

CHALLENGE  
TO LEAD

SREB

LEADERSHIP  
PREPARATION  
INITIATIVE

## Schools Can't Wait:

*Accelerating the Redesign  
of University Principal  
Preparation Programs*

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board

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## ***Challenge to Lead Goals for Education***

1. All children are ready for the first grade.
2. Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
3. Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
4. All young adults have a high school diploma — or, if not, pass the GED tests.
5. All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for postsecondary education and a career.
6. Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
7. The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.
8. Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
9. Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal.
10. Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
11. The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
12. The state places a high priority on an education *system* of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.

The Southern Regional Education Board has established these Goals for Education, which challenge SREB states to lead the nation in educational progress. They are built on the groundbreaking education goals SREB adopted in 1988 and on more than a decade of efforts to promote actions and measure progress.

# Schools Can't Wait:

## *Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs*

*“Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance —  
and leadership begins with an effective school principal.”*

**SREB Challenge to Lead Goal**

Southern Regional Education Board

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This report was prepared by a team of SREB staff, including Betty Fry, director, Leadership Research and Publications; Kathy O’Neill, director, SREB Leadership Initiative; and Gene Bottoms, senior vice president.

The publication is supported by the Wallace Foundation, which seeks to support and share effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. Its three current objectives are to 1) strengthen education leadership to improve student achievement, 2) improve out-of-school learning opportunities and 3) expand participation in arts and culture. In pursuit of these goals, Wallace supports the development of knowledge and analysis from multiple sources and differing perspectives. The findings and recommendations of individual reports are solely those of the authors. For more information and research on these and other related topics, please visit Wallace’s Knowledge Center at [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org).

## A Message from the President of SREB

In an era of higher standards and greater accountability, it is critical that schools have leaders who are prepared to do everything necessary to improve teaching and learning. Done right, principal preparation programs can help states put a quality principal in every school who knows how to lead changes in school and classroom practices that result in higher student achievement.

### **But how do we “do it right?”**

State leaders have relied on universities to get the job done — with modest state guidance in the form of certification tests, accreditation and program approval, and more recently, school administrator standards. But, as a growing body of research makes clear, many universities *are not getting the job done* and are in no particular hurry to redesign their programs to ensure that aspiring principals are thoroughly prepared for their role in improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement.

A recent widely publicized study by Arthur Levine, President of Teachers College at Columbia University, found that “many of the university-based programs designed to prepare the next generation of educational leaders are engaged in a counterproductive ‘race to the bottom,’ in which they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watering down course work, and offering faster and less demanding degrees.” While many university programs say they are undergoing program redesign, Levine concluded that “education schools have for the most part continued to do business as usual ... too many have chosen to ignore not only their own shortcomings, but also the extraordinary changes in the nation and the world ...”<sup>1</sup>

Our own study of the progress of pacesetter universities in SREB states that are committed to redesigning their principal preparation programs led us to four conclusions:

- **Current state policies and strategies intended to promote redesign of principal preparation programs have produced episodic change in a few institutions but have fallen short in producing the deeper change that would ensure all candidates master the knowledge and skills needed to be effective school leaders today.**

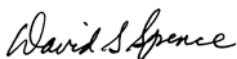
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<sup>1</sup> Levine, Arthur. *Educating School Leaders*. Washington, D.C.: The Education Schools Project, 2005.

- **There is a lack of urgency for refocusing the design, content, process and outcomes of principal preparation programs based on the needs of schools and student achievement and little will happen until there are committed leaders of change at every level — state, university and local school district.**
- **States and districts cannot depend on universities to change principal preparation programs on their own because the barriers to change within these organizations are too deeply entrenched.**
- **The issue is not whether principal preparation programs need to change, but how can states plan and carry out a redesign initiative that gets the right results?**

**The question before the nation is how can we leave no child behind?** Compelling research evidence points to high quality school leadership as a big part of the answer. Students and teachers are under enormous pressure to perform. The education climate has never been more conducive to change. Schools simply can't wait for principal preparation programs to find solutions to their design problems on their own. The commitment of governors and state legislators to make the preparation of quality school leaders a state priority is essential — as is united leadership from higher education and K–12 leaders at the state and local level.

States wishing to make speedy progress should consider using the services of an external agency to increase their internal capacity to plan and support a redesign initiative. Several states in the region have already reached out to SREB for assistance (Alabama, Louisiana and Tennessee) and these states are currently implementing redesign initiatives at all of their universities or are involved in a pilot group that will lead the others in redesign. SREB is prepared to play a supporting role by doing what states have long depended on the organization to do and what we do best — provide tools and analyses for advocacy, policy development and implementation; help states learn from one another; and serve as a consistent and reliable source of information on effective practices and the status of efforts to get quality school leaders.



Dave Spence  
President  
Southern Regional Education Board

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## The Case for Redesign

Given the urgency for increased student achievement, it would seem that redesigning principal preparation programs around leadership practices that have an impact on students' learning would be a high priority in every university. Yet, it is not.

Despite some movement in some areas, the overall pace of change has been too slow, the changes are not yet deep or fundamental, and the field has yet to find ways to overcome the basic institutional resistance to change at most, if not all, universities.

Those concerned about providing every school the leadership necessary to improve student performance need only pay attention to the findings of recent research reports on the quality of principal preparation programs to realize these programs are falling far short. In particular, two studies stand out as sources of evidence that principal preparation programs across the nation are in trouble.

*Arthur Levine, President of Teachers College at Columbia University, concluded from his extensive analysis of the quality of educational leadership programs that they are the weakest programs in the nation's education schools, lacking purpose, curricular coherence, adequate clinical instruction, appropriate faculty and high admission standards. Further, the programs have become little more than "graduate credit dispensers," a problem further exacerbated by states and school districts, fueling what has become more of a system for driving raises for teachers than a meaningful education experience.*

Levine, Arthur. *Educating School Leaders*. Washington, D.C.: The Education Schools Project, 2005.

*Researchers at the American Enterprise Institute studied the content of 31 principal preparation programs across the nation and concluded there is serious reason to doubt whether principals are mastering the skills requisite for success as 21st-century school leaders. Deficiencies they cited include the lack of attention to management and to topics like the use of data, research, technology, the hiring or termination of personnel, and using data to evaluate the performance of personnel in a systematic way. Almost 30 percent of total instruction focuses on technical law or finance problems; 11 percent addresses curriculum and pedagogy, and discussions of staffing focus more on traditional faculty oversight than on using new managerial tools to improve school results.*

Hess, Frederick M. and A. Kelly. *The Accidental Principal*. Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 2005.

SREB's study of principal preparation programs at 22 pacesetter universities indicates that the approaches states have used to promote redesign have produced only a moderate level of change in many of the most willing universities. The findings pinpoint that, while a few universities have excelled at redesign, the majority fall short of implementing the conditions necessary to create high quality programs centered on preparing principals who can lead improvement in student achievement.

### *Questions Addressed in the SREB Study of University Redesign*

- What progress have pacesetter universities made in establishing formal university/district partnerships for designing and implementing a leadership preparation program based on a shared vision of school leaders who have the knowledge and skills to improve schools and student achievement?
- What progress have pacesetter universities made in translating standards, research-based leadership practices and real-world problems into new course content, academic and practical assignments and other learning experiences that develop the leadership competencies that have the greatest impact on student achievement?
- What progress have pacesetter universities made in providing candidates field experiences throughout the program that engage them in authentic activities designed to develop and demonstrate the leadership competencies essential for solving school problems, improving curriculum and instructional practices and increasing student achievement?
- What progress have pacesetter universities made in designing and systematically implementing evaluative strategies that provide reliable evidence of quality program design, graduates' mastery of essential leadership competencies and the program's impact on schools and student achievement, including data on graduates' on-the-job performance and student achievement?

For example, the study revealed about one-third of the programs (seven) have made substantial progress in developing courses that concentrate on helping candidates master the explicit knowledge and skills they need to lead change in school curriculum and instructional practices. Yet, there is substantial evidence that one of the most important ways principals impact student achievement is by ensuring all students are engaged in a rigorous, standards-based curriculum supported by high-quality instruction.

The weaknesses in redesign efforts among the pacesetter universities included

- lack of collaboration between universities and school districts;
- failure to create a curriculum that develops the leadership skills necessary to increase student achievement;
- poor planning, supervision and evaluation of field experiences; and
- lack of rigorous evaluation strategies for continuously monitoring and measuring program quality and effectiveness.

Many states have relied upon the adoption of new standards or new examinations emphasizing the principal's role in instructional leadership to bring about a major overhaul of principal preparation, but these measures alone have not produced the expected program changes or the hoped-for new breed of principal. In fact, it is difficult to distinguish most of the programs of today from those of the preceding generation.

Instead of true program redesign, many leadership faculties have been more concerned about

- which existing courses can be used as evidence of meeting the standards;
- the rights of faculty to choose course content;
- the number of hours of internship (rather than the quality of activities and experiences);
- the potential loss of enrollment and decreases in revenue production due to more stringent selection and admission procedures; and
- other issues having little bearing on what aspiring principals need to learn about improving schools and student performance.

Many universities' redesign efforts are focused on the wrong things and the pace of change is so slow that it is doubtful that more than a handful will produce a new program that addresses the needs of schools. In too many universities, the low level of importance the president assigns to preparing effective school leaders, the absence of strong leadership for change within the educational leadership department, low funding, traditional university norms for getting work done (such as daunting internal program and course development and approval processes), and faculty resistance to change have drastically retarded or derailed the redesign.

The reluctance to change principal preparation programs cannot be blamed on a lack of clarity about the important role principals play in the success of schools and the achievement of students or a lack of knowledge of what principals need to know and be able to do to succeed on the job. We have a respectable knowledge base about how school leaders influence student learning, as put forth by Leithwood, et al, in their definitive report, "How Leadership Influences Student Learning".<sup>2</sup> Already, there is a common core of leadership practices that any successful school leader can depend on to achieve the core functions of the educational organization — teaching and learning — and several well-disseminated studies define these practices.<sup>3</sup>

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"How Leadership Influences Student Learning".*

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<sup>2</sup> Leithwood, Kenneth, K. Seashore Louis, S. Anderson, and K. Wahlstrom. *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement, University of Minnesota, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at The University of Ontario, and The Wallace Foundation, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> See the following: Bottoms, Gene and K. O'Neill. *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action*. SREB, Atlanta, Ga., 2001.  
Waters, Tim, R.J. Marzano and B. McNulty. *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement*. Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003.

## It is Time to Act

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The findings from SREB's study of redesign in principal preparation programs furnish dramatic evidence of a major structural weakness in the architecture of school reform — quality preparation for aspiring school principals that ensures they master the essential competencies for leading school improvement and having a positive impact on student achievement. These findings are an urgent mayday call for key state, university and district leaders to get serious about their responsibility to provide higher-quality programs that prepare more capable school principals. Without expert leadership, *schools simply will not change.*

- It is time for ***policy-makers*** to take the bold steps that will motivate universities to work with local districts to select the right people for leadership preparation and develop, in partnership, new program designs based on well-defined conditions and curriculum frameworks that will produce a new generation of principals.
- It is time for ***state agencies*** to find new ways to support universities and districts in the design and implementation of new and more powerful preparation programs and to implement more effective program approval processes.
- It is time for ***university presidents*** to recognize that a continuing supply of high-performing principals is critical to the economic growth of their region and to be evaluated and held accountable for providing quality preparation programs, including sufficient funding, staffing and other institutional support necessary to meet high standards.
- It is time for ***departments of educational leadership*** to awaken from their complacency, reject the status quo and respond to appeals and criticisms from the field by identifying new content that addresses what principals need to know in order to do their jobs and by devising instructional processes that ensure principals master the essential knowledge and skills.

- It is time for *local school districts* to become proactive in accepting co-ownership of principal preparation, identify what principals need to know and be able to do on the job and take the necessary steps to ensure universities provide programs that address their needs for improved schools and student achievement.
- It is time for *local school boards* to provide the working conditions and resources that will make it possible for a pool of aspiring principals handpicked by the board as the most promising candidates to complete high-quality preparation programs, including substantial internships supported by exemplary mentor principals.

## States Can't Wait, Either

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The state is in the driver's seat when it comes to the design and quality of principal preparation and it appears that in many states the ignition key is still in the off position. Leaders in universities know this, and they are waiting and willing to comply when their states raise the bar. During interviews with SREB staff, several university representatives stated that their faculties would get serious about changing the program when the state stopped certifying their graduates and districts stopped hiring them. In other instances, they told interviewers substantial changes in programs would be made only when the state required it.

States and school districts cannot afford to be complacent about the current status of principal preparation. Better-prepared school leaders are essential to achieving state goals for higher student achievement and economic progress. This is an ambitious agenda requiring a different kind of leadership from states. The commitment of governors and state legislators is essential — as is united leadership from higher education and K–12 leaders at the state and local level.

States can direct program change and can provide the support needed by universities and local districts to plan and implement new principal preparation programs. States can require universities to form real partnerships with districts to design new programs and award the stamp of approval only when universities meet conditions of quality for preparing principals for the real work of improving schools. States can also ask local school districts to take on the role and responsibilities of equal partners in selecting and preparing their next generation of principals.

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Clearly, states need help with redesigning their school leadership systems to ensure an adequate supply of high-quality principals who know how to lead implementation of school and classroom practices that result in increased student achievement. But simply providing states more evidence of the failings of current programs alone will not help them do what is necessary to improve school leader preparation.

SREB prepared *Schools Can't Wait: Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs* to highlight the program redesign process and the core conditions that must be addressed; to recommend a course of action that states can follow to plan and implement successful redesign initiatives; and to provide tools that can help them work toward the ideal.

Grounded in a study that examined the progress of a select group of universities in the SREB region, which are considered pacesetters in program redesign, this report:

- recommends a state action plan for beginning or accelerating leadership redesign initiatives;
- describes the study design and methodology and summarizes key findings about progress in program redesign;
- identifies prominent barriers to redesign that state, university and district leaders must resolve in order to build quality principal preparation programs;
- provides snapshots of effective redesign practices; and
- gives guidance about using this report to make progress on redesigning principal preparation programs.



## Meeting the Urgent Need for New Educational Leadership Systems: An Action Plan for States

Waiting for all universities to take the initiative to implement a redesign of principal preparation programs will take far longer than states — and schools — can afford to wait. States can create new educational leadership systems that guarantee a steady supply of quality school leaders if they adopt a basic set of building blocks as the foundation for their initiatives. Alabama, Louisiana and Tennessee are already using these building blocks for redesign — developed during five years of intensive work with states, universities and local school districts — and each state is making notable progress in changing their systems.

The recommended building blocks include the following:

- Although adopting standards alone will not ensure significant change in preparation programs, without rigorous, well-defined standards that are stringently implemented across the school leadership system, attempts at redesign often produce no real change and sometimes weaken a state's capacity to put a quality principal in every school.
- **Begin with commitment from high-level state leaders.** When state leaders make school leadership a priority and create an agenda for change with specific goals and timelines, there is a sense of urgency surrounding the redesign initiative. A team of state leaders — including the governor, key legislators with a strong interest in education and school leadership, the chief state school officer, the chancellor or president of the higher education system, and a prominent business leader committed to bettering the state's education system — should agree on a goal to create a system of school leadership development that results in high-performing schools and increased student achievement.

One way to focus a team of top state leaders on redesigning school leadership is to make use of their connections to and relationships with credible, trusted and stable external entities. These entities frequently sponsor and invite state leaders to participate in events that expose and sensitize them to current issues that warrant attention. For example, SREB has a well-established track record of dependability and trustworthiness for informing and influencing leaders in the region through annual events such as the Forum on School Leadership, SREB Board Meeting, SREB Legislative Work Conference and through preparing and disseminating useful publications to legislators and other state leaders.

Once consensus has been reached on an overarching goal for school leadership, the state leadership group should authorize, through **legislative resolution or executive order**, a redesign commission that will recommend policies and provide oversight for the development, implementation and evaluation of a statewide redesign program. The authorizing legislation or executive order should specify the purpose and intent of the leadership system redesign and should delineate responsibility for selecting and organizing the commission, naming the particular entities to be represented and describing how to designate the chairperson.

- **Establish a three-year commission for school leadership redesign.** Charge the commission with recommending policy, program and practice changes that will create a school leadership system focused on a vision of school leaders as instructional leaders capable of changing school and classroom practices to increase student achievement. Give the commission responsibility for overseeing implementation of the new system when adopted. Ask the commission to prepare and present a report that includes the recommendations for policy changes and their implementation to the legislature, governor, state board of education, or other appropriate authorizing body at a time specified in the legislative resolution or executive order.

This commission brings an array of representatives with a vested interest in school leadership to work as a team on recommendations to achieve the state's goal. The role of the authorizing body is to review, endorse and turn the commission's recommendations into legislation or other appropriate forms of statewide mandates.

Membership on the redesign commission should include

- lead staff from key state education agencies such as the state department of education, the state board of education, the office of higher education, the higher education governing board and the professional standards commission/board;
- a dean of education or educational leadership department chair who is progressive and recognized as a leader by peers;
- district school superintendents from a small and a large district;
- influential legislators from both chambers of the legislature;
- representatives from the professional associations for school and district leaders; and
- a prominent leader from the business community.

In year one, the commission should hold hearings, collect information through task forces, recommend policy changes and formulate a plan for redesigning the components of the school leadership system in accordance with the new policies.

In years two and three, the commission should oversee the implementation of the new policies by advising and reviewing the work of state agencies as they translate these into rules, frameworks, procedures and other protocols to guide the redesign of the leadership system and ensure it is aligned with the state policies and goal.

Actions in subsequent years might involve making necessary funding requests to the legislature, monitoring implementation, and studying and reporting on the results produced by the new system.

- **Appoint task forces.** Task forces appointed by the commission can assist with the development of priority issues and sound recommendations by reviewing research, identifying best practices, gathering information on current practices and drafting recommendations for consideration by the commission.

Membership on the commission-appointed task forces should include the following:

- current principals and assistant principals;
- teachers;
- college of education deans and faculty members;
- district superintendents;
- staff from key state agencies — department of education, state board of education, office of higher education and professional standards commission or board;
- leaders of professional organizations, including but not limited to the state associations for school administrators, school boards, and teachers;
- business community representatives; and
- legislators with a strong interest in educational leadership.

- **Appoint a respected individual within a state agency as the leader of redesign implementation and provide the necessary resources.**

The lead staff person reports to the redesign commission and coordinates the implementation of redesign efforts across various state agencies to ensure that the effort stays on track and aligned with the intent of the policies. The leader of implementation convenes meetings of agency heads to coordinate efforts, assess progress and help solve problems. The position entails full-time assignment and must carry with it the authority, independence and resources necessary to accomplish the work in a timely and effective manner.

During the early stages of the redesign initiative, other key state agency staff can be selected and assigned to assist the commission, facilitate task forces and carry out other work assigned to their respective agencies. Engaging staff early in the redesign initiative builds commitment and capacity for quality implementation.

- **Seek assistance from external agencies.** It may be expedient for the commission to secure the assistance of an external agency specializing in policy, research, training and the development of leadership for education. An external agency can provide cutting-edge information, training and expert technical assistance that can make the work of the commission, task forces and state agency staff less burdensome.
- **Keep all constituencies informed about the redesign initiative.** States can ensure commitment to a redesign initiative and support for its implementation by using effective communication strategies. The idea is to inform constituents about the state goal, new leadership standards, the commission and task force proceedings and recommendations, and the new policies and procedures that are to be implemented. These strategies might include a Web site where all proceedings and products are posted.
- **Provide clear and explicit rules, redesign conditions, curriculum frameworks and guidelines for change.** State agencies responsible for implementing the new policies on school leadership will likely include the professional standards commission or the certification office within a department of education, the office responsible for program approval and the higher education office or agency. The agencies must translate the policies into rules, procedures and guidelines that incorporate new criteria and define new ways for accomplishing such things as a) approving programs for principal preparation, induction and professional development; b) administering licensure examinations and applying other rules and requirements for licensure; c) documenting the demonstration of competencies during induction; and d) developing and implementing performance evaluations that are required for initial and advanced levels of licensure.

State agencies should also prepare protocols giving clear direction to other entities that are to be held accountable for redesign. For example, protocols designed to guide the collaborative redesign efforts of universities and their district partners should address the **key redesign conditions and indicators** for the new programs. The conditions and indicators would make clear the state's expectations regarding program content, instructional methodologies, organizational structures, staffing, resource allocation and evaluation of program quality and outcomes.

States can provide a **curriculum framework** to provide guidance to joint university/district design teams on the selection of priority leadership concepts, procedures and skills that principal preparation programs are to address. The framework should be detailed and ensure coherent, research-based programs that address all state standards and enable participants to master the standards and competencies having the greatest impact on student learning. (See the SREB Critical Success Factors displayed on the inside back cover of this report for a recommended set of school leader behaviors and practices related to student achievement.)

The implementation rules, redesign conditions, curriculum frameworks and other interpretive guidelines can be developed based on what is most feasible in particular states. For example, in some states these guiding protocols might be developed by the redesign commission or its designated task forces and incorporated into state board rules for implementation. In other states, the agencies responsible for implementing the various leadership system components — selection and preparation, licensure, induction, professional development, working conditions, etc. — might be responsible for preparing the guidelines in collaboration with representatives from each task force or other selected groups.

- **Develop and implement a support system for universities and districts that are working together to redesign leadership programs.** Universities need a support system to help overcome the deep-rooted barriers to change existing in traditional higher education organizations. A good support system incorporates the following components:
  - strategies to ensure university presidents, provosts and deans of education give high priority to principal preparation programs and support their leadership department's redesign efforts with additional funding, staffing and other resources and incentives for change;
  - well-planned workshops to orient teams comprised of university administrators, deans, leadership department faculties and district superintendents to the redesign initiative;
  - training on course development and exemplary curriculum materials that provide explicit examples of how the state's standards, redesign conditions and curriculum frameworks can be translated into new courses and professional development;
  - planned opportunities for design teams representing all universities to discuss issues, share new information and benchmark progress on redesign;
  - access to on-site consultation and assistance from external experts who are not responsible for the evaluation and approval of leadership programs;
  - additional resources to support release time for faculty teamwork, new faculty positions, curriculum materials, quality internships and travel expenses for network meetings with other university design teams; and
  - cross-institutional study teams comprised of state agency staff, university faculties, school and district practitioners and business community representatives to develop viable solutions to high-priority redesign issues.

- **Develop and implement an external curriculum audit process.**

States need to implement a process for conducting a mid-point inspection to evaluate the changes being made in leadership preparation and development programs. It is important that universities and districts receive explicit feedback on the strengths and weaknesses revealed by the audits so they know what improvements are needed.

A well-designed curriculum audit can provide feedback to university leadership departments and their district partners on the degree to which program content (including assigned readings and textbooks), assignments given to students, assessments of their learning and performance and field experiences actually incorporate the adopted standards, conditions for redesign and curriculum frameworks into their design. States can develop specific criteria for assessing these program components in detail and then select and train a panel of external auditors with expertise in principal preparation to consistently apply these to every program.

- **Develop guidelines to assist universities and districts to co-develop school leadership accountability processes.** Universities and school districts own a large share of the responsibility and accountability for creating effective systems of school leader selection, preparation, induction, professional development and supportive working conditions. Hence, it is essential that these partners develop and use a joint accountability process that includes valid and reliable measures of program effectiveness, graduates' on-the-job performance and school and student achievement results.

States can develop guidelines and provide technical assistance and additional resources to universities and districts that volunteer to create a joint school leadership accountability process. The effective models developed by a few selected sites can be shared with other universities and districts.



## Measuring Progress at Pacesetter Universities: SREB Study Design and Findings

To gather information about the redesign of principal preparation programs that would serve as a foundation for providing guidance to states, SREB studied progress at 22 universities exhibiting a strong commitment to redesign. Criteria for selecting the program sample were based on the rationale that the most useful information about redesign would likely be found at universities engaged in a serious effort to create new programs addressing current requirements of the principal's job. The sample included 11 universities that were participating in the SREB University Leadership Development Network; seven universities that applied for membership in the SREB network but were not selected to participate; and four universities widely reputed to exhibit substantial progress in redesigning their programs.<sup>4</sup> The length of time that the various universities had been engaged in a program redesign effort was not a major consideration in their selection, since the objective was to develop a picture of the current status of fundamental changes in four specific areas rather than the outcomes of a university's total efforts. All of the universities had been involved in the redesign process for at least two years, with some universities' efforts spanning up to 10 years.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A, Research Sample: 22 Pacesetter Universities in SREB States, for a list of universities included in the study.

<sup>5</sup> The results of the study revealed that some universities engaged in redesign for two years had made the same level of progress on the core conditions as those engaged in redesign for 10 years.

The study sought answers to questions about four core conditions of principal preparation, which our prior redesign research identified as essential to creating programs that center on preparing principals who can improve schools and student achievement:<sup>6</sup>

- Formal university/district partnerships are established for designing and implementing a leadership preparation program that is based on a shared vision of school leaders who have the essential knowledge and skills to improve schools and student achievement;
- Standards, research-based leadership practices and real-world problems are translated into new course content, academic and practical assignments, and other learning experiences that develop the leadership competencies that will have the greatest impact on student achievement, while addressing all essential school leadership functions;
- Field experiences throughout the program engage candidates in authentic activities designed to develop and demonstrate leadership competencies essential for solving school problems, improving curriculum and instructional practices and increasing student achievement. Faculty, mentor principals and district staff provide the guidance and support necessary for candidates to succeed; and
- Evaluative strategies are designed and systematically implemented to provide reliable evidence of quality program design, graduates' mastery of essential leadership competencies and the program's impact on schools, including data on graduates' on-the-job performance and student achievement.

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<sup>6</sup> The four core conditions represent a synthesis of knowledge gleaned by SREB from five years of research and development work in the field, including reviews of the literature on school improvement and leadership preparation; focus groups with exemplary principals; interviews with expert panels; benchmark studies of progress in redesign in SREB states; and lessons learned from supporting redesign efforts in 11 universities participating in the SREB University Leadership Development Network (see Appendix B, SREB University Leadership Development Network).

The four core conditions were translated into a set of guiding questions for the study:

- What progress have pacesetter universities made in establishing formal university/district partnerships for designing and implementing a leadership preparation program based on a shared vision of school leaders who have the knowledge and skills to improve schools and student achievement?
- What progress have pacesetter universities made in translating standards, research-based leadership practices and real-world problems into new course content, academic and practical assignments and other learning experiences that develop the leadership competencies that have the greatest impact on student achievement?
- What progress have pacesetter universities made in providing candidates field experiences throughout the program that engage them in authentic activities designed to develop and demonstrate the leadership competencies essential for solving school problems, improving curriculum and instructional practices and increasing student achievement?
- What progress have pacesetter universities made in designing and systematically implementing evaluative strategies that provide reliable evidence of quality program design, graduates' mastery of essential leadership competencies and the program's impact on schools, including data on graduates' on-the-job performance and student achievement?

To answer these questions quality indicators describing specific processes, products or outcomes linked to each condition were developed to allow more discrete measures of progress.<sup>7</sup> The core conditions and related indicators were then used to prepare data collection protocols.

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<sup>7</sup> The indicators represent a synthesis of information gleaned from current literature and research on leadership preparation and lessons SREB learned from observing and working with the 11 institutions participating in the SREB University Leadership Development Network.

## Core Conditions and Indicators for the Redesign of Leadership Preparation

### *Condition 1. University/district partnerships for principal preparation*

**Definition:** Formal university/district partnerships are established for designing and implementing a leadership preparation program that is based on a shared vision of school leaders who have the essential knowledge and skills to improve schools and student achievement.

#### **Indicator 1.1**

The partnership is formal, definitive and institutionalized.

- There is a written agreement signed by the university president and district superintendent defining how the entities will work as partners in the preparation of school principals.
- The agreement defines how the university/district partners will a) create a shared vision and program design that meets the needs of the district; b) develop criteria and a process for recruiting, selecting and supporting the most promising candidates; and c) conduct high-quality field experiences.
- Implementation of the partnership is a priority in both organizations, as reflected in their missions, program plans, staff assignments and budgets.

**Indicator 1.2**

Candidate screening and selection is a joint process.

- The university and district have jointly established and implemented criteria and processes for screening and selecting promising candidates for admission to the preparation program.
- The selection criteria emphasize expertise in curriculum and instruction, a record of raising student achievement and prior leadership experiences.
- Implementation of the screening and selection system is continually monitored, evaluated and improved.

**Indicator 1.3**

The program is customized to meet district needs.

- The university and district partners work together to assess local needs for improved student learning outcomes and to incorporate district and school data, state and local standards, adopted curriculum frameworks, current change initiatives and school reform models, and assessment and accountability processes into program goals, course content and field experiences.

**Indicator 1.4**

Resources and conditions support candidates' success.

- The university and district allocate and pool resources to provide candidates the support and conditions necessary to successfully complete the leadership preparation program, including such things as release time for course work and field experiences, tuition assistance, learning materials and expert mentoring and coaching as needed to master essential competencies.

***Condition 2. Emphasis on knowledge and skills for improving schools and raising student achievement***

**Definition:** Standards, research-based leadership practices and real-world problems are translated into new course content, academic and practical assignments, and other learning experiences that develop the leadership competencies that will have the greatest impact on student achievement, while addressing all essential school leadership functions.

**Indicator 2.1**

There is a design team and a plan for course redesign.

- A leadership program design team, including key faculty and practitioners, has developed and is implementing a plan for designing new courses aligned with the university/district shared vision, program goals and adopted standards.
- All leadership department faculty are informed about and involved in the redesign of courses.

**Indicator 2.2**

The curriculum is collaboratively developed, mapped and monitored.

- A collaborative curriculum development process involving university faculty and practitioners is used to identify essential content for building in-depth knowledge and mastery of research-based leadership practices, real-world problems and critical performances expected of principals.
- Formal mapping of the essential content across courses ensures a coherent, consistent curriculum.
- Regular monitoring keeps the department focused on delivery of the priority curriculum and provides information for revisions as needed.

**Indicator 2.3**

The program design places greatest emphasis on the principal's role in improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement.

- The program concentrates on the principal's responsibilities for improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement, and this concentration constitutes at least one-third of the program's curriculum.

**Indicator 2.4**

Instruction and assignments are designed to ensure mastery of competencies for improving student achievement.

- The leadership faculty engage in collaborative review and development of instructional methodologies and academic and practical assignments to ensure these elements align with the priority content, address real school problems and are sufficiently rigorous and sequenced to develop participants' mastery of the leadership knowledge and skills most closely linked to improved student achievement.

**Indicator 2.5**

Participants engage in solving real-world problems.

- School-based assignments and projects incorporated throughout the program require authentic application of knowledge, skills and processes gained in the program to identify and solve real problems contributing to the achievement gap.

### ***Condition 3. Well-planned and supported field experiences***

**Definition:** Field experiences throughout the program engage candidates in authentic activities designed to develop and demonstrate leadership competencies essential for solving school problems, improving curriculum and instructional practices and increasing student achievement. Faculty, mentor principals and district staff provide the guidance and support necessary for candidates to succeed.

#### **Indicator 3.1**

Field experiences are integrated with course work.

- Field experiences provide opportunities for application and practice of concepts, skills and procedures as they are addressed in academic course work.

#### **Indicator 3.2**

Field experiences are purposefully designed to provide application, practice and reflection on concepts, skills and procedures essential for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement.

- Field experiences are explicitly designed and implemented to provide candidates substantial opportunities for application, practice and reflection on the key leadership concepts, skills and procedures that improve schools and ensure the academic success of students.
- All candidates complete at least one major academic improvement or action research project in a school, including identifying needs, selecting and implementing interventions for closing the achievement gap and measuring the results.



**Indicator 3.3**

Field experiences provide a continuum of practice supporting mastery of competencies for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement.

- Field experiences provide a continuum of observing, participating in and leading teachers in activities aimed at improving school and classroom practices in ways that increase student achievement.

**Indicator 3.4**

Candidates receive feedback and coaching on performance of essential competencies during field experiences.

- University-based faculty or other supervisors have frequent, direct involvement with candidates and their mentor principals during planning and implementation of field experiences and provide timely feedback and coaching to ensure candidates master the essential competencies.
- Faculty or other supervisors assigned to plan and supervise candidates' field experiences are provided time and other resources necessary to effectively fulfill these responsibilities.
- Faculty and other supervisors are held accountable for providing high-quality field experiences.

**Indicator 3.5**

Mentor principals plan and provide opportunities for authentic practice and mastery of essential competencies.

- Mentor principals are selected and prepared to model and plan opportunities for aspiring principals to practice and master the essential competencies for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement.
- Mentor principals are jointly accountable with university faculty or other supervisors for providing aspiring principals quality opportunities to master the essential competencies.

***Condition 4. Rigorous evaluation of participants' mastery of essential competencies and program quality and effectiveness***

**Definition:** Evaluative strategies are designed and systematically implemented to provide reliable evidence of quality program design, graduates' mastery of essential leadership competencies and the program's impact on schools and student achievement, including data on graduates' on-the-job performance and student achievement.

**Indicator 4.1**

A regular, formal monitoring process ensures the program meets rigorous quality standards and is aligned with district needs and goals.

- University and district staffs jointly monitor the program's performance, using data on all aspects of the program, including content, instructional processes, delivery, structure, staffing, retention and graduation rates and the degree to which the program is meeting district goals and needs.
- Results of the monitoring process are used to make refinements to the program's design and delivery that ensure quality standards are met.

**Indicator 4.2**

Candidates are assessed on demonstrated mastery of essential competencies and the data is used to provide feedback for improvement and determine their status in the program.

- Rigorous assessments based on clearly defined performance criteria are used to measure each candidate's progress in mastering the essential competencies for improving schools and increasing student achievement.
- A team of university faculty and district staff uses results from the assessments to provide candidates feedback on how they need to improve and to track their progress in meeting performance criteria.

**Indicator 4.3**

Decisions about candidates' successful completion of the program are based on clearly defined exit criteria and reliable measures of performance.

- University and district staffs jointly determine which participants have successfully completed the program based on evidence that established performance standards and exit criteria are met.
- Reliable tools and procedures are used to collect and analyze the evidence that standards and performance criteria are met.

**Indicator 4.4**

Evaluation of program effectiveness includes measures of on-the-job performance and results.

- Appropriate measures of program graduates' on-the-job performance as instructional leaders and the resulting impact on school and classroom practices and student achievement are used by university and district staffs to determine the program's effectiveness in preparing school leaders.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection methods included a preliminary review of selected course syllabi and intensive interviews with leadership program department heads. Before interviews were scheduled, course materials from selected universities were reviewed to determine whether course offerings placed an emphasis on curriculum and instruction and whether field experiences were integrated throughout the leadership programs. In general, the documents were too generic and course titles, catalogs and syllabi were not sufficiently descriptive to give a clear indication of where each university stood in relation to the SREB core conditions and indicators of redesign.

Interview questions were developed to probe for evidence of progress on the core conditions, gather snapshots of the redesign process and identify factors that support and hinder redesign. A panel of selected university faculty from universities not included in the study reviewed the interview questions to establish clarity and practicality prior to their use. Interviews with department heads at the 22 universities included in the study occurred during the fall and winter of 2003 and were taped and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

A more detailed description of the data analysis process is provided in Appendix C, Analysis of Interview Data, and in Appendix D, Scoring Guide for Core Conditions and Indicators of Program Redesign.

### *Summary of Findings on Program Redesign at 22 Pacesetter Universities*

Clearly, educational leadership departments in universities are insulated from the impact of states' efforts to improve schools and student achievement. Many universities included in this study did not show meaningful change and had no identifiable sense of urgency to change.

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*Many universities included in this study did not show meaningful change and had no identifiable sense of urgency to change.*

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**Preparing principals who know how to lead schools in ways that meet district expectations and needs is not a priority of many universities.** District leaders share the blame. They have not been proactive enough to act as a partner in their preparation. About one-third of the programs (seven out of 22) have made *substantial progress* in developing a working relationship with local school districts. Their collaborations center on selecting promising candidates and on designing and delivering a leadership program based on a shared vision of school leaders who have the essential knowledge and skills to improve schools and increase student achievement.

**Courses in the principal preparation curriculum have not been substantially redesigned to emphasize concepts and procedures principals must know and use to increase student achievement and to meet the demands of new accountability systems.** About one-third of the programs (seven out of 22) showed *substantial progress* in changing the content of courses, creating new assignments related to solving problems of student achievement and using more effective instructional methodologies to help candidates master explicit knowledge and skills for improving student learning.

**Field experiences are not planned, supported and evaluated with a focus on developing explicit knowledge and skills needed on the job.** Less than one-fifth of the universities showed *substantial progress* in providing aspiring principals well-planned and well-supervised field experiences that assure opportunities for application and for practice of the explicit knowledge and skills of improving curriculum, instruction and student learning. The methods used to measure mastery of essential competencies during field experiences lack even a moderate degree of rigor and consequently fail to serve their primary purpose of providing meaningful, timely feedback to candidates on how they need to improve.

**Evaluation strategies ensuring that the program meets quality standards and produces graduates who demonstrate high performance on the job are weak, if not absent altogether.** Only one university showed *some progress* and 21 others showed *no progress* in redesigning evaluation strategies to a) measure candidates' progress in mastering the essential competencies; b) monitor and evaluate the quality of program components; and c) determine the preparation program's ultimate effectiveness in producing school leaders whose job performance has a positive impact on school and student performance.

**Table 1**  
**22 Universities' Progress on Core Conditions of Redesign**

<b>Core Conditions of Redesign</b>	<b>Substantial Progress</b>	<b>Some Progress</b>	<b>No Progress</b>
<b>Condition 1.</b> University/district partnerships for principal preparation.	7	11	4
<b>Condition 2.</b> Emphasis on knowledge and skills for improving schools and raising student achievement.	7	11	4
<b>Condition 3.</b> Well-planned and supported field experiences.	4	14	4
<b>Condition 4.</b> Rigorous evaluation of participants' mastery of essential competencies and program quality and effectiveness.	0	1	21

**Definition of progress levels:**

- **No progress:** No action has been taken on any indicators related to this core condition of redesign.
- **Some progress:** Action has been taken on one or more indicators related to this core condition of redesign, but there are major weaknesses in meeting the indicators.
- **Substantial progress:** Action has been taken on all indicators related to this core condition of redesign, and weaknesses in meeting specific indicators are minor.

To test the extent to which our ratings of progress at pacesetter universities represented perceptions of university progress overall, teams of key state leaders attending an SREB forum on school leadership<sup>8</sup> were asked to use an SREB scoring guide and determine an aggregate progress rating for all universities offering principal preparation programs in their respective states. Overall, the pacesetter universities were judged to be making more progress redesigning their programs than universities in general, although even among the pacesetter universities progress is uneven.

On core conditions one, two and three, the percentage of states giving their universities an aggregate rating of *no progress* were much higher than the percentage of pacesetter universities rated at the *no progress* level by SREB staff.

- On **university/district partnerships for principal preparation** (core condition one), 47 percent of the states rated their universities at the *no progress* level, compared with 18 percent of pacesetter universities; 53 percent of the states rated their universities at the *some progress* level, compared with 50 percent of pacesetter universities; and no states rated their universities at the *substantial progress* level, compared with 33 percent of pacesetter universities.
- On **emphasis on knowledge and skills for improving schools and raising student achievement** (core condition two), 33 percent of the states rated their universities at the *no progress* level, compared with 18 percent of pacesetter universities; 33 percent of the states rated their universities at the *some progress* level, compared with 50 percent of pacesetter universities; and 33 percent of the states rated their universities at the *substantial progress* level, the same percentage as pacesetter universities.

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<sup>8</sup> The Southern Regional Education Board Forum: Preparing and Supporting a New Generation of School Leaders, May 2005, Atlanta, Georgia. Participants included state legislators; representatives from the governors' office, the chief state school officer's staff, the office of higher education and the professional standards commission; university administrators and faculty; and school district administrators.

- On **well-planned and supported field experiences** (core condition three), 40 percent of the states rated their universities at the *no progress* level, compared to 18 percent of the pacesetter universities receiving this rating; 40 percent of the states rated their universities at the *some progress* level, compared with 64 percent of the pacesetter universities; and 20 percent of the states rated their universities at the *substantial progress* level, compared with 18 percent of the pacesetter universities receiving this rating.
- On **rigorous evaluation of participants' mastery of essential competencies and program quality effectiveness** (core condition four), all states rated their universities at the *no progress* level, compared with 21 out of 22 pacesetter universities receiving this rating.



## Why Universities Have Difficulty Making Progress on Redesign

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Why do these glaring weaknesses and disconnects from the needs of districts and schools continue to exist in principal preparation programs? Our research revealed many department heads feel trapped by the traditions and mandates of the current system and its inattention to quality. Universities have little competition in the principal certification marketplace and almost no accountability for the quality of their graduates. As a result, they are inclined to sustain high enrollments, producing an oversupply of candidates who enroll only to earn a master's degree leading to higher pay and who have no desire to become a school principal.

There is a general attitude among department leaders that their job is maintaining the status quo — keeping enrollments at peak levels and ensuring a flow of institutional income that can be used to support other programs. There is little incentive to invest this income in their program's redesign. In such a seller's market, real change is unlikely to occur — and will only come, in most instances, when states revamp their policies and program approval mandates and no longer automatically certify graduates of these programs as school leaders.

Department leaders who voiced a strong desire to change their programs identified several common barriers to progress, including

- insufficient resources;
- lack of administrative priority and support;
- departmental resistance;
- institutional hurdles; and
- state and district policies that, in effect, turn principal preparation programs into a system for raising teachers' pay.

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*There is a general attitude among department leaders that their job is maintaining the status quo — keeping enrollments at peak levels and ensuring a flow of institutional income that can be used to support other programs.*

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### ***Problem: Insufficient Resources***

Too few resources for program redesign is the most prevalent barrier to changing leadership preparation programs. This barrier exists despite the fact educational leadership programs are among the most lucrative and low-cost programs offered by universities. **How can this be?** In many cases, universities use a significant portion of these tuition dollars to enhance other programs that the university administration gives higher priority. Without external pressure to develop and implement higher quality principal preparation programs, the money is simply spent elsewhere.

However, the lack of adequate resource allocations from the university administration or the state does not stop *all* universities from making progress. The seven institutions in the SREB study most often rated as making *substantial progress* on a number of indicators depended on external networks or initiatives to support their redesign. Four of the institutions were members of the SREB University Leadership Development Network and the other three had involvement and ties to other networks or reform initiatives.

Department leaders reported that being part of a network provided a) encouragement and support for their redesign; b) opportunities to learn from others at redesign-focused meetings, conferences, study groups and teleconferences; and c) opportunities to reflect on the changes needed in their programs, to develop new ideas and to make a case for new faculty or changes in courses.

Universities making progress also take advantage of other kinds of external resources. For example, members of the SREB University Leadership Development Network took advantage of the opportunity to have faculty trained and to use a series of SREB-developed leadership curriculum modules to jump-start their course redesign efforts.

Universities that change preparation programs also develop winning proposals that bring in grants from state and federal sources and nonprofit foundations to support their redesign efforts. For example, one of the universities rated as making *substantial progress* on providing well-planned and supported field experiences used funding from a state grant to provide year-long internships for all candidates.

While a lack of resources does not curtail redesign in some programs, even a plethora of resources may not bring about progress in others. One institution with a substantial financial endowment and strong support from the provost to initiate reforms had very little change in their program. In this case, the problem is not the lack of resources but the unwillingness or inability of the program's administrator and faculty to engage in a change effort. Resources are necessary for redesign, but without the presence of a resident change catalyst to provide leadership and vision, money won't make the difference.

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*Resources are necessary for redesign, but without the presence of a resident change catalyst to provide leadership and vision, money won't make the difference.*

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### ***Problem: Lack of Administrative Priority and Support***

In some universities, presidents and deans do not consider preparation of school leaders a front-burner issue. **Unfortunately, these leaders fail to recognize that the quality of students they enroll in higher education from local school districts is directly related to the quality of school leaders the university is producing.** The involvement of presidents, provosts and deans is essential to putting into place the conditions that support redesign — new institutional policies regarding course design and approval processes, changes in performance evaluation and reward systems and financial investments in redesign such as additional faculty appointments, professional development and time for the faculty to collaboratively plan and develop the components of the new program.

### ***Problem: Departmental Resistance***

Some institutions reported major departmental resistance to redesigning principal preparation programs. Often the resistance stems from current faculty who lack the expertise to develop and teach new courses emphasizing the school leader's role in working with teachers to implement research-based school and classroom practices that will close the achievement gap. Faculty who have spent years teaching traditional courses are challenged — even intimidated — by new content and by the need to work with candidates and local school systems to provide authentic problem-solving experiences.

Good models of the new leadership curriculum can help resistant faculty members gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the preparation needs of today's principals. Until recently, such models have not been available. Organizations such as SREB, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Council for Education and the Economy (NCEE) and others have produced modules, courses or other materials that point the way.

Many faculties are reluctant to leave the old program behind and invest themselves in creating a new model *when the state has not firmly refocused its policies in ways that prevent the status-quo programs from continuing*. In addition, leadership departments are uneasy about the potential for successfully marketing to districts a dramatically new program design when the state has not provided the political coverage that universities and districts rely on when changes are made in preparation and licensure.

Our critical need to concentrate principal preparation on curriculum, instruction and student achievement loses much of its urgency when university faculties find themselves bogged down translating several competing sets of standards and accreditation requirements into a cohesive curriculum design. Too often, faculties squander most of their energy on building a standards matrix and leave undone the work of developing new courses that would prepare aspiring principals to solve the real-world problems they will face. This problem is compounded when the standards and accreditation requirements fail to give primary emphasis to the principal's role in ensuring teaching quality and student performance.

Even when leadership departments *do* engage in an earnest redesign effort focused on what principals must know and do to succeed, they frequently feel compelled to put this work aside for a year or more while they jump through the hoops of state program approval or national accreditation. Typically, this involves a tedious process of documenting the elements of the very program they are working to change. Even well-planned state redesign initiatives can be compromised when universities are unable to fully participate because they must bend to the requirements and schedules of an accrediting organization and document program elements required for state approval or national accreditation. Also, the need to accommodate the requirements and time cycles of the accreditation process puts at risk the implementation of well-planned state redesign initiatives.

The special form of individualism and entrepreneurship that has grown up in universities can also be deterrents to collaboration among faculty. Universities do not reward faculties for spending their energies on the development of the programs in which they teach. Instead, there is competition and reward for involvement in work having little impact on program quality — or on schools and student achievement. Numerous presentations to professional organizations, frequent publications in refereed journals, and securing grants or contracts brings higher prestige, rank and financial rewards. For many, a funded project, paid consultancies or professional development contracts with local school districts serve as the coveted ticket that buys them out of a full load of courses or relieves them of the obligation to work with candidates in the field and to support other departmental work such as course development and student advising.

**The rewards system needs to change.** In addition, strategies that provide faculties with quality professional development preparing them for the new work of principal preparation — or challenging them to become part of the program redesign process in order to advance in their profession — could lead to substantial changes in the nature of collaboration and involvement.

### *Problem: Institutional Hurdles*

The university environment presents serious institutional hurdles to program redesign. Long-standing beliefs about the mission and role of universities and schools of education, a prevailing norm of academic freedom, formalized procedures for creating programs and developing courses, and a system of promotions and rewards that places the highest value on research and scholarly work often stymie even the most dedicated efforts to do things differently. These hurdles, created by centuries-old norms for how work is done in universities, are rock solid and extremely resistant to change.

Many department leaders report faculty are reluctant to design new courses with new titles simply because it is too difficult to get them through the approval systems at both the institutional and state levels. One university indicated that even after a department develops a new course, it takes another 18 months to get it approved for delivery due to the tedious bureaucracy involved in moving it through the institution's graduate council and then on to the state university system office where it is scrutinized once again.

Since few faculties have the knowledge and firsthand experience required for designing new courses addressing the critical success factors for today's school leaders, they need intensive professional development before beginning the redesign process. But changing the university mindset about the purpose and effective strategies of professional development is difficult, too. What counts as professional development for faculties seldom constitutes a venue that brings them into contact with practitioners who provide a firsthand perspective on the problems and challenges faced by school leaders.

Changing two working conditions in universities — revising promotion and tenure policies to provide expectations and incentives for applying new knowledge to the redevelopment of courses and encouraging better professional development for faculties — could do much to overcome some of the most serious hurdles and promote redesign of leadership programs.

***Problem: State and District Policies that Allow a Master's Degree in Any Field to Serve as the Basis for Higher Pay***

Currently, most states and districts have policies providing salary increases for teachers earning higher degrees or graduate credits in education, regardless of whether these are earned in the content area or field in which they are currently employed. Because many teachers perceive educational leadership programs as “easy” degrees with less rigorous content and requirements than other graduate programs, many who have no intention of becoming school principals complete a master's degree or credits in this field as means to a pay increase.

These current policies and practices have produced three negative results: a) a large pool of individuals certified to be principals but not qualified to lead a school; b) a large number of classroom teachers have completed graduate study in education that does not equip them with the knowledge and skills to improve their teaching performance in ways that benefit students; and c) a much larger proportion of state or district budgets expended on teacher salaries without an attendant improvement in the quality of education provided students.

Policies that promote and reward teachers for engaging in graduate study and professional learning that increases teaching quality is one of the most effective ways for states to make progress toward their goals for higher student achievement. While some would argue that graduate study in educational leadership should be rewarded because it prepares teachers to take leadership roles in school improvement, this linkage with student achievement is not as direct and powerful as improved teaching performance. Instead, the on-the-job learning most likely to translate into improved student learning is teacher-learning focused on the academic content they teach and on how to foster students' deep intellectual engagement with that content.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Viadero, D. “Teachers’ On-the-Job Learning Seen as Path to Greater Student Gains.” *Education Week*, July 7, 2005.





## Snapshots of Implementation of the Four Core Conditions of Redesign

So, what does it look like when the core conditions are translated into a real program design? What implementation strategies are most effective? The snapshots and promising practices presented in the following sections come from an intensive look at 22 pacesetter universities in the SREB region. This information can help states, universities and school districts gain a clear picture of what is possible and what it will take to build programs that ensure schools will have the effective leaders they need.

### *Core Condition One.*

#### *University/district partnerships for principal preparation*

*On formal university/district partnerships for designing and implementing a leadership preparation program that is based on a shared vision of school leaders who have the essential knowledge and skills to improve schools and student achievement, about one-third of the programs (seven out of 22) studied by SREB have made **substantial progress**; one-half showed **some progress** (11 out of 22) and four out of 22 have made **no progress**.*

Universities that made substantial progress on collaborative redesign of principal preparation programs began by working with local school districts. They developed formal agreements to become true partners in designing a program and selecting and preparing a pool of new leaders who can meet the needs of districts and schools for improved student learning outcomes. The agreements, signed by high-level university and district administrators, attest to the partners' commitment to a shared vision of school leadership and define how the partners will work together to design, implement and evaluate a program built on this vision.

University and district administrators established and convened a regular schedule of meetings (monthly meetings in the beginning) to plan, coordinate and monitor program development and delivery. At the university and district level, a respected staff member was assigned primary responsibility for leading and coordinating their organization's involvement in the preparation program. The job descriptions for these individuals set out clear expectations for the work to be done.

In selecting candidates for the program, the partners used jointly developed criteria and a process for recruiting, screening and selecting individuals who were motivated to become school leaders. In addition to intellectual capacity, selection criteria placed strong emphasis on a) demonstrated expertise in curriculum and instruction through activities such as serving as an instructional coach or demonstration teacher, providing professional development for other teachers or mentoring beginning teachers; b) a track record of raising student achievement; and c) leadership traits demonstrated while serving in other positions.

Universities and districts jointly developed program goals, course content, instructional methodologies, participant assignments and delivery strategies to address the district's targeted goals. They were aligned to the district's adopted school reform designs and research-based school and classroom practices to the greatest extent possible. For example, assignments were designed to engage participants in analyzing local school data to determine priority needs; working with principal and teacher teams to implement appropriate instructional interventions, curriculum frameworks and school reform models; and planning and implementing action research and other projects aimed at solving real problems of student achievement. Practitioners from the district and local schools teamed with university faculty in developing and teaching courses, planning and supervising high-quality field experiences, and determining whether candidates mastered the requisite knowledge and skills and met the standards for successful completion of the program.

**In true university/district partnerships, local school districts have a strong voice in the design of the leadership program and in determining program outcomes.** As a result, districts are willing to commit significant resources to support their selected pool of candidates. This support might take the form of reimbursement of expenses for tuition, books and materials; release time for class attendance and study; field trips to study exemplary and diverse school sites; access to specialized training or networking opportunities; coaching by outside experts; and release from duties for a full- or part-time internship or residency. When feasible, the district might “lend” curriculum specialists to help develop courses and plan field-based activities. Often, the district contributes the time of qualified district staff to teach special topics such as school budget planning, facilities management procedures, school accountability processes and other content areas that are substantially governed by district policies.

The obligation to deliver on promises made in a formal partnership agreement signed by the university president served as a strong incentive for the university to put real effort and additional resources into program design and delivery — and to maintain a close and productive working relationship with those being served by the program. The extra university resources often included release time for faculty to focus on program design as a team; funds to support retreats and assistance from external consultants; the addition of new faculty with expertise in school improvement; and professional development that creates the capacity to develop new courses with fresh content, authentic problem-solving assignments and performance-based assessments.

***A Promising University and District Partnership:  
The University of North Texas and the Dallas Independent  
School District***

*“Usually in a cohort of 26 people like this we would find four or five that really stand out as potential principal material.... In this class, what we found is just the opposite. There might be a few candidates that will not be as strong as we would like, but we have 20 highly qualified leaders with diverse backgrounds to choose from as our next generation of school leaders. We are delighted with the results of this program and feel that the reason for success was the careful processes the university and district jointly planned for selection at the beginning of the program. We have signed another letter of agreement with UNT to start Cohort Two in the near future.”*

Joe Neely, former Specialist in University Relations  
Dallas Independent School District

The Dallas Independent School District (DISD) works in partnership with the University of North Texas (UNT) to set a higher standard for the selection of leadership candidates. The UNT–DISD approach is a joint effort to identify and prepare small teams of teacher leaders who can meet the university’s graduate admission requirements and who have demonstrated leadership initiative and a passion for improving student achievement and quality teaching that helps students meet high standards. According to the formal agreement between the university and district, the program seeks to prepare future leaders who will “work with staff to further a comprehensive school improvement plan where classroom instruction is linked to the standards and goals of the Texas state accountability system.”

Early on, the university and district described in a memorandum of understanding the type of school leaders they expect the program to produce. They identified seven qualities the leaders would possess, including

- Support rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that motivate and engage students.
- Make meaningful connections between the abstract aspects of the curriculum and real-world learning experiences.
- Create and manage a system of support enabling all students to meet high standards and motivating faculty to have high expectations for all students.
- Set priorities for change that can be measured and managed realistically.
- Create a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards.
- Apply research knowledge to improve school practices.
- Use technology for management and instructional purposes.

With these qualities as a foundation, participant selection involved three steps. First, DISD identified 10 principals who had demonstrated a commitment to school improvement and had shown they were good mentors for aspiring leaders. Second, the identified principals were asked to nominate teachers in their schools who were successful in getting high achievement from all students and had demonstrated leadership in working with others to improve school and classroom practices — teachers who would make “good assistant principals for curriculum and instruction,” said Judith Adkison, associate dean of education at UNT. Principals nominated 38 teachers who attended an orientation session to learn more about the program.

In the third step, five interview teams consisting of two principals and a UNT faculty member interviewed the candidates. Each interview followed a set of questions reflecting the SREB critical success factors for school leaders.<sup>10</sup> The interview teams ranked the candidates and the UNT design team enrolled the top applicants the interview teams recommended. UNT organized the first cohort of 27 graduate students into 10 teams comprised of two to four participants who worked on projects to improve their schools.

DISD paid half of the course tuition for the 27 graduate students and provided stipends and mentor training for the participating principals. The district also paid costs for the cohort to travel to the state capital to attend appropriate administrator conferences, tour the Texas Education Agency and meet with state officials and legislative aides. DISD also invited students in the cohort group and UNT faculty to participate in its professional development programs.

The benefits of a joint selection process are visible to district administrators even in the early stages of program implementation. The first cohort graduated in summer 2004 and over half are currently serving as assistant principals or in some other school leadership position in the Dallas Independent School District.

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<sup>10</sup> See the back cover of this publication for a list of the 13 critical success factors for school leaders that were identified through research conducted by SREB and reported in *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action*. SREB, Atlanta, Ga., 2001.

***Core Condition Two.  
Emphasis on knowledge and skills for improving schools and raising student achievement***

*On standards, research-based leadership practices and real-world problems translated into new course content, academic and practical assignments and other learning experiences that develop the leadership competencies that will have the greatest impact on student achievement, while addressing all essential school leadership functions, about one-third of the universities (seven out of 22) studied by SREB showed **substantial progress**; one-half (11 out of 22) showed **some progress** and four showed **no progress**.*

Universities that made substantial progress on refocusing the curriculum of principal preparation to emphasize the knowledge and skills of instructional leadership created design teams comprised of key leadership department faculty, selected faculty from other colleges or departments and practitioners from local school districts who had a vested interest in principal preparation.

One of the first and most difficult issues the most successful design teams had to wrestle with was the leadership departments' resistance to change. Faculty were reluctant to give up their autonomy in deciding what would be taught in those courses the university normally assigned to them and were unaccustomed to spending the amount of time necessary working together to rethink the essential content that would comprise the new curriculum.

The difference for the successful teams was a strong department chair or another team member who acted as a change agent. This person shaped the faculty into a learning community focused on solving redesign problems and seeking the necessary support for engaging in an enduring new way of work. For example, one department chair worked with the dean, provost and president to secure extra funding for a series of faculty retreats. These retreats, along with opportunities to participate in training on a new leadership curriculum, kept the momentum for redesign strong and allowed all members of the department to concentrate on learning about and doing redesign together. Though the faculty developed no new courses during the first year of their redesign effort, their commitment grew strong, and they laid a solid design foundation and put in place a process for engaging the faculty in comprehensive curriculum development.

Successful design teams had in common the establishment of a **program design foundation**, although they did not label their activities this formally. The design foundation guided the development of the new curriculum and changes in other major aspects of the program including goals and objectives, instructional processes, organizational structure, staffing and use of resources. It included the following elements:

- a vision of a new kind of school leader that is focused on what principals need to know and be able to do to improve student learning outcomes and lead a successful school in the real-world environment of schools today and in the projected future;
- a data-driven assessment of the current needs of local districts and schools and prevailing student learning outcomes that validated the need for change; and
- agreement and clarity on the standards and essential competencies that would constitute the reference point for changes in the program.

To create a vision and determine the key standards and essential competencies that would constitute the foundation of the program, the teams conducted a critical review of state and national standards, research reports and other publications describing exemplary programs. They studied research on school improvement and analyzed the school reform models being implemented by local school districts to validate the concepts, skills and procedures most important for addressing the real problems of student achievement faced by school leaders. They listened to the input of practitioners serving on the design team and filled vacancies and new positions with faculty members who could bring firsthand experience and expertise in school improvement to the program.

Once the foundational pieces for program redesign were in place, the teams went to work on translating them into two other essential program elements: a) **priority content** aligned with the standards and competencies; and b) **effective instructional strategies** for helping aspiring principals learn and apply the competencies.

The priority content selected by the design teams included concepts, procedures and effective leader behaviors related to the following:

- using data to make decisions about needed changes in school and classroom practices;
- leading change;
- student assessment and instruction;
- school curriculum development;
- building a culture of high expectations;
- planning professional development of staff;
- leading improvement in literacy and numeracy;
- personalizing the learning environment;
- building and working with teams; and
- communication that enhances a school leader's effectiveness.

When the design team reached consensus on the list of priority concepts, procedures and leader behaviors related to the standards and essential competencies, they began determining how to organize this content and to explicitly address it through instruction. This step involved decisions about the depth of coverage (scope) for each topic, the most coherent order (sequence) for teaching various topics, and how to map this scope and sequence into the 12 courses that typically constitute the educational administration master's degree program.

Design teams used the following curriculum mapping strategies: a) mapping the priority content into three or more courses on curriculum and instruction; b) creating a program strand on instructional leadership; or c) integrating content on the essential competencies for improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement into a number of other courses through school-based projects requiring observation and analysis of curriculum and instructional practices, participation on school teams addressing curricular issues, or leading school teams in making changes in school and classroom practices.

Involving local practitioners in a significant way in the design and delivery of a new curriculum helped the universities forge close connections with local schools. This paved the way for aspiring principals to carry out more meaningful school-based assignments that engaged them in using the knowledge, skills and procedures that school systems expect of principals. These assignments range from short-term projects involving data collection and analysis to curriculum mapping for a grade or subject. Assignments also include semester or year-long projects in which aspiring principals work with teams of teachers to identify problems in achievement, determine root causes, research possible interventions, lead the implementation of selected interventions and track early results.

**The study revealed that universities making substantial progress in addressing core condition one were also found to be making substantial progress on core condition two. This suggests that a design team is more likely to emphasize curriculum, instruction and student achievement when working with school practitioners who help keep the focus on developing a leadership curriculum that addresses district and school improvement needs, targets and strategies.**



Several of the universities organized aspiring principals into small teams responsible for examining needs and for planning and assisting major school improvement efforts in their own schools or at an identified high-needs school. Class sessions, textbooks, education journals and other reference materials served as the source of just-in-time information for understanding and solving school problems. **In some cases, faculties met with groups of aspirants in the selected schools each week to conduct a lab or clinical round on leading school improvement. These sessions focused on discussions of candidates' school-based application of leadership concepts and skills introduced in their academic course work, examining potential solutions to school problems and identifying areas where deeper knowledge or skills are needed.**

As a result of the changes made in assignments, classroom instructional strategies have changed, too. Instead of planning lectures about what principals do or having participants report on articles read or topics researched, faculties plan how to turn participants' school-based experiences into shared learning experiences. The new instructional strategy involves facilitating class sessions where aspiring principals share their authentic experiences; ask colleagues to critique their decisions, actions and plans; and reflect on what they have learned about leading schools.

Universities making substantial progress had a plan for ensuring that the priority curriculum is the taught curriculum and that eliminating repetition is part of the curriculum development process. The design teams addressed this by assigning faculty to teaching teams, developing and using standard course syllabi and end-of-course examinations and by teaming adjuncts from local school districts with proven expertise with faculty to fill the void of practical knowledge among current faculties.

The department heads of programs were able to provide documentation on new course titles, course syllabi including new content with a tight match to standards and essential competencies, examples of new kinds of assignments linking theory to practice, and descriptions of how assessments are (or will be) linked to standards.

The seven universities making substantial progress in providing opportunities for aspiring principals to apply and practice the concepts, procedures and behaviors of effective instructional leadership are either members of a redesign network or have been involved with one in the past. They reported benefiting greatly from network membership.

### *Promising Curriculum Redesign: Western Kentucky University's Process for Designing a Curriculum that Emphasizes Knowledge and Skills for Instructional Leadership*

*“A Kentucky higher education goal to improve teacher quality resulted in a special pool of funds accessible to universities, if alternative certification programs were put in place. Our department took the challenge and developed an alternative program for principals. Having to rethink everything about our current program, figure out what was really essential and create something different did more than anything else to cause our faculty to realize that a lot of things in our program needed change.”*

Dr. Gayle Ecton, Department Head  
Educational Administration, Leadership, and Research  
Western Kentucky University (WKU)

The alternative program provided an excellent venue for field-testing new ideas and was the catalyst that made WKU ready for a comprehensive redesign of its leadership preparation program. WKU's administration also allocated funds to support a more comprehensive redesign effort. The funding support helped, but the process of redesign was not easy.

WKU began by focusing the redesign on Kentucky's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (SISI). The faculty agreed that basing the program curriculum on these nine standards and giving special emphasis to the 17 Kentucky indicators shown to be consistently present in schools where high percentages of students meet the standards for learning was a dependable way to align what was taught in the preparation program with what principals need to know and be able to do.

The next step in the alignment process was forming small faculty work groups to develop critical performance tasks for the standards and key indicators. WKU then used the critical performance tasks — clear **descriptions of what program completers are expected to know and to be able to do as leaders of Kentucky schools** — as the starting point for backward-mapping course content, problem-based learning experiences and formative assessment strategies that comprise the program curriculum.

The faculty used three criteria to ensure the learning experiences they developed were problem-based: a) the experience requires school-based application of key leadership concepts and procedures taught in course work; b) the experience relates to real problems in schools; and c) the experience is applicable to a variety of school contexts and environments.

Devising rubrics, assessments and proficiency levels for each problem-based activity was the final step of curriculum alignment. WKU engaged consultants with expertise in developing performance assessment systems to provide faculty training and advice on this phase of the redesign, which is still in progress.

WKU conducted program design retreats at strategic points in the redesign process to allow faculty time away from their daily responsibilities for reviewing their progress, making critical decisions about the program and planning the next steps. Providing faculty opportunities to be trained in the SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules was another strategy supporting the redesign process. Faculty participated in training and then used what they learned as a model for creating learning experiences that integrate a new leadership curriculum focusing on improving student achievement with authentic problem-based application.

Though many logistical questions remain, WKU has made a concerted effort to translate standards and key indicators of effective school leadership into content, instructional processes and assessments that will prepare aspiring principals for the work they must do to improve schools and raise student achievement. “We saw the SREB Leadership Initiative as a way to help us get there and each experience convinces us more and more that we need to change. We were slow out of the gate, but with the help of the SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules to provide exemplary content models and working with faculty trained to use the modules, we are moving quickly toward implementation. Moreover, we know that we are on the right path,” said Gayle Ecton.

WKU gives credit to the university president for providing strong support for leadership preparation redesign. WKU is benefiting from ties to the Wallace Foundation initiatives in Kentucky, State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP) and a LEAD project (Leadership for Educational Achievement in Districts), in Jefferson County (Louisville). “We have all the pieces in one state to accomplish what we need to do to change our programs. Now we just have to do it and stay the course,” added Ecton.

***Core Condition Three.  
Well-planned and supported field experiences***

*On field experiences throughout the program (that) engage candidates in authentic activities designed to develop and demonstrate leadership competencies essential for solving school problems, improving curriculum and instructional practices and increasing student achievement and with faculty, mentor principals and district staff providing the guidance and support necessary for candidates to succeed, four out of 22 universities showed **substantial progress**; about two-thirds (fourteen out of 22) made **some progress**; and the remaining four made **no progress**.*

Field experiences and internships that connect the academic study of school leadership to the problems of improving schools and that provide opportunities for aspiring principals to work with skillful mentors don't happen by chance. Schools comprise the living laboratories where the connection of educational leadership theory with appropriate application and practice can best be made. But just spending time in schools and observing seasoned principals does not guarantee that aspiring principals will have the experiences that help them understand how to translate theory into practice. Bringing the academic and practical world together in a way that creates effective learning conditions for aspiring principals is a challenging undertaking requiring a level of thoughtful design and collaborative implementation that is not currently achieved by many universities and districts.

At most institutions, internships are disconnected from course work and do not provide ongoing, in-school translation of key concepts and strategies or opportunities to apply new knowledge to solving real-world problems and improving school and classroom practices. A recent study conducted by SREB revealed that less than 15 percent of the 61 universities surveyed provide candidates opportunities to lead groups of teachers in work aimed at improving literacy and numeracy. Overall, the survey data indicated that principal interns spend the majority of their time observing and participating and have few opportunities to take the leading role in any of the 36 activities related to improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Fry, Betty, G. Bottoms, and K. O'Neill. *The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?* SREB, Atlanta, Ga., 2005.

Universities making substantial progress in redesigning field experiences began by creating strong partnerships with one or more local school districts that had established a focused mission to improve student achievement. The joint university/district design teams were deliberate in planning a prescribed set of activities closely linked to local school needs and also aligned with the program's standards and curriculum framework. District and school-level implementation of school improvement plans provided a frame for engaging candidates in authentic practice and demonstration of essential competencies.

In each case, local district involvement made it possible to create a structure for field experiences and internships that affords candidates opportunities to observe, participate in and lead groups of teachers in meaningful work aimed at changing school and classroom practices. School sites where aspiring principals are assigned to complete field experiences are carefully selected to accommodate the planned set of activities and experiences. This means beginning with the desired learning in mind and purposefully identifying schools that provide the laboratory in which those experiences can occur, rather than beginning with where the candidates are currently teaching and adjusting the experiences to what is possible in that setting.

Throughout the program, districts find ways to release candidates from regular teaching duties for a full- or half-day per week to spend time in assigned schools. Candidates work with mentor principals and teacher leadership teams to gather data, examine school practices and consider solutions to problems. University faculties and sometimes district staff members meet in the schools with the aspiring principals on a weekly or biweekly basis to conduct debriefings and facilitate reflection on these activities. All candidates are expected to take the lead in planning, implementing and evaluating a semester or longer project that addresses identified school needs and has the potential for bringing about a positive change in school and classroom practices.

Oklahoma State University is structuring field experiences as clinical rounds. Here, candidates treat a low-performing school as the “patient.” They figure out what is wrong with the school and how it differs from a healthy or successful school. They study the school improvement plan and make judgments about whether or not the current “treatment” is working. They refer to research and best practice to develop alternative solutions and create a plan for incorporating them into the school improvement plan.

In universities making substantial progress, mentor principals are provided handbooks and guidelines that make explicit the roles and responsibilities of mentors, candidates and faculties; required activities; expectations for candidates’ performance; and processes for working with candidates. In addition, mentors participate in an orientation session with their assigned candidates and university supervisors.

In contrast, universities in the study sample that were rated at the *no progress* level leave much of the responsibility for selecting field experience sites, acquiring a willing mentor principal and arranging learning activities up to the individual candidate and his or her mentor principal. Candidates in these programs usually remain on full teaching duty, completing a culminating internship in their own schools with supervision from their current principals. Internship activities mainly take place during their daily planning periods, before and after the regular school day and sometimes during the summer months. Mentor principals receive written communication or a handbook from the university regarding roles and expectations for mentors and candidates, but face-to-face meetings for orientation, planning and evaluation of field experiences do not occur.

There is little or no attempt to ensure candidates complete a continuum of observing, participating in and leading authentic school improvement work. Instead, candidates are expected to cobble together a series of activities that allows them to document and check off that they have demonstrated certain standards or competencies, without regard to the depth of application and practice. University faculties have little direct involvement with candidates and their mentors during field experiences, visiting them in their schools once or twice during the internship or not at all.

However, even the universities rated as making substantial progress in redesigning field experiences did not measure up on all indicators for this condition. Of the universities studied, only Delta State University in Mississippi has developed and implemented well-defined criteria for mentor principal selection. None provide formal training to prepare mentors to work effectively with candidates and model the desired leader behaviors and practices they are expected to master. None have a formal process for holding mentor principals jointly accountable for ensuring candidates have quality experiences that bring them to mastery on targeted standards or competencies. While formative and summative evaluations of candidates are conducted during field experiences and internships, they are not based on clearly defined performance criteria and validated measurement processes. Portfolios documenting experiences rather than performances still carry large weight in determining which candidates have successfully completed field experience requirements.

***Promising Field Experience Redesign: Providence School Department and the University of Rhode Island's Design for Integrated, Intensive and Full-time Field Experiences***

The Providence Aspiring Principals Program (APP) is the result of a strong partnership between the Providence School Department and the University of Rhode Island. The program recruits young, talented teachers who have demonstrated instructional expertise and leadership potential for a customized principal preparation program that supports their learning and development.

Unlike traditional principal preparation provided by universities, the partners' shared vision of principals as instructional leaders and the district's school reform framework, which incorporates the Institute for Learning's model for creating an effort-based system of education that promises all students high quality instruction to meet rigorous achievement standards, drives the program's design.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See [www.instituteforlearning.org](http://www.instituteforlearning.org) for more information about the Institute for Learning school reform model.

The university and district are designing all parts of the program — content, assignments, field experiences, and performance assessments — to focus on a set of nine competencies essential for implementing the district’s school reform framework. The competencies are

- contributing to high standards of learning for all students;
- having a deep understanding of curriculum and learning standards for students;
- having content-focused expertise;
- facilitating change in teacher beliefs and practices;
- discerning quality teaching;
- effectively observing teaching, examining student work, interpreting test results and providing feedback to teachers;
- leading participatory school improvement planning processes;
- working with teachers to create school cultures of professional collaboration; and
- holding teachers accountable for student learning and high-quality teaching.

Field experiences are a central and pervasive feature of the program. They engage aspiring principals in observing, participating in, and leading the improvement of instruction and the learning environment by applying the essential competencies. One Providence newspaper reporter aptly described the 18-month preparation experience as a “work-study program.” Field experiences are organized in three ways:

- Course work taken over two summer sessions and semester-long courses attended during after-school hours in the fall and spring semester integrate *targeted field work* into the curriculum. In these courses, aspiring principals study the research that supports the nine leadership competencies, and they complete observations and specific clinical assignments helping them link their knowledge of research and theory to the real work of principals. In the process, they gain an understanding of when and how to apply what they’ve learned within the specific school context.
- During the fall semester, aspiring principals complete a nine-week *internship* in two different schools, engaging in intensive projects and action research aligned with the district’s school reform framework and the model of distributive leadership endorsed and promoted by the district. Required activities include the following:



- participating in *Learning Walks*, an instructional leadership practice designed by the Institute for Learning enabling principals and other leaders to assess teaching quality and discuss findings with teachers;
  - planning, developing and conducting professional development sessions that follow up on what participants learned during *Learning Walks*;
  - assessing the quality of teaching and learning in actual school settings and drawing inferences and conclusions based on observations;
  - engaging in a strategic planning process to help teachers develop a school vision for curriculum, instruction and student achievement;
  - constructing a design for an engaged learning community and determining existing barriers and actions;
  - presenting case studies about school achievement problems and implementing interventions requiring data collection and analysis;
  - attending, analyzing proceedings and presenting at school board meetings; and
  - completing heavy reading assignments encompassing state-of-the-art educational and business books.
- During the spring semester, aspiring principals complete a nine-week *residency* in which they unofficially assume a broad range of administrative roles with specific tasks and responsibilities determined by the mentor principal.

Together, the university and district are creating a sequence of field assignments aligned with key school reform practices and providing participants opportunities for ongoing guidance, feedback and reflection on their learning and performance.

Providence administered the SREB-developed questionnaire on internship to its first and second cohorts of aspiring principals that gathered information on the extent to which the program provided them the opportunity to *observe*, *participate in* or *lead* 36 school-based activities that develop the competencies essential for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement. The results indicated the program provides much more opportunity for *leading* these activities than other programs surveyed by SREB. The percentages of participants in the Providence program indicating their internship or residency experiences provided opportunities for *leading* ranged from 37 to 89 percent. Asked whether their programs required interns to take a leading role in these same activities, 15 to 37 percent of department heads in 61 universities in SREB states indicated their programs did meet this requirement.

***Core Condition Four.***

***Rigorous evaluation of participants' mastery of essential competencies and program quality and effectiveness***

*On evaluative strategies designed and systematically implemented to provide reliable evidence of quality program design, graduates' mastery of essential leadership competencies and the programs' impact on schools and student achievement, including data on graduates' on-the-job performance and student achievement, only one university showed **some progress**; all others showed **no discernible evidence of change**.*

It is not possible to paint a picture of redesign-in-action for this condition because so little progress was found within the 22 universities studied. The practice of continually gathering information to help university administrators and faculties make important decisions such as how to improve the program's design, which candidates have mastered the essential competencies and are prepared to be principals, and how effective the program is at doing what it is expected to do — prepare principals who lead schools in reaching their goals for higher student achievement — appears to be given low priority in the redesign process.

Decisions about candidates' mastery of the essential competencies and which ones have successfully completed the program are based primarily on earning a passing grade in all required courses and a “pass” rating on a portfolio of internship activities. Though portfolio contents usually are linked to standards — Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) or state-adopted standards — often the requirements can be met without deep engagement in the real work of effective principals and the portfolio evaluation process lacks rigorous criteria and consistent procedures.

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*The practice of continually gathering information to help university administrators and faculties make important decisions such as how to improve the program's design appears to be given low priority in the redesign process.*

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Universities are paying scant attention to measuring program effectiveness and outcomes in terms of benefits to the schools and students where their graduates are placed in leadership positions. In most instances, they reported relying on the number of program completers, passing rates on state licensure examinations, job placement rates and surveys of employers' satisfaction as the primary measures of program quality and effectiveness. These measures are important but not sufficient indicators of quality or significant impact. The common reasons for excluding the more powerful measures of impacts on school practices and student achievement are the complexity of designing a valid process, lack of time and expertise, no clear direction or assistance from the state and failure to make this a priority area.

Building a sound process for evaluating program quality and effectiveness requires that states provide universities and districts direction, technical assistance and additional resources to create and implement the following<sup>13</sup>

- clearly formulated, explicit criteria that all participants must meet in order to complete the program successfully;
- a regular review of program participants' progress and status in the program by a team of university and district partner staff;
- a valid, data-driven program assessment process that is 1) closely linked to district goals for student learning outcomes; 2) comprehensive of all aspects of the program — i.e., content, process, delivery strategies, structure and staffing; 3) based on clearly defined criteria; and 4) used to make decisions about modification to the program design; and
- a tracking system that produces 1) a semi-annual report on participant retention and completion that is incorporated into the program assessment; and 2) a comprehensive annual report on the placement of program graduates (i.e., where graduates are employed and the nature of the positions they are filling) and their on-the-job performance, including evidence of the impact they are having on school practices and student achievement after a reasonable period of employment as a principal.

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<sup>13</sup> These elements of a sound evaluation plan are modified from a Preferred Practices Inventory developed by the Education Development Center, Inc., 2005.



## Using this Report for Making Progress in Principal Preparation Program Redesign

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It is crucial that future efforts to improve principal preparation not be wasted on vague or weak policies, piecemeal remedies or flawed implementation plans. Before states can develop a well-conceived plan for redesigning their school leadership preparation system, they must answer some key questions.

- How can we measure the quality of the preparation programs now being offered in order to direct their leaders' efforts to improving critical weaknesses?
- What does a successful redesign process look like in universities?
- What promising practices might we adopt to jump-start the redesign process?
- What elements are necessary for leadership departments to make progress in redesign and what elements are serious barriers?
- Where do we begin to launch a statewide effort?
- How can we create a system of support for redesign that ensures every university will succeed in developing a new program that meets expectations?
- What resources are required?

The information contained in this report will help states use what was learned from SREB's study of program redesign at 22 pacesetter universities to begin to answer these questions and develop a sound plan for redesign initiatives.

Specifically, the report provides

- an action plan for implementing a systemic state initiative for redesigning the school leadership system; (See pages 15 – 22.)
- a clear definition of core conditions and specific indicators to help states and universities envision an ideal principal preparation program for those who have mastered the leadership competencies linked to increased student achievement; (See pages 26 – 33.)
- tools to assess progress toward achieving this ideal; (See pages 67 – 70 and pages 79 – 96.)
- descriptions of what the redesign process looks like when universities and local districts work together to create programs around a shared vision of school leaders who have the knowledge and skills to improve student learning outcomes; and (See pages 47 – 65.)
- identification of the major barriers to principal preparation program redesign and what it will take to overcome them. (See pages 39 – 45.)

### *Defining the Ideal and Measuring Progress in the Redesign of Principal Preparation Programs*

States can develop their redesign initiatives based on a precise description of the ideal features of a program, coupled with a measure of where their programs now stand compared to the ideal.

The study described in this report deepened our understanding of how far pacesetter universities in SREB states have come (and how much farther they need to go) in redesigning preparation programs to prepare aspirants for their role in leading their school's most important functions — curriculum, instruction and student achievement. Of the 22 universities studied by SREB, none met the ideal but our meta-analysis of their various reforms allowed us to piece together a frame of reference to help states select criteria and track progress in redesigning principal preparation programs.

We are now firm in our belief that putting the four core conditions and indicators in place as measures of quality program design can help states ensure aspiring principals acquire the competencies required to be effective instructional leaders.

States will know their preparation programs are substantially redesigned to prepare principals who can lead schools to higher levels of student achievement when

- Universities have developed partnerships with local school districts that involve working together to recruit, admit and support a pool of well-qualified candidates and to design and implement a program that ensures aspiring principals master the essential knowledge and skills needed to lead changes in school and classroom practices *in a district context*.
- State standards, research-based leadership practices and problems from the real world are translated into explicit course content, practical assignments and performance assessments ensuring candidates develop the essential leadership competencies for improving schools and raising student achievement, including
  - A comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement;
  - The ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous improvement of student achievement; and
  - The ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices.
- All candidates are provided well-planned, well-supported field experiences throughout the program that engage them in a continuum of progressively more responsible leadership activities focusing on solving school problems, improving curriculum and instructional practices and closing the achievement gap.
- Systematically implemented evaluative strategies provide reliable evidence of a) quality program design that meets rigorous standards; b) participants' mastery of essential leadership competencies, based on clearly defined performance standards and exit criteria, and c) program impact on schools and student achievement, including data on graduates' on-the-job performance and the impact on school and classroom practices and student achievement.

Each of the four core conditions of redesign is more discretely defined by specific indicators and descriptions of their implementation on pages 26 – 33.

States can obtain a measure of the depth of redesign in their university preparation programs by using the Scoring Guide for Core Conditions and Indicators of Program Redesign (Appendix D). Using the scoring guide can involve external audits by teams from other universities or selected consultants, self-analysis by faculties at each university, or a combination of strategies that produces data from multiple sources about the gap between existing programs and the ideal preparation the state seeks to provide aspiring principals. Using the results of such an audit, the state can determine what steps are needed to initiate and support change in all universities. University leadership departments can then use the information to put a laser-sharp focus on the improvements they need to incorporate in their redesigned programs.



## Conclusion

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The redesign of school leadership is an arduous undertaking requiring fundamental change from the state house to the schoolhouse. Better-prepared, higher-performing school leaders are essential to achieving states' goals for higher student achievement and their even broader goals for social and economic progress. It is time for states to take bold steps to direct and support the changes that must take place in state agencies, universities and school districts as they work to put a new system into place. To begin, states can

- **Authorize a commission to plan and provide oversight for a systemic redesign of the school leadership system including selection and preparation of principals, licensure, induction, professional development and working conditions following a process such as the one recommended in this report. (See pages 15 – 22.)**
- **Require universities and local school districts to work together to select the right candidates for principal preparation and develop new programs that incorporate relevant content and field-rich instructional approaches to ensure aspiring principals master the essential knowledge and skills for improving schools and increasing student achievement.**
- **Challenge university presidents to place a high priority on producing a continuing supply of high-performing principals and make it an essential part of the institutional mission, with a level of funding and staffing that supports a quality program.**
- **Restructure state licensure to require and provide a feasible means for implementing a year-long residency with emphasis on instructional leadership for those individuals whom districts intend to appoint as first-time school principals, including mentoring by principals who demonstrate effective instructional leadership and complete a state-approved mentor training program.**

- **Develop new criteria and program approval processes holding universities and local districts jointly accountable for providing quality principal preparation programs, as evidenced by curricula and field experiences that meet rigorous standards and measures of graduates' on-the-job performance and impact on school practices and student achievement.**
  
- **Eliminate salary schedules providing pay increases to individuals who earn a master's degree in educational administration but are not employed in a school or district leadership position.**

## APPENDIX A

**Research Sample: 22 Universities in SREB States**

Appalachian State University*	North Carolina
Arkansas Tech University**	Arkansas
Clemson University*	South Carolina
Delta State University***	Mississippi
East Carolina University***	North Carolina
East Tennessee State University*	Tennessee
Florida Atlantic University**	Florida
Florida State University**	Florida
Jackson State University*	Mississippi
Jacksonville State University*	Alabama
Marshall University**	West Virginia
Oklahoma State University*	Oklahoma
Old Dominion University*	Virginia
University of Texas-Pan American**	Texas
Towson University*	Maryland
University of Delaware**	Delaware
University of Louisiana, Lafayette*	Louisiana
University of Memphis***	Tennessee
University of North Texas*	Texas
Valdosta State University**	Georgia
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University***	Virginia
Western Kentucky University*	Kentucky

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\* Member of the SREB University Leadership Development Network

\*\* Developed a redesign plan and applied for membership in the SREB University Leadership Development Network

\*\*\* Participated in another redesign network or initiative or recognized as an exemplar of program redesign



## SREB University Leadership Development Network

With support from the Wallace Foundation, SREB organized the SREB Leadership Initiative in 2000 to work with SREB states on a long-term basis to redesign leadership preparation and certification systems around a focus on the core functions of the school — curriculum, instruction and student learning. To begin this work, SREB conducted research, collected data about the need to reform educational leadership preparation programs and created a model for the redesign of educational leadership preparation programs. A set of conditions of redesign was developed to provide a vision of more effective programs and guide the redesign process in the desired direction. The conditions are as follows:

- Create an advisory board made up of faculty, business leaders, exemplary principals, state education department representatives and other school leaders with diverse backgrounds who represent a wide range of schools and school systems and meet regularly to assist in designing the program.
- Plan learning experiences in which leadership candidates apply research-based knowledge to
  - solve field-based problems;
  - concentrate on learning about core functions of the school, including instruction and student achievement; and
  - engage in internship experiences that are well-planned, integrated throughout the preparation program, and allow aspiring leaders to receive mentoring from and practice skills with master leaders.
- Create a preparation program that can be customized for individuals on the basis of their experience in providing leadership while serving in other positions.
- Provide faculty, practicing educators and others with broad, research-based knowledge, and redesign university leadership preparation to provide emphasis on school-based learning.

- Contribute staff time and expertise to design, develop and field test leadership training modules that address problems leaders must solve in school, and develop a team structure among leadership faculty to facilitate their working together to teach modules that are, at least in part, school-based.
- Support faculty with time to conduct school-based research and to participate in an ongoing evaluation process to determine if program adjustments are preparing leaders who demonstrate the ability to increase student learning and produce high-achieving schools.
- Realign the faculty advancement and reward system to include acceptance of school-based work as part of tenure and promotion requirements.
- Support school districts in identifying potential leaders with demonstrated leadership ability, knowledge of curriculum and instruction and a proven record of high performance.
- Adjust budgets to allocate additional time, resources and staffing to coordinate, develop and implement a new curriculum for school leader preparation.
- Solicit waivers from state agencies as needed to address certification issues.

Beginning in 2001, SREB organized a small network of universities as demonstration sites to show states that the conditions of redesign could be used as a framework for university program redesign and that the redesign of leadership preparation was achievable. The university network members work to

- shift the preparation focus for school leaders toward a greater emphasis on curriculum, instruction and student achievement;
- create and support partnerships that develop models, document lessons learned and disseminate successful programs and policies across the SREB states and nationally; and
- create conditions that encourage school districts and universities to work together to design leadership preparation programs and to select principal candidates based on proven performance.

## Analysis of Interview Data

The analysis of data collected in interviews with department heads from the 22 universities was conducted by a three-member SREB research team and followed these steps:

- Step 1.** Independent reading and sorting of interview respondents' comments for each university by condition and indicator, followed by team comparison and analytical processing. (Three repetitive cycles of reading all interviews, sorting of comments, and comparing/analytical processing were conducted over three months.)
- Step 2.** Development of a scoring guide with criteria distinguishing three levels of progress on each indicator related to each of the core conditions: *no progress*; *some progress*; *substantial progress*. (See Appendix D, Scoring Guide for Core Conditions and Indicators of Program Redesign.)
- Step 3.** Independent evaluation of individual universities to determine levels at which each indicator related to each core condition was addressed as defined in the scoring guide, followed by a cycle of team comparison and analytical processing. Discrepancies on **indicator** levels assigned by each team member were resolved by reaching consensus based on specific evidence in the interview transcriptions.
- Step 4.** Derivation of a progress level on each core condition for each university, based on the following definitions:
  - **No progress:** No action has been taken on any indicators related to this core condition of redesign.
  - **Some progress:** Action has been taken on one or more indicators related to this core condition of redesign, but there are major weaknesses in meeting the indicators.
  - **Substantial progress:** Action has been taken on all indicators related to this core condition of redesign, and weaknesses in meeting specific indicators are minor.





## Scoring Guide for Core Conditions and Indicators of Program Redesign

### Core Condition 1.

#### University/district partnerships for principal preparation.

**Definition:** Formal university/district partnerships are established for designing and implementing a leadership preparation program that is based on a shared vision of school leaders who have the essential knowledge and skills to improve schools and increase student achievement.

#### Indicator 1.1

##### The partnership is formal, definitive and institutionalized.

- There is a written agreement signed by the university president and district superintendent that defines how the entities will work as partners in the preparation of school principals.
- The agreement defines how the university/district partners will a) create a shared vision and program design that meets the needs of the district; b) develop criteria and a process for recruiting, selecting and supporting the most promising candidates; and c) conduct high-quality field experiences.
- Implementation of the partnership is a priority in both organizations, as reflected in their mission, program plans, staff assignments and budgets.

**No progress:** University and district representatives have not discussed creating a partnership for preparing school principals.

**Some progress:** The university and district are currently working on an agreement that defines a mission to work as partners in creating a program based on a shared vision and the needs of the district.

The agreement includes provisions for recruiting, selecting and supporting candidates and providing high-quality field experiences.

**Substantial Progress:** There is an agreement signed by the district superintendent and university president that defines a clear mission to work as partners in creating a program based on a shared vision and the needs of the district.

The agreement describes how the partners are developing and implementing criteria and processes for recruiting, selecting and supporting the most promising candidates and planning high-quality field experiences.

Both organizations have assigned key staff to the initiative and their budgets, and professional development plans include allocations and activities to support implementation of the agreement.

**Indicator 1.2****Candidate screening and selection is a joint process.**

- The university and district partners have jointly established and implemented criteria and processes for screening and selecting promising candidates for admission to the preparation program.
  - The selection criteria emphasize expertise in curriculum and instruction, a record of raising student achievement and prior leadership experiences.
  - The implementation of the screening and selection system is continually monitored, evaluated and improved.
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**No progress:** The university and district are not working together to establish criteria and processes for screening and selecting candidates. The university sets criteria for admission to the program and implements and monitors the selection system without district input.

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**Some progress:** The university and district are working on criteria for screening and selecting candidates that emphasize expertise in curriculum and instruction, a record of raising student achievement, and prior leadership experiences.

Implementation processes aligned with the screening and selection criteria are under development.

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**Substantial Progress:** The university and district partners are implementing jointly developed screening and selection criteria and processes that emphasize expertise in curriculum and instruction, a record of raising student achievement, and prior leadership experiences.

There is a plan for joint monitoring that provides information for continuous evaluation and improvement of the system and implementation is in progress.

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### Indicator 1.3

#### The program is customized to meet district needs.

- The university and district partners work together to assess local needs for improved student learning outcomes and to incorporate district and school data, state and local standards, adopted curriculum frameworks, current change initiatives and school reform models, and assessment and accountability processes into program goals, course content and field experiences.
- 

**No progress:** University faculty and district staff have not worked together to assess local needs and customize the leadership program to meet these needs. The university faculty makes decisions about the design and delivery of the program without input from the district.

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**Some progress:** University and district staff have worked together to analyze local needs for improved student learning outcomes and develop program goals aligned with these needs.

Development of course content and field experiences that address local factors such as school and student performance data, state/local standards, curriculum frameworks, current change initiatives and reform models, and assessment and accountability processes is in progress.

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**Substantial Progress:** University faculty and district staff have jointly assessed local needs and developed program goals aimed at improving student learning outcomes.

Specific course content and field experiences that engage participants in working with local school and student performance data, state/local standards, curriculum frameworks, current change initiatives and reform models, and assessment and accountability processes have been identified and developed.

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**Indicator 1.4****Resources and conditions support candidates' success.**

- The university and district allocate and pool resources to provide candidates the support and conditions necessary to successfully complete the leadership program, including such things as release time for course work and field experiences, tuition assistance, learning materials and expert mentoring and coaching as needed to master essential competencies.
- 

**No progress:** The university and district have not worked together to allocate and pool resources to support candidates' participation in the leadership preparation program.

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**Some progress:** The university and district have worked together to allocate and use resources to provide some support and conditions that help candidates succeed in the program, but some important supports or conditions are still not provided.

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**Substantial Progress:** The university and district allocate and use resources to provide the essential support and conditions needed by candidates to successfully complete the program, including release time for academic and field-based experiences, tuition assistance, learning materials and expert mentoring and coaching.

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## Core Condition 2.

### Emphasis on knowledge and skills for improving schools and raising student achievement.

**Definition:** Standards, research-based leadership practices and real-world problems are translated into new course content, academic and practical assignments, and other learning experiences that develop the leadership competencies that will have the greatest impact on student achievement, while addressing all essential school leadership functions.

#### Indicator 2.1

##### There is a design team and a plan for course redesign.

- A leadership program design team including key faculty and practitioners has developed and is implementing a plan for designing new courses aligned with the university/district's shared vision, program goals and adopted standards.
- All leadership department faculty are informed about and involved in the redesign of courses.

**No progress:** A design team has not been established to develop new courses aligned with the university/district's shared vision, program goals and adopted standards.

**Some progress:** A design team is established and has begun work on a plan for involving all leadership department faculty in the development of new courses that are aligned with the university/district's shared vision, program goals and adopted standards.

No new courses are ready for delivery.

**Substantial Progress:** A design team prepared and is now implementing a plan that involves all leadership department faculty in developing new courses that are aligned with the university/district's shared vision, program goals and adopted standards.

Some new courses are ready for or are being delivered.

**Indicator 2.2****The curriculum is collaboratively developed, mapped and monitored.**

- A collaborative curriculum development process involving university faculty and practitioners is used to identify essential content for building in-depth knowledge and mastery of research-based leadership practices, real-world problems, and critical performances expected of principals.
  - Formal mapping of the essential content across courses ensures a coherent, consistent curriculum.
  - Regular monitoring keeps the department focused on delivery of the priority curriculum and provides information for revisions as needed.
- 

**No progress:** The leadership department faculty have not engaged in collaborative curriculum development, mapping and monitoring activities.

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**Some progress:** University faculty and selected practitioners are working together to identify essential content for building knowledge and mastery of research-based leadership practices, real-world problems and critical performances expected of principals.  
Curriculum mapping and monitoring have not been addressed.

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**Substantial Progress:** University faculty and selected practitioners worked together to select essential content for building knowledge and mastery of research-based leadership practices, real-world problems and critical performances expected of principals.  
The priority content has been mapped across courses to create a curriculum scope and sequence that is coherent and consistent.  
A curriculum monitoring process is either under development or being implemented to ensure delivery of the priority curriculum and to provide information for revisions as needed.

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**Indicator 2.3****The program design places greatest emphasis on the principal's role in improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement.**

- The program concentrates on the principal's responsibilities for improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement, and this concentration constitutes at least one-third of the program's curriculum.
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**No progress:** There is one discrete course emphasizing theoretical aspects of school curriculum and instruction.

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**Some progress:** There are one or two discrete courses that focus on the principal's role in improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement. Faculty are encouraged to integrate related topics throughout all courses, but actual implementation is not monitored.

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**Substantial Progress:** Leading improvement of curriculum, instruction and student achievement is a major organizing theme for the program, with courses directly related to this theme comprising at least one-third of the program and all other courses integrating and reinforcing the essential concepts and skills as appropriate.

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**Indicator 2.4****Instruction and assignments are designed to ensure mastery of competencies for improving student achievement.**

- The leadership faculty engage in collaborative review and development of instructional methodologies and academic and practical assignments to ensure these elements align with the priority content, address real school problems, and are sufficiently rigorous and sequenced to develop participants' mastery of the leadership knowledge and skills most closely linked to improved student achievement.
- 

**No progress:** Collaborative faculty review of instructional methodologies and academic and practical assignments has not been conducted or planned.

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**Some progress:** The faculty conducted a collaborative review of the various instructional methodologies and assignments contained in course syllabi and assessed their alignment with priority content, focus on real school problems, and degree of rigor and sequencing for mastery of leadership knowledge and skills linked to improved student achievement.

Gaps and weaknesses in alignment, focus, rigor and sequencing have been identified and a plan for modifying or developing new instructional methodologies and assignments is being created.

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**Substantial Progress:** The faculty conducted a collaborative review of the various instructional methodologies and assignments contained in course syllabi and assessed their alignment with priority content, focus on real school problems, and degree of rigor and sequencing for mastery of leadership knowledge and skills linked to improved student achievement.

New instructional methodologies and assignments have been incorporated into courses to fill gaps and eliminate any weaknesses in alignment, focus, rigor and sequencing.

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**Indicator 2.5****Participants engage in solving real-world problems.**

- School-based assignments and projects incorporated throughout the program require authentic application of knowledge, skills and processes gained in the program to identify and solve real problems contributing to the achievement gap.
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**No progress:** School-based assignments and projects that require application of knowledge, skills and processes to identify and solve real problems contributing to the achievement gap are not incorporated throughout the program.

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**Some progress:** There is a department-wide effort to incorporate school-based assignments and projects that require candidates to apply knowledge, skills and processes learned in courses to identify and solve real problems contributing to the achievement gap.

Several new assignments or projects designed to engage candidates in authentic interactions and use of processes with school teams are currently being piloted with at least one group or cohort.

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**Substantial Progress:** A core set of assignments and projects designed to engage candidates in applying knowledge, skills and processes learned in courses to authentic work with school teams solving real achievement gap problems is incorporated throughout the program.

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### Core Condition 3.

#### Well-planned and supported field experiences.

**Definition:** Field experiences throughout the program engage candidates in authentic activities designed to develop and demonstrate leadership competencies essential for solving school problems, improving curriculum and instructional practices and increasing student achievement. Faculty, mentor principals and district staff provide the guidance and support necessary for candidates to succeed.

#### Indicator 3.1

##### Field experiences are integrated with course work.

- Field experiences provide opportunities for application and practice of concepts, skills and processes as they are addressed in academic course work.

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**No progress:** Field experiences have not been integrated throughout the program to provide opportunity for application and practice of concepts, skills and processes as they are taught in academic course work.

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**Some progress:** The faculty has completed an effort to integrate into selected courses throughout the program at least one field experience that provides opportunity for application and practice of a key concept, skill or procedure as it is taught in academic course work.

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**Substantial Progress:** The faculty has completed an effort to integrate into courses throughout the program a well-planned series of field experiences that provide opportunities for application and practice of key concepts, skills and procedures as they are taught in academic course work.

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### Indicator 3.2

**Field experiences are purposefully designed to provide application, practice and reflection on concepts, skills and procedures essential for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement.**

- Field experiences are explicitly designed and implemented to provide candidates substantial opportunities for application, practice and reflection on the key leadership concepts, skills and procedures that improve schools and ensure the academic success of students.
- All candidates complete at least one major academic improvement or action research project in a school, including identifying needs, selecting and implementing interventions for closing the achievement gap and measuring the results.

**No progress:** Field experiences are not explicitly designed to provide application, practice and reflection on key concepts, skills and processes of leading school improvement and ensuring the academic success of students. Candidates are not expected to complete a major improvement or action research project aimed at closing an existing achievement gap.

**Some progress:** Requirements for field experiences include an expectation that candidates engage in activities providing application, practice and reflection on key concepts, skills and procedures for leading school improvement and ensuring the academic success of students. The faculty is currently developing a set of field-based activities explicitly designed for this purpose. Candidates complete a school-based improvement or action research project that is planned in collaboration with the mentor principal, but topics are not limited to closing the achievement gap and interventions are not required.

**Substantial Progress:** Requirements for field experiences include a defined set of field-based activities explicitly designed to provide substantial application, practice and reflection on key concepts, skills and procedures for leading school improvement and ensuring the academic success of students. Candidates complete a school-based improvement or action research project that involves identifying an achievement gap among groups of students; selecting and implementing an appropriate intervention; and measuring and reporting the results. Some projects result in lasting changes in school and classroom practices.

**Indicator 3.3****Field experiences provide a continuum of practice supporting mastery of competencies for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement.**

- Field experiences provide a continuum of observing, participating in and leading teachers in activities aimed at improving school and classroom practices in ways that increase student achievement.
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**No progress:** There is no effort to ensure candidates experience a continuum of observing, participating in and leading activities aimed at improving school and classroom practices in ways that increase student achievement.

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**Some progress:** Field experiences are structured to involve aspiring principals in observing and then participating in a number of activities that focus on improving school and classroom practices in ways that increase student achievement, but opportunities to lead such activities are limited or left to the discretion of the mentor principal.

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**Substantial Progress:** Field experiences are structured to involve aspiring principals in observing, then participating in, and then leading an identified set of activities that focus on improving school and classroom practices in ways that increase student achievement.

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### Indicator 3.4

#### Candidates receive feedback and coaching on performance of essential competencies during field experiences.

- University-based faculty or other supervisors have frequent, direct involvement with candidates and their mentor principals during planning and implementation of field experiences and provide timely feedback and coaching to ensure candidates master the essential competencies.
- Faculty or other supervisors assigned to plan and supervise candidates' field experiences are provided time and other resources necessary to effectively fulfill these responsibilities.
- Faculty and other supervisors are held accountable for providing high-quality supervision of field experiences.

**No progress:** University faculty or other supervisors have no contact or limited contact (one or two site visits) with candidates and their mentors during field experiences. Feedback or coaching on performance of essential competencies occurs during seminars or regular class sessions. Faculty or other supervisors responsible for planning and supervising candidates' field experiences are not provided time or additional resource. Performance of supervisory responsibilities is not formally evaluated.

**Some progress:** University faculty or other supervisors meet with candidates and their mentors at least once to plan field experiences and conduct monthly site visits that focus on feedback and coaching on performance of essential competencies. Additional feedback and coaching on performance of the competencies is provided through other strategies such as seminars, regular class sessions, electronic portfolios, telephone conferences and e-mails. Supervising candidates' field-based experiences counts as a standard portion of a regular faculty teaching load, without regard to the number supervised. Performance of supervisory responsibilities is included in the overall evaluation of faculty and other supervisors, though weight and quality criteria for this factor are non-specific.

**Substantial Progress:** University faculty or other supervisors meet with candidates and their mentors at critical points throughout the program to plan field experiences that provide opportunities for learning and performing essential competencies. Site visits are individually scheduled to coincide with key activities and performances in order to provide timely feedback and coaching. Regular contact with candidates throughout their field experiences is maintained through such strategies as seminars, regular class sessions, electronic portfolios, telephone conferences and e-mails. Supervising candidates' field-based experiences counts as a portion of a regular faculty teaching load that is based on the number supervised. Performance of supervisory responsibilities is given specific weight in the overall evaluation of faculty performance and quality criteria are defined.

**Indicator 3.5****Mentor principals plan and provide opportunities for authentic practice and mastery of essential competencies.**

- Mentor principals are selected and prepared to model and plan opportunities for aspiring principals to practice and master the essential competencies for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement.
- Mentor principals are jointly accountable with university faculty or other supervisors for providing aspiring principals quality opportunities to master the essential competencies.

**No progress:** There is no standard process and no defined criteria for selecting mentors. Preparation for the role is not provided.

There is no process for holding mentors accountable for providing aspiring principals quality opportunities to master essential competencies.

**Some progress:** There is a description of desired characteristics of mentor principals but the university and district partners do not implement a formal screening and selection process. Mentors are oriented to their role through meetings with university faculty who share information such as expectations for candidates, schedules, suggested activities, processes, evaluation criteria and recordkeeping forms. Formal training on how to model and plan opportunities for aspiring principals to practice and master essential competencies is not provided.

Faculty or other university-based supervisors meet with mentors periodically to monitor candidates' experiences and progress, but there is no process for evaluating and holding mentors accountable for the quality of opportunities they provide candidates for mastering the essential competencies.

**Substantial Progress:** The university and district use a jointly developed mentor screening and selection process that is based on defined criteria. Formal training that focuses on the competencies mentors are expected to model for candidates and how to plan and implement learning experiences that provide for practice and mastery of these is conducted for mentors.

There is a formal process and criteria for evaluating and holding mentors accountable for providing quality learning opportunities that support aspiring principals' mastery of the essential competencies.

## Core Condition 4.

### Rigorous evaluation of participants' mastery of essential competencies and program quality and effectiveness.

**Definition:** Evaluative strategies are designed and systematically implemented to provide reliable evidence of quality program design, graduates' mastery of essential leadership competencies and the program's impact on schools and student achievement, including data on graduates' on-the-job performance and student achievement.

#### Indicator 4.1

#### A regular, formal monitoring process ensures the program meets rigorous quality standards and is aligned with district needs and goals.

- University and district staffs jointly monitor the program's performance, using data on all aspects of the program including content, instructional processes, delivery, structure, staffing, retention and graduation rates and the degree to which the program is meeting district goals and needs.
- Results of the monitoring process are used to make refinements to the program's design and delivery that ensure quality standards are met.

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**No progress:** University and district staffs do not conduct joint monitoring of the program's performance. Program monitoring conducted by the university focuses on a few of the program aspects. There is no evidence that information gained from monitoring is used to refine the program's design and delivery to meet quality standards.

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**Some progress:** University and district staffs are jointly developing a program monitoring process that will include data on most of the program aspects. The intent is to use results of the monitoring process to make refinements that bring the program design and delivery to quality standards.

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**Substantial Progress:** University and district staffs are implementing a jointly developed process to monitor program performance. The process includes data on all aspects of the program, including content, instructional processes, delivery, structure, staffing, retention and graduation rates and the degree to which the program is meeting district goals and needs. There is evidence that the monitoring process results in refinements to program design and delivery that ensure quality standards are met.

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**Indicator 4.2**

**Candidates are assessed on demonstrated mastery of essential competencies and the data is used to provide for improvement and to determine their status in the program.**

- Rigorous assessments based on clearly defined performance criteria are used to measure each candidate's progress in mastering the essential competencies for improving schools and increasing student achievement.
  - A team of university faculty and district staff uses results from the assessments to provide candidates feedback on how they need to improve and to track their progress in meeting performance criteria.
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**No progress:** Rigorous assessments with clearly defined performance criteria for measuring candidate's progress in mastering the essential competencies are not implemented or planned. Feedback to candidates on how they need to improve and their status in the program is not based on assessment results and is not a university/district team effort.

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**Some progress:** Performance criteria and assessments designed to measure candidate's progress in mastering the essential competencies are currently under development. The intent is to use the assessments to provide candidates feedback on how they need to improve and their status in the program, but details of the process are not developed.

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**Substantial Progress:** Rigorous assessments based on clearly defined performance criteria are used to measure candidates' progress in mastering the essential competencies. A university/district team reviews assessment results and provides each candidate feedback on how they need to improve. The team uses a well-structured process to track candidates' progress in meeting performance criteria and to inform them of their status in the program.

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**Indicator 4.3****Decisions about candidates' successful completion of the program are based on clearly defined exit criteria and reliable measures of performance.**

- University faculty and district staff jointly determine which participants have successfully completed the program based on evidence that established performance standards and exit criteria are met.
  - Reliable tools and procedures are used to collect and analyze the evidence.
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**No progress:** Decisions about which candidates successfully complete the program are not made jointly by the university and district. The tools and procedures for collecting and analyzing the evidence that performance standards and exit criteria are met do not satisfy reliability requirements.

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**Some progress:** University and district staffs have jointly identified performance standards and exit criteria that will inform their decisions about candidates' successful completion of the program. There is a plan for developing reliable tools and procedures for collecting and analyzing evidence.

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**Substantial Progress:** University and district staffs use jointly developed performance standards and exit criteria to make decisions about which candidates successfully complete the program. Reliable tools and procedures for collecting and analyzing evidence that standards and criteria are met have been selected or developed and implemented.

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**Indicator 4.4****The evaluation of program effectiveness includes measures of on-the-job performance and results.**

- Appropriate measures of program graduates' on-the-job performance as instructional leaders and the resulting impact on school and classroom practices and student achievement are used by university and district staffs to determine the program's effectiveness in preparing school leaders.
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**No progress:** The evaluation of program effectiveness does not include measures of graduates' on-the-job performance as instructional leaders and their impact on school and classroom practices and student achievement.

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**Some progress:** University and district staffs are currently planning how graduates' on-the-job performance as instructional leaders and their impact on school and classroom practices and student achievement will be used to determine program effectiveness, and one or more measures are under development.

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**Substantial Progress:** Appropriate measures of graduates' on-the-job performance as instructional leaders and their impact on school and classroom practices and student achievement are being used by university and district staffs to gather data for evaluating program effectiveness.

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## Critical Success Factors

1. Create a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.
2. Set high expectations for all students to learn high-level content.
3. Recognize and encourage implementation of good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement.
4. Create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult.
5. Use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement.
6. Keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement.
7. Make parents partners in their student's education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration.
8. Understand the change process and have the leadership and facilitations skills to manage it effectively.
9. Understand how adults learn and know how to advance meaningful change through quality sustained professional development that leads to increased student achievement.
10. Organize and use time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement.
11. Acquire and use resources wisely.
12. Obtain support from the central office, the community and parent leaders for the school improvement agenda.
13. Continuously learn from and seek out colleagues who are abreast of new research and proven practices.

