Ready to Lead
Preparing Principals for Today’s Needs

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Effective leadership is key to improving teaching & learning…

Research has caught up to what educators have long known:

“Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.”

- How Leadership Influences Student Learning, 2005
...But a new paradigm is needed

- In the past, principals were seen as solitary superheroes

- Today, higher student achievement goals mean that all students need good principals

- It is impossible to reliably train “hero-principals” – especially for high-needs schools

- We need a new model for selecting, preparing and launching new principals that can help students and teachers meet high expectations
A new leadership paradigm

- Principals as orchestra leaders, rather than soloists: building their team to take on the challenge of improving today’s schools.

- Research has identified three roles of successful principals.
  - Setting directions
  - Developing people
  - Redesigning the organization

- We need better preparation and development programs that support this new type of leadership.
A growing demand for quality training

According to a Public Agenda survey:

80% of superintendents and 69% of principals believe that leadership training in schools of education is out of touch with current realities of the job.
Getting the leaders schools deserve

SREB lists common barriers to improve training of principals:

- Insufficient resources
- Lack of administrative support and priority
- Faculty resistance
- State and district policies that, in effect, turn principal preparation programs into a system for raising teachers’ pay

— Schools Can’t Wait: Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs
We’re learning what successful principal training programs look like

They are:
– more selective,
– more focused on the improvement of instruction,
– more closely tied to the needs of districts, and
– provide more relevant internships with hands-on leadership experience.
We know what good principal training programs require…

According to Stanford researchers, characteristics of exemplary principal training programs:

- Must be based on professional and state standards
- Involve active partnerships between universities and districts
- Offer paid, robust internships
- Make concerted efforts to successfully place graduates

Better value for investing public dollars…

Exemplary programs:
- **Stanford**: 60% of the 2002-04 graduates of exemplary programs were principals by 2005
- **NYC Leadership Academy**: 81% of the 2004-07 graduates were principals by 2008

Typical administrator preparation programs:
- 20-30% of graduates become principals within a few years
- Fewer than half ever become administrators
Graduates of exemplary programs are more mission driven

Exemplary programs reached out to candidates whose backgrounds would allow them to become strong instructional leaders. They were:

- More likely to be diverse in terms of gender and race/ethnicity
- More likely to have strong experience with instructional leadership
- Typically younger
Principal mentoring: off to a good start

- Carefully selected and well-trained principal mentors
- Lasts for at least a year, ideally two or more
- Supported by state and local funding that ensures mentors receive high-quality training and appropriate stipends
- Be focused primarily on fostering effective instructional leaders
States can play a key role in providing training

“States have often been silent, or quiet partners”

– Linda Darling-Hammond
State policy levers to improve principal preparation

- Providing vision and standards for school leadership
- Improving leadership preparation through accreditation or review of training programs
- Providing on-the-job support – mentoring and coaching – to maximize success
- Building an infrastructure for ongoing professional development
Closing the achievement gap is a serious challenge

“Good leaders need and use the leverage that ambitious policy and aggressive advocacy provide for them – so don’t go fuzzy on them.”

– Kati Haycock, Education Trust, 2007
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