development programs, including an introduction for teachers who aspire to become principals, the "Leadership Base Camp and Summit" that retrains education leaders and teachers, and several one-day workshops for principals. The professional development opportunities culminate in ongoing, structured networking for principals who have participated in the GLISI programs. Similarly, the Southern Regional Education Board offers professional development activities through its State Leadership Academy Network, a

University Leadership Development Network, and Leadership Curriculum Training Modules.

### Partnership Programs

A fourth and growing category consists of programs provided by partnerships between important stakeholders, most commonly universities in collaboration with school districts. These partnerships typically occur in cities where the district and university partners have developed a common vision of education and school leadership and where the principal preparation offered by the university is closely consistent with the instructional initiatives of the district and features internships in the district's schools. These programs are highly contextualized. Faculty may include district and university staff. Participants may be selected and their salaries underwritten by the district as investments in the leadership corps. Sometimes, the district and university come together to offer a continuum of professional experiences from preparation to ongoing development. The university often maintains authority over principal preparation while the district tends to take a stronger role in ongoing development, although these distinctions are in some cases are blurred. Examples of this genre include the programs sponsored by University of San Diego with the San Diego Unified School District and Bank Street College with Region 1 (formerly District 10) in New York City.

Local professional development academies have been launched in some communities as public-private partnerships to ensure ongoing, district-relevant professional development for educators that can remain untouched by the vicissitudes of annual school budget fluctuations. For example, the Gheens Professional Development Academy, run by the Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky with funding from the Gheens Foundation, was started in 1983 with a focus on teacher development for school reform. It now offers many programs, including a job-embedded training program for school principals, which includes cohort groupings, individualized professional development plans, a summer institute, and staff development days for principals throughout the school year. It also supports new administrators through New Principal Induction and New Assistant Principal Induction programs. The Mayerson Academy, a similar joint venture between the Cincinnati Public Schools and local businesses, offers an ongoing principals network for new and experienced principals and assistant principals who meet monthly for dialogue and inservice programs.



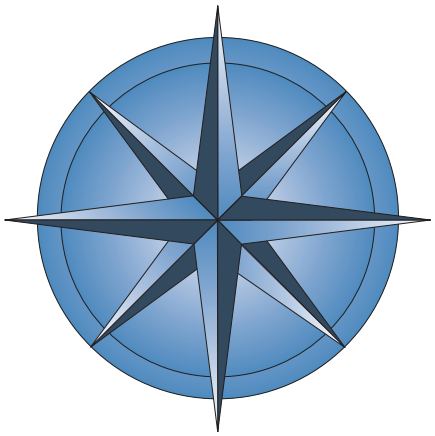
# Key Finding 4: Policy Reform and Finances

*Effective policy reform is aligned with knowledge of program components and the systems that support their implementation and sustainability. Additional research is needed to understand how successful programs and policies are implemented, governed, and financed.*

Another concern for policymakers interested in launching and sustaining effective program models is a better understanding of program costs, the financing strategies used to fund them, and the policies needed to sustain them. Effective policy aligns budget and state processes with leadership priorities, develops a pool of potential school leaders, and promotes more rigorous licensing and credentialing.

Many states have launched new efforts to reform principal preparation and professional development programs in ways that are both more productive for schools and more sustainable for those who aspire to lead. These efforts include reforming standards for licensure requirements and performance assessments, influencing principal preparation programs, as well as developing the direct approaches to training mentioned under Key Finding 3 (state and regional academies, etc.).

Although states and districts have become increasingly active in designing leadership development programs, there is little information to guide them regarding the policy strategies that can be used to leverage and support high-quality programs or the costs and funding approaches needed to sustain them. Research is required to examine policies and funding streams that influence principal preparation and development programs.



# Next Steps: Identifying Effective Leadership Development

Effective school leadership is a key factor in high student achievement but additional research is required to understand how to best develop these leaders. Direction can be taken from the answers to these key questions:

- What skills do excellent leaders have?
- What experiences can programs provide to support the development of these skills?
- What program structures best support the delivery of these experiences?
- What financing and policy practices are best to launch and support these programs?

Analysis of the literature thus far has raised these questions and offered direction for future investigation.

**Leadership skills:** *What knowledge and skills should be developed to create effective leaders?*

Evidence suggests that principals' attitudes and behaviors play a large role in shaping how schools create a context in which students can effectively learn. There is a growing consensus regarding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions commonly found among effective principals (Leithwood et al., 2004). Facilitating and supporting teaching and learning and implementing strategies that focus on ongoing school improvement have become centrally important elements of both the emergent professional standards that guide administrative development and practice and the increasingly diverse range of principal preparation and professional development programs nationwide. However, little is known about how to help principals develop the capabilities to influence how schools function or what students learn. Most empirical literature in the field tracks the structures, processes, and methods used to prepare prospective administrators and relies heavily on self-reports, individual perceptions, and personal testimonies (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004).

"School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals" will analyze the eight case studies and the comparison sample of principals to examine the impact of and effective approaches for leadership in key areas such as teacher, staff, and stakeholder

management; organizational and process design; curriculum implementation; assessment; and adaptation to local contexts.

**Program elements:** *What program features are essential in the development of effective school leaders? What standards should institutions follow?*

Existing research sheds little light on the attributes of the different kinds of professional preparation and development program features, including the policy and financial structures that support them, and their influence on organizational and student outcomes. This review of the literature uncovered several features that appear with increasing frequency in programs across the country. These include field-based internships, mentoring, cohort groups, tight collaboration between university programs and school districts, curricular coherence, problem-based instruction, and an emphasis on instructional leadership, change management, and organizational development. Empirical support within the field of education for many of these elements, however, is thin.

Although even less is known about the characteristics, processes, and outcomes of inservice programs, it appears that they have begun to mirror initial preparation programs in several ways, including the use of coaching, mentoring, and authentic problem-based learning experiences. Importantly, there has been an increasing interest in providing inservice programs that are ongoing, career staged, and seamless.

Our research aims to sort out how various program components may influence how principals practice in schools and with what results. Research in parallel and ancillary fields will be used to inform education leadership program designs.

**Program design:** *With a broad array pre- and inservice programs, how can we identify effective program design?*

As knowledge and interest in leadership development have grown, a variety of approaches to selecting, training, and developing principals have proliferated. The categories described under Key Finding 3 will help identify and track the effectiveness of the four major types of principal preparation programs: (1) university based, (2) district initiated, (3) third party, and (4) stakeholder partnerships.

The growing array of inservice programs and providers complicates efforts to conduct comprehensive systemwide research. However, our review of the literature has uncovered at least three new approaches to ongoing professional development:

1) statewide leadership academies (e.g., North Carolina's Principal Executive Program),

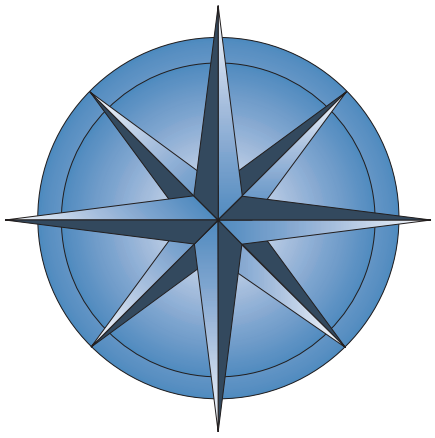
2) local professional development academies for teachers and principals (e.g., Gheens Professional Development Academy in Jefferson County, KY), and

3) comprehensive professional development initiatives tied to school reform (e.g., Wallace Foundation supported LEAD districts).

**Financing:** *What policy and fiscal structures and strategies are most likely to support effective principal preparation and inservice programs, and are there models of excellence that can be replicated?*

Another concern for policymakers interested in launching and sustaining effective program models is a better understanding of program costs, the financing strategies used to fund them, and the policies needed to sustain them. These include aligning budget and state processes with leadership priorities, developing a pool of potential school leaders, and promoting more rigorous licensing and credentialing standards.

Building on their examination of costs and financing of teacher professional development, The Finance Project will examine policies and funding streams that influence principal preparation and development programs, comparing the districts and state policies in which our eight case study programs are located with policies in an additional three states.



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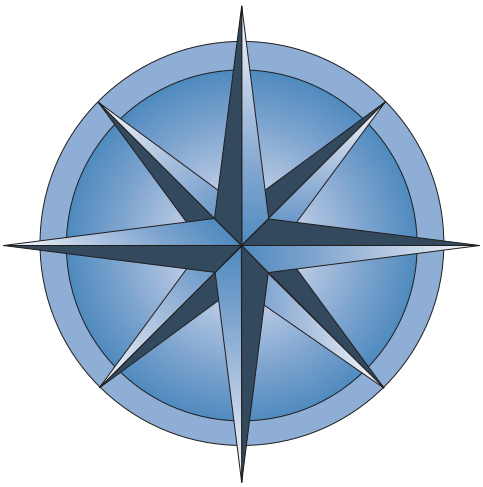

# About the Authors

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Stephen Davis has been an associate professor of education at Stanford University since 2002. He is the author of several articles on school leadership and decision making and recently co-authored the book, *The Intuitive Dimensions of Administrative Decision Making* (2003, Scarecrow Press). Dr. Davis is a former school district superintendent, personnel director, and high school principal.

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Michelle LaPointe is Research Director of the Stanford School Leadership Study. Dr. LaPointe has spent a decade analyzing educational policies and evaluating programs to support youth. She was previously 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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Debra Meyerson is associate professor of education and professor of organizational behavior (by courtesy) at Stanford University. Meyerson's research focuses on the ways in which organizations promote and constrain distributed leadership, incremental change strategies that eradicate inequities in organizations, and, more recently, the relationship betweeb an organization's capacity to learn and inter-group relations. Meyerson currently teaches courses on the organization of diversity, organizational analysis, and social change and has given workshops on her research to organizations in the profit, not-for-profit, and public sectors throughout the world.

### 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.

### The Finance Project

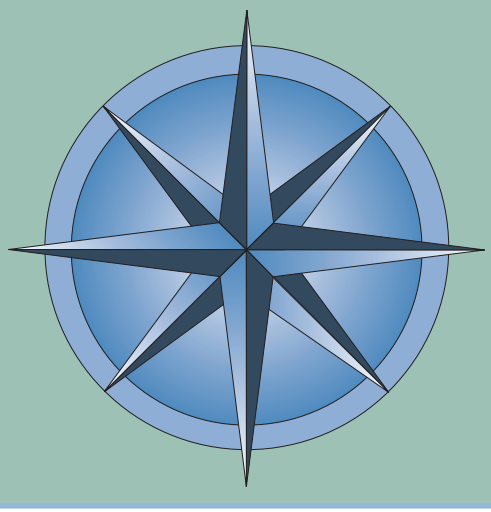
The Finance Project is a non-profit policy research, technical assistance and information organization. Its mission is to support decision-making that produces and sustains good results for children, families and communities. The Finance Project develops and disseminates information, knowledge, tools and technical assistance for improved policies, programs and financing strategies. Its work falls into four major areas: financing issues and strategies, community supports and services, managing for results, and information for decision making. For more information, 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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