Districts Developing Leaders

Lessons on Consumer Actions and Program Approaches from Eight Urban Districts

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Executive Summary

Developing school leaders who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to effectively lead low-performing schools has become a critical goal for local school districts intent on dramatically improving student outcomes.[1] Given the current criticism surrounding leadership preparation programs and the changing nature of school leadership itself, school districts are becoming more actively involved in influencing the quality of their school leaders and the preparation programs that develop them.

Recent research on exemplary school leader preparation programs suggests that school districts, as the direct "consumers" of program graduates, are strategically positioned to exercise meaningful influence over the content and design of program practices.[2] It also suggests that programs preparing candidates are more effective when they work from an understanding of the challenges the districts face, a collaboration with the districts on redesigning programs, and a shared initial accountability for new leader support and performance.[3]

Based on this recent activity and research, The Wallace Foundation has provided funding and other system resources that enable school districts to take steps to improve the effectiveness of school leader preparation through collaboration and innovation.

As much as anyone in public education, it is the principal who is in a position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond single classrooms, and that ineffective practices aren't simply allowed to fester. Clearly, the quality of training principals receive before they assume their positions ... has a lot to do with whether school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of these jobs.

—Christine DeVita, President, The Wallace Foundation

The eight urban districts profiled in this report are among those that received long-term, sustained funding from The Wallace Foundation to design, or influence the redesign of, leadership preparation programs that match their leadership needs. They represent different contexts (from varying city size and population to number of local universities and demographic and economic mixes) and have different state policy environments (particularly in their prescription for quality leadership preparation). The choices that these districts made about the specific ways to improve leadership preparation locally depended on a variety of factors. The results of their efforts, presented in our findings and seven conclusions, offer valuable insights on effective leadership preparation practices for aspiring principals and the organizational and systemic constraints to this work.

1. Kelley, C., & Peterson, K. D. (2002). The work of principals and their preparation. In M. S. Tucker & J. M. Codding (Eds.), *The principal challenge* (pp. 247–312). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; Murphy, J. (2002). Re-culturing the profession of educational leadership: New blueprints. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38(2),* 178–191; Murphy, J. (2006). *Preparing school leaders.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education; Young, M. D., Petersen, G. J., & Short, P. M. (2002). The complexity of substantive reform: A call for interdependence among key stakeholders. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38(2),* 137.
2. Darling-Hammond, L., Meyerson, D., LaPointe, M. M., & Orr, M. T. (2009). *Preparing principals for a changing world.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
3. Ibid.

The Eight School Districts and Their University Affiliates

We selected eight school districts from a pool of 15 Wallace-funded sites that received funding and resources to support their leadership preparation efforts for three or more years. The districts ranged in size from 34 schools to more than 650. All had significant school improvement needs, according to their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status. They varied in their leadership needs, based on growth or decline in student population, principal retirement and turnover, and the pressure of under-performing schools. Seven of the eight districts formed an affiliation with one or more local universities for their grant-funded leadership preparation efforts leading to certification (see table below).

School districts, their enrollment, AYP status, and primary university affiliates for leader preparation

School District	Number of Students	Number of Schools	Meeting Federal AYP*	Primary University Affiliate
Boston, Mass.	56,168	143	No	University of Massachusetts Boston
Chicago, Illinois	380,787	655	No	University of Illinois at Chicago
Fort Wayne, Indiana	31,606	53	No	—
Jefferson County, Kentucky	92,000	157	No	University of Louisville initially, and later added Bellarmine and Spalding universities and Indiana University Southeast
Providence, Rhode Island	23,344	52	No	University of Rhode Island
Springfield, Illinois	28,000	34	No	Illinois State University
Springfield, Mass.	25,233	55	No (for some schools)	University of Massachusetts Amherst
St. Louis, Missouri	30,000	84	No	University of Missouri–Columbia

* AYP status of all schools and districts is for 2007–08.

The Findings

1. Districts had challenging school and leadership contexts

2. Districts exercised consumer influence in different ways to improve quality

3. New program designs redefined the scope of leadership preparation

4. The organization and delivery of leadership preparation reflected innovation

5. Leadership preparation incorporated the features of high-quality programs

6. Creation and sustainability of programs required well-developed inter- and intra-organizational relationships

7. State policies complemented district actions and program approaches

8. District investments in leadership preparation yielded both direct and indirect educational and organizational benefits

1. Districts Had Challenging School and Leadership Contexts

Across the board, we found that the eight study districts were faced with two persistent challenges in addressing their school leadership needs: (1) a continuing demand for highly qualified school leaders that exceeded the number of qualified and available local candidates; and (2) a number of chronically low-performing schools, requiring leaders who are equipped to dramatically improve them. While all eight districts already had begun reform initiatives to foster instructional change, over the course of their funding period districts increased their focus on a formal leadership development strategy.

The districts' ability to address those challenges was influenced by several factors:

Number of vacancies. School districts seeking to fill 50-plus principal vacancies on an annual basis faced considerably different sets of challenges than did smaller school districts with fewer than 12 vacancies to fill each year.

Leadership stability. The overall stability of leadership in a school district was also a determining factor when considering leader preparation options. In some districts, where leader turnover was high for both the schools and the district, there were significant shifts in reform strategy from one administration to the next.

Number of low-performing schools in need of a principal. High numbers of low-performing schools directly increased a school district's sense of urgency to take swift and decisive action in providing strong, effective school leadership.

The availability of local universities ready to make change. The eight districts were located near several university-based leadership preparations programs, often including a public university-based program. The universities

varied in their initial interest in working with districts to adapt or redesign their programs to meet district needs, ranging from disinterest to eagerness to change. Leadership turnover and other university-related changes sometimes disrupted their capacity to sustain participation.

2. Districts Exercised Consumer Influence in Different Ways to Improve Quality

The school districts increasingly viewed themselves as "consumers" of local universities' program graduates. We found that they used three predominant consumer approaches to influence the content and quality of school leader preparation programs and their graduates, often starting with one and then branching out into others. Each of the approaches placed demands on the school districts and universities, required different resources, presented different challenges and benefits, and varied in their potential for program sustainability:

Becoming a discerning customer. This approach is defined by clear expectations for school leader standards and competencies and the strategic use of them to articulate recruitment and selection criteria for aspiring principal candidates and preparation programs. It was used by Chicago, Fort Wayne, and Jefferson County. For example, Chicago identified five core competencies to assess aspiring leaders' eligibility for their principal candidate pool and to set the performance expectation bar for preparation programs. This consumer approach required time on the part of the district and (if involved) university faculty to define these new standards, but little direct financial cost. It seemed to have the greatest potential to improve

both the program outcomes—the graduates themselves—and the institutions and programs that prepare them.

Becoming a competitor. Districts became a competitor by creating their own leadership preparation programs that were directly aligned with their standards and reform priorities. This approach was used by Boston; Fort Wayne; Providence; and Springfield, Mass. Boston and Springfield preparation programs had certification authority from the state; Fort Wayne operated its own post-certification internship program independent of state requirements. Offering their own leadership preparation programs gave districts the greatest control over outcomes—in terms of program candidate competencies—and the processes of developing these outcomes through district-defined preparatory experiences. This approach proved to be the most costly and time-consuming option, however, and may be the most vulnerable to changes in districts' leadership, funding, and overall reform approach.

Becoming a collaborator. By using contracts and other inducements (e.g., scholarships and designation of "preferred provider" status or collaborator status) districts could induce local university programs to change selection criteria and customize program content, instructional methods, internships, and assessment practices. This approach was used by Chicago; Jefferson County; Springfield, Illinois; and St. Louis. Districts' use of inducements to effect change in local universities' programs was more costly but enabled more finely tailored program redesign to meet districts' changing needs than did a focus on standards alone. The approach of locating the changes in the universities had greater potential for program sustainability than did use of a district's own program. For example, Springfield's co-constructed program is continuing without external funding, suggesting the potential for sustainability in this consumer approach.

Districts' consumer approach to leadership preparation

Discerning Customer
Chicago, Fort Wayne, and Jefferson County

Competitor
Boston; Fort Wayne; Providence; and Springfield, Mass.

Collaborator
Chicago; Jefferson County; Springfield, Illinois; and St. Louis
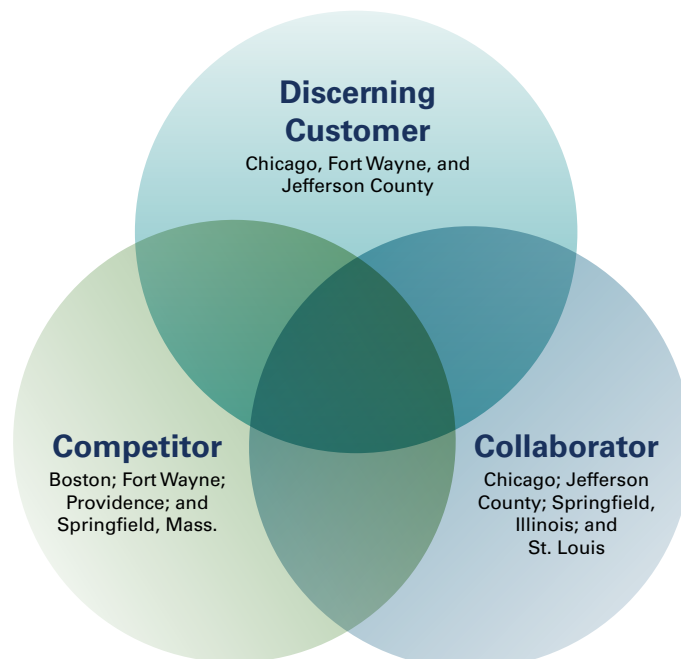
Combining consumer approaches that clarified the district's leadership standards and expectations and induced local leadership preparation programs to change to meet district needs had the greatest potential for broad-reaching, sustainable change in the quality of leadership preparation and graduates ready for school leadership.

3. New Program Designs Redefined the Scope of Leadership Preparation

The focus and nature of the Wallace support encouraged districts to be innovative and responsive to their own leadership needs. The most substantive innovation was the expansion, by all eight districts, of the scope of preparation beyond minimal requirements for leadership licensure or certification. The new requirements typically included more content about school and district systems and procedures and more applied learning experiences (through full-time internships). They also provided more time for program completion (typically, three to four years instead of one to two). These changes resulted in a broader and progressively more in-depth leadership preparation continuum. The scope and length of the preparation appeared to match the leadership challenges that the districts experienced—i.e., the work was challenging and difficult and more preparation was needed to help aspiring leaders be ready.

The addition of multiple applied learning experiences suggests that while formal leadership preparation programs are important and necessary, they may not be sufficient when preparing candidates for positions in demanding school and district contexts.

4. The Organization and Delivery of Leadership Preparation Reflected Innovation

The district-university affiliated programs, to varying degrees, organized leadership preparation experiences in new ways. Like conventional leadership preparation programs, they were constrained by state accreditation and licensure requirements, resulting in similarities in program length and core course requirements. The method of delivery, however, varied. The greatest variation occurred in how instructional time was scheduled and courses were sequenced, ranging from weekly courses and summer institutes, to coursework scheduled around full-time internships and in formats that offered more intensive learning experiences. These organizational features appeared to enable the programs to be more accessible to candidates and to increase opportunities for district-relevant coursework.

An example of redesigned content, internship, and program time is found in the St. Louis program. In that program, candidates are in internships four days a week and attend classes Thursday evening and all day Friday. Class sessions focused on problems of practice and issues as they emerged, linking course content and hands-on learning assignments. Course topics were introduced with the cycles of the academic year, current issues and priorities of the district, and learning needs of the program candidates.

5. Leadership Preparation Incorporated the Features of High-Quality Programs

Program modifications appeared to be guided by three aims: improving alignment to district reform approaches, fostering candidates' skill development, and balancing theory and practice. Given that The Wallace Foundation encouraged high-quality preparation, we expected there to

be a strong emphasis on incorporating program design features found in high-quality leadership preparation programs.[4]

Without comparative program assessments, however, the question remains of whether the districts approaches were better than conventional leadership preparation, and were yielding better-qualified school leaders who could make positive improvements in the districts' schools. What we can conclude is that the new approaches taken by district-university affiliated programs have potential for yielding better-prepared candidates. The more that programs use innovative strategies and integrate them coherently around a core set of principles as found here, the more likely it is that their graduates will be able to meet challenges in their schools.

Among the program features, we found several innovative approaches to program content and design; these addressed challenges commonly cited in the historic criticisms and shortcomings of university-based leadership preparation programs that were the impetus for these districts' work:

Recruitment and selection of the "right" program candidates. To ensure that candidates admitted into preparation programs were well-suited to be leaders, the eight districts used a combination of strategies. Most district-university affiliated programs added to or replaced the list of qualifications for candidate eligibility as one critical step toward improving candidates' caliber. Districts' development of leadership standards informed their affiliated programs' recruitment and selection criteria by clarifying certain qualities, particularly pertaining to instructional leadership, commitment to challenging conditions, and leadership dispositions. In some districts, the standards became an extension of the district's vision for education.

Some districts chose to identify, recruit, and develop future school leaders from

within their own teaching ranks and invest in and nurture these candidates' development over time. Many districts added various candidate assessments, multiple interviews, and simulated assignments that placed heavy emphasis on screening applicants for previous instructional leadership experience and dispositions (i.e., temperament and attitude) that signal strong school leader potential.

Increased emphasis on leadership expectations in program content. Some districts developed or revamped their leadership standards to be more explicit about local needs and expectations and to reflect their assumptions about effective leadership for their schools. They then used the standards to frame program content and delivery. An analysis of the standards suggests that districts and programs placed greater emphasis on assessment, the use of data, and school change through transformational leadership practices than

exists in the national Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, but less emphasis on school management and operations and on family and community engagement.

To varying degrees, all seven district-university affiliated programs tried to structure program content and learning experiences around core values and beliefs about leadership. Our study limited its focus to four content areas that were most relevant to the districts' priorities:

- All seven district-university affiliated programs had courses that covered *instructional leadership,* although their content varied in scope, breadth, and explicitness. Some programs included courses that looked generally at the principalship, whereas others focused more narrowly on content for teacher observation, supervision, and development.

- *Change leadership* as a content focus that was part of, or complementary to, instructional leadership was less explicit in the program content and was often described by program officials as "stressed in" or "woven into" the courses, although a few programs had explicit courses. In some programs, learning activities were designed around the districts' school improvement processes, in which candidates were asked to analyze a low-performing school and develop an improvement plan.

- All eight districts incorporated instruction on *district operations and processes* into their leadership preparation continuum, but rarely as an explicit course within the formal program. District operations courses and seminars were largely drawn from information about how the districts themselves managed operations and about their processes for supporting schools through supervision, oversight, and coordination of services.

School districts are becoming more actively involved in influencing the quality of their school leaders; they are giving careful consideration to their role in selecting candidates and influencing the program content, field experience, and assessments used to develop prospective principals.

- Only some districts' programs had an explicit focus on *urban education issues* or a more general focus through topics within courses on school-community relations. Only one program had seminars in which candidates engaged in activities that explicitly addressed the equity and cultural diversity issues of that district.

Use of experiential pedagogical practices. Some districts' programs made extensive use of experiential learning approaches, such as immersing participants in analyzing and planning for high-need schools and assessing their leadership options. In our site visits, we observed frequent examples of exercises that enabled candidates to apply what they were learning to district-like situations or to construct learning for other candidates based on their own school-based experiences. Course-related assignments and capstone assessment projects also tended to be constructivist in nature because they created opportunities for candidates to learn and develop skills related to district leadership tasks. One common task noted was the development of a school improvement plan or other district-required reports and communications.

Inclusion of lengthy, authentic internships in real school settings. All eight programs made significant investments in providing lengthy, authentic internship experiences with a focus on developing competencies to address the school challenges that principals were likely to encounter. Several programs developed solutions to creating quality internship experiences while faced with a shortage of highly effective principals who could mentor them by (1) rotating candidates through a series of internships in multiple school contexts, (2) providing clearer guidance for required internships, (3) developing measures for assessing intern performance, and (4) implementing programs to train coaches and mentors. These solutions show some promise for improving the quality of the internship experience. Other practical issues associated with on-site supervision of leadership interns (i.e., costs, capacity, and accountability)

remain largely unresolved and will demand the joint attention of school districts, universities, and state policymakers.

Assessment of candidates. All eight districts integrated leadership preparation assessments into program experiences. They also tied assessments to candidate advancement along the preparation continuum (if one existed) or used them as part of the selection process for a leadership candidate pool or leadership position. Assessments took a variety of forms: ongoing assessment of candidates using program standards; capstone or culminating projects as final, integrating assessment experiences; and portfolio-based assessment of the internship and other related experiences.

6. Creation and Sustainability of Programs Required Well-Developed Inter- and Intra-Organizational Relationships

Creating and sustaining locally responsive leadership preparation programs required districts to coordinate with one or more local universities around elements of preparation. Such coordination would entail one or more of the following: developing shared goals and objectives, having planning and decision-making processes, awarding master's credit and degrees for coursework, creating program-related roles and responsibilities, establishing processes for program operation, and sharing resources.

We found that additional coordination was needed within the districts and universities. We could evaluate the level of coordination by looking at how tightly coupled the program was to other organizational leader-related processes, such as hiring, placement, and supervision, in both the districts and universities. The tightness or looseness of these external and internal levels of coordination influenced the approach, quality, and impact of the district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs, protected the program from external influences, and facilitated or hindered sustainability.

Types and Characteristics of Affiliations

As shown in the figure below, district-university affiliations require three types of relationships: (1) inter-organizational: between districts and universities in support of the district-university affiliated program, (2) intra-organizational: between the district-university affiliated program and other parts of the district itself, and (3) intra-organizational: between the district-university affiliated program and other parts of the affiliated university. Each relationship can be analyzed for its goals, structures, and processes and their degree of tight/loose coupling.

The figure also illustrates that the goal of district-university affiliation is to combine the two broader fields in which the respective institution's work exists, to make them more complementary. The figure shows how the fields influence the institutions and their affiliated programs and also how the institutions' work through the programs has the potential to influence the larger fields. Finally, the figure acknowledges the intra-organizational couplings within each institution that influence the potential and feasibility of the programs and their alignment with other district and university programs and operations.

District-university affiliation for leadership preparation: Structures, processes, domains of coupling, and field influences

Fields of leadership preparation and K–12 education

Intra-organizational coupling

School district

District-university affiliated leadership preparation

Affiliated university

Intra-organizational coupling

Methods of coupling
- Goals, objectives, and commitments
- Roles and responsibilities
- Planning and decision-making processes
- Financial and in-kind resources
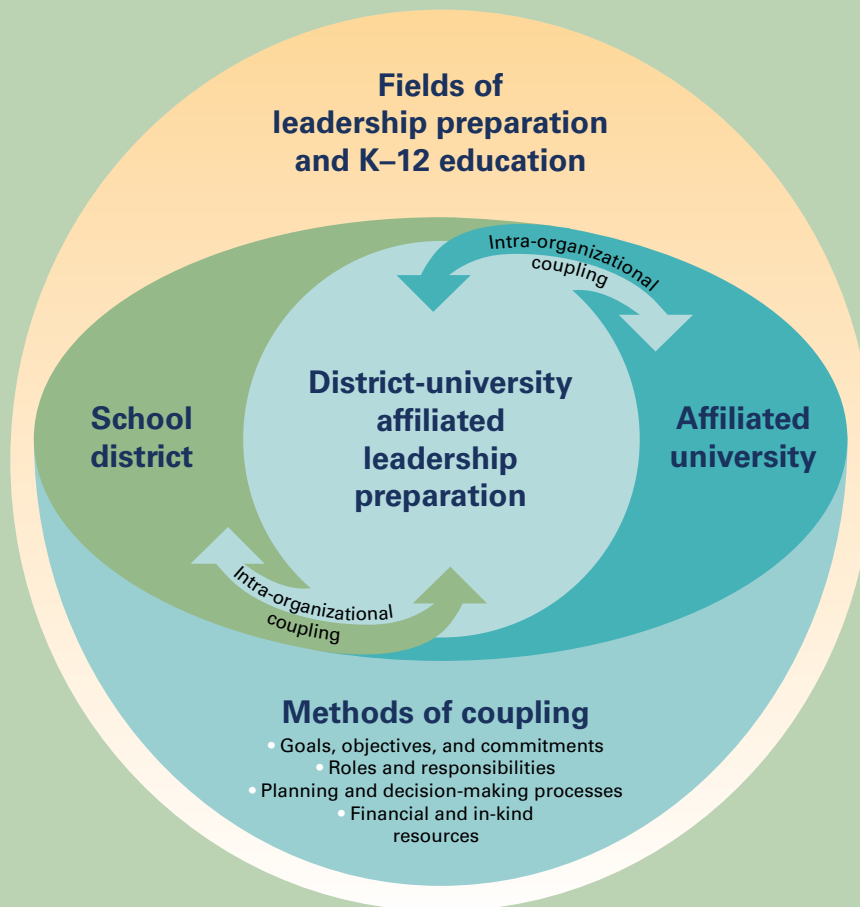
Types and Characteristics of Affiliate Coordination

Most districts had developed an affiliation with one or more local universities for locally focused leadership preparation, with a contract or other form of agreement that outlined their shared work, roles, and responsibilities. The more collaborative the affiliation, the more likely the district and university had shared goals, objectives, and commitments for leadership preparation.

We found several examples of formally defined and written agreements for the inter-institutional arrangements, such as a contract or initial Memorandum of Understanding, but no advisory committees or formally designated forms of joint governance.

In fact, much of the coordination between districts and universities for the affiliated programs occurred informally, facilitated by district and university leaders who served as bridges with designated responsibility for working across institutions. It appeared that looser, informal district-university relationships were better suited to address the variety of ongoing program issues and decision-making required for candidate recruitment and selection, program content, staffing, internship placement and support, and assessment; they offered flexibility amid district and university leadership turnover. However, such informality and loose inter-institutional relationships had their drawbacks.

School districts need to recognize the power of their position as consumers of principal preparation programs' graduates, and the resulting influence that they can wield in shaping these programs. By behaving as consumers, districts can improve the quality of program candidates and graduates, increase the number of qualified candidates for leadership positions, and ensure that program curricula address district needs.

Decision-making was ad hoc; without systemic input; and without any means for formal program review, monitoring, and feedback.

Types and Characteristics of Affiliate Investments

The district-university affiliated programs required both financial and in-kind investments by districts and universities. In addition to Wallace support, districts contributed human resources (specifically, bridge and program leaders for program design and operation), district information and expertise on operations and procedures, space for course instruction, internship placements, and internship supervisors. The universities contributed faculty expertise in course development and instruction and internship support, credit and degree management, candidate support, and higher education resources such as libraries. Some universities chose to forego potential income by reducing or waiving tuition altogether, or by granting course credit for district-delivered instructional experiences or credits earned at other institutions as part of the program. Generally, the more collaborative the affiliation, the greater the financial and in-kind resource contributions from both districts and universities.

The Opportunities and Challenges of Intra-District Organizational Relationships

We identified three ways that the affiliated leadership preparation program fit within other district systems and processes: as a component of district reform; in its alignment with principal recruitment, selection, and hiring; and in its fit with other district leadership education and principal supervision. Further, two organizational conditions influenced this fit: the program's location within the district's organizational structure, and feedback mechanisms on program graduates' career advancement and effectiveness as school leaders. The districts

varied in the extent to which they used these opportunities and had optimal organizational conditions.

Typically, programs were placed under the umbrella of one of three departments—human resources, professional development, or curriculum and instruction—or they functioned as a stand-alone office for leadership preparation, which facilitated some alignment of the program with certain district systems and less with others.

Generally, we found that over the course of the grant period, some programs became more tightly coupled with some district functions (e.g., central office professional development, instruction, and leadership departments). By the end of the grant period, most districts reported that they were working toward an aligned continuum of leadership development and leader education for school leaders that differentiated programs and support for aspiring leaders, new leaders, and mid-career principals. Investments in clarifying leadership standards and expectations for the leadership preparation programs seemed to have a carryover effect for these other programs, and the use of standards for multiple purposes was often coordinated by bridge leaders for the district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs.

However, the district-university affiliated programs remained only loosely coupled with the districts' human resources systems for hiring, placement, and evaluation of principals, with little or no formal feedback mechanisms, particularly for candidate selection and assessment of graduates' performance as school leaders. Program graduates were rarely given preference in district hiring decisions. This loose relationship existed in both district-led and other district-university affiliated programs and where the district's hiring was centralized or decentralized.

Moreover, there were no formal arrangements for tracking and sharing leadership appointment information on program graduates and candidates from other programs, and thus no means for following up on performance gains (or lack thereof) in schools led by program graduates or in comparison with other new school leaders prepared elsewhere. This loose coupling hindered program monitoring and improvement because program leaders could not evaluate the benefits of the district-university affiliated program compared with other programs.

Superintendent turnover hindered greater district action to couple the affiliated leadership preparation program with other district functions in the hiring, support, and supervision of principals.

The Opportunities and Challenges of Intra-University Organizational Relationships

The relationship between the district-university affiliated program and the participating university was dependent on the characteristics of the university, how the university's affiliation with the district contributed to its own leadership preparation improvement work, how program roles and responsibilities were defined and allocated within the university, what the university-related resource expectations were, and how the programs fit within the university's organizational structure. Most affiliated universities were somewhat locally accessible, public institutions with a strong community service mission and with an existing leadership preparation program. Most faculty we interviewed voiced a strong desire to reform their department of leadership preparation and become more effective in preparing leaders for the challenging conditions of their regions' schools; they saw their affiliation as a learning opportunity for their programs generally.

When the affiliated programs were situated within departments of educational leadership at a university, the departments were more likely to share faculty with the program and include the district-university affiliated program in broader departmental planning, program improvement, and assessments, such as for national accreditation. Distance, co-location of the program off-site or in the university's department of continuing education, and turnover of key faculty hindered the tightness of the relationship. The demands that affiliation placed on university resources and district leadership turnover also hindered the extent to which the district-university affiliated program was more tightly integrated into the university.

7. State Policies Complemented District Actions and Program Approaches

The districts' and universities' programs were influenced by their states' regulatory policies and requirements for school leadership licensure or certification, for leadership preparation program registration, and for public and private higher education in general. Increasingly, these regulatory influences were being shaped by national leadership standards and national accreditation requirements.

States' policies for school leadership and preparation were evolving throughout the grant period. The districts' states had concurrent Wallace grants to strengthen their leadership policies and were encouraged to include university faculty as well as school and district leaders in policy development, which unfolded over the time of the districts' own leadership development work.

The states had four potential policy levers—standards, program accreditation requirements, leadership licensure, and use of Wallace funding—to influence the preparation and quality of leaders. In the six states, we found a trend in policy

development (during the grant period) toward greater specificity in leadership standards and expectations and also varying expectations of how to prepare leaders and determine their eligibility for licensure. The more rigorous state policies complemented the local district leadership preparation and development efforts by requiring more field experience (by defining requisite internship hours and years of school leader experience before professional licensure) plus more leadership preparation and continuing development, particularly with the addition of post-preparation requirements.

8. District Investments in Leadership Preparation Yielded Both Direct and Indirect Educational and Organizational Benefits

More research is needed to determine the impact of redesigned leader preparation on school leader retention, stability, and performance. However, there are early indications of the benefits of some of these efforts for the districts and the universities.

More highly qualified leader candidates for districts' schools. First, in six years, the number of potential new leaders increased, from 35 additional program completers in one site to 111 additional program completers in another. In addition, by 2009, 58 percent of the completers had advanced to a school leadership position, including 32 percent who had become principals. Second, according to some school and district officials interviewed, new leaders from district-university affiliated programs were better-prepared and of better quality than those from other programs. In many cases, where evidence was available, these new leaders were perceived by district officials to be more effective, particularly in their instructional leadership ability, their capacity to transition well into leadership roles, and their understanding of school district operations.

At least one district reported the cumulative benefit of having a substantial number of the current school leaders who were similarly well-prepared; it enabled a collective leadership capacity and community of practice that supported their school improvement work.

District learning benefits. The districts themselves realized several benefits from improving their leadership preparation programs. They gained a clearer picture of their own leadership expectations, a better understanding of the needs of and demands placed on new school leaders, and an increased understanding of the role of leadership education in systemic school improvement.

Affiliated university learning and program-related benefits. The affiliated universities gained both production benefits, in the number of new certification or master's degree candidates who earned course credit through them, and organizational learning and system-changing benefits. These latter benefits included opportunities to improve the quality of other programs by adopting new content and organizational strategies. Several affiliated universities were willing to make one or more programmatic, organizational, and financial changes to affiliate with the districts. These changes led to other changes in practices that the universities have sustained or applied to other district partnerships. In addition, the universities greatly valued their preferred provider status with their districts. Although this affiliation offered only modest financial benefits, it produced less tangible but highly desirable enhancements of reputation.

Limited benefits to other universities beyond clarified leadership expectations. The impact on other institutions in the districts' communities was less clear. We anticipated that as districts became more active consumers, local universities would pay attention, even if they were not directly affiliated with the district's leadership preparation efforts. However, this was not the case, at least not in the way that had been expected. The few program faculty

members (from unaffiliated institutions) who could talk about the district programs' influence on their own programs were not able to identify any changes that the district programs had engendered.

Instead, they said that their programs were more strongly influenced by national and state accreditation requirements, as their course requirements reflected. However, to the extent that the districts' work on leadership standards contributed to the new state standards, the districts did indirectly influence local programs' designs.

Conclusions and Implications

Our analysis of the involvement of eight urban school districts with leadership preparation programs led to a number of conclusions with important implications for districts, universities, policymakers, and other funders.

First, to effectively invest in leadership preparation, school districts need to recognize the power of their position as consumers of principal preparation programs' graduates, and the resulting influence that they can wield in shaping these programs. By behaving as consumers, districts can improve the quality of program candidates and graduates (by setting standards and expectations), increase the number of qualified candidates for leadership positions, and ensure that program curricula address district needs.

Second, districts should look to harness the resources of local universities to develop, staff, and support leadership preparation programs that can meet state

higher education standards and leader certification requirements. Such an undertaking requires districts and universities to work together to forge a new understanding of what school leaders need to know and be able to do to improve local schools, and to translate this understanding into leadership preparation strategies.

Third, districts and universities can redesign leadership preparation as a multi-staged learning process, as several districts in our study did. Such a multi-staged process could begin with pre-service exploratory experiences as a prerequisite for admission to a formal preparation program that has a supervised internship. Following successful completion of certification and degree requirements (the next stage) and placement in a leadership position, the final stage of the system would be coaching and close supervision in the initial induction period. This system would begin to address the broader, increasingly more intense stages of development that are needed to effectively prepare aspiring leaders, particularly in demanding environments and conditions.

Fourth, districts and universities can focus on knowledge development, drawing from their respective areas of expertise. This effort comprises infusing information about the districts' specific challenges and priorities into university course content and other learning experiences, while inculcating discipline-based theory about district procedures into operations and management skills development.

Fifth, feedback on graduates' performance as school leaders is essential for both districts and universities to learn from their investments and to improve program quality and effectiveness. Monitoring of and feedback on graduates' performance are crucial to turning district and university investment into improved preparation and a viable

strategy in districts' systemic reform work and universities' redevelopment of their leadership preparation approaches.

Sixth, supportive district and state policies for leadership preparation complement the districts' and universities' program design and redesign work for their affiliated programs. However, as shown by recent developments in some states, such as Kentucky, states can go further in encouraging leadership preparation programs to be more aligned with local districts' needs and priorities.

Finally, high-quality program models require more dedicated funding and cannot rely on foundation and government grants. Some of the policy-encouraged strategies—particularly offering full-time internships as part of leadership preparation—are expensive. States and districts must explore other means of providing and supporting paid, full-time internships and other program elements in order to continue such a critical component of leadership preparation, resulting in better-prepared aspiring leaders.

Chapter 1 Introduction

In recent years, school districts have undertaken systemic approaches to school performance improvement and reform, building on state and federal policies to promote school change through new educational standards, curriculum frameworks, and accountability systems (Marsh, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) education accountability policy, as well as other performance-related requirements, pressures districts to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, school leaders, and their schools' instructional programs to improve student achievement.[5] These measures have led some districts to invest significantly in teacher and school leader capacity-building strategies aligned with their district reform efforts (Marsh, 2002; Shannon & Bylsma, 2004).

A growing body of research shows that some leader practices—centering on creating a school's vision, developing teachers and other staff, and enhancing the school as a learning organization (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003)—are more efficacious than others, particularly in turning around low-performing schools (Brown, Anfara, & Roney, 2004; Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, & Sobel, 2002). Research over the last two decades has consistently shown that school principals, through their vision, direction, and influence, can be powerful players who effect school improvement and broad-scale change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003; Silins, 1994). The development of effective school leaders, therefore, has become a critical factor in improving school performance (Kelley & Peterson, 2002; Murphy, 2002, 2006; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002).

Moreover, school districts can no longer rely solely on conventional recruiting and succession planning approaches to attract and retain candidates with the necessary leadership skills and capacities to support reform. Increasingly, districts are giving careful consideration to their role in the initial preparation and ongoing professional development (PD) of their school leaders (A. Jacobson, Neill, Fry, Hill, & Bottoms, 2002; Peterson, 2002; Tucker & Codding, 2002) in order to increase the number, quality, and fit of candidates for school leader positions and to meet school improvement demands.

With recent support from The Wallace Foundation and other foundations and government agencies, several school districts have already created new programs and strategies for developing leaders. The eight urban districts whose efforts are reported here were among those that received long-term, sustained Wallace funding to improve leader preparation. Their experiences provide insights into their strategic programmatic and organizational investments in school leadership preparation; their different approaches, including the roles played by affiliated universities; and their choices and opportunities.

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5. NCLB, enacted in 2002 (20 U.S.C.A. §§ 6301 et seq.), requires principals to effect significant instructional improvement in a short period of time, or their schools will be sanctioned and experience other consequences. States must test all students in grades 3–8, and all schools and districts must meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in order to achieve the federal goal of having 100 percent of students academically proficient by 2014 (Neuman-Sheldon, 2006). There are severe consequences for schools that fail to meet AYP for five consecutive years, including restructuring and replacing most or all school staff.

Investment options for these school districts are best understood within the framework of several contexts: the labor market, low-performing schools, and the field of school leader preparation (including relevant state and national policies). A brief discussion of each provides a backdrop for understanding the complexity and significance of the districts' investments and the inherent challenges discussed later in this report.

The Labor Market

Most recent studies have found that while there are sufficient numbers of leadership-certified individuals nationally, this conclusion overstates the viability of this labor pool to meet the quantitative and qualitative needs of urban districts. Moreover, study results show that the leadership job market is changing and that some positions are more difficult to fill than others (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009; Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002; Ringel, Gates, Chung, Brown, & Ghosh-Dastidar, 2004).

The size and nature of the pool.
Although labor market studies have shown that there are more leader-certified individuals than there are positions, a closer analysis suggests otherwise. Not all certified candidates are interested in pursuing a school leader position, nor do those who are interested sustain this interest over time. Interest in seeking advancement seems to wane after 5–10 years if leader-certified individuals have not already attained their first leadership position (Lankford & Wyckoff, 2003; Ringel et al., 2004). Thus, the viable "leadership labor pool" may comprise only recently certified

individuals, suggesting the importance of continually replenishing the pool with new candidates.

Conversely, the number of leadership positions is rapidly growing as districts add assistant principal positions, create new schools and charter schools, and disaggregate large urban high schools into several smaller ones (Ringel et al., 2004). The types of leadership positions are expanding as well, with the addition of new supervisory positions at the school and district level for instructional and curricular support, special education, and student support services. These changes place additional demands for new leaders on districts already challenged to fill openings created by natural attrition—including retirements, moves to other schools or districts, and moves to other fields (Lankford & Wyckoff, 2003; Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002; Roza, 2003). In New York State in 2000, for example, almost 70 percent of principals were nearing retirement (Lankford & Wyckoff, 2003). Moreover, there is reason to suspect that individuals who take urban principalships are less well-prepared. Research shows that they are more likely than their peers in other schools to be less experienced and to have earned their bachelor's degree from lower-ranked colleges (Papa et al., 2002).

High leader turnover rates. High-need schools experience both a shortage of qualified candidates interested in applying for leadership positions and more rapid principal turnover, thereby requiring more candidates over time (Fuller & Young, 2009; Gates et al., 2004; Ringel et al., 2004). In their analysis of principal careers in Texas schools in the early 2000s,

Fuller and Young (2009) found that more than half the elementary school principals of low-performing schools had left within five years, and almost half the secondary school principals had left within three years of beginning their positions. Gates et al. (2004) found even less stability in North Carolina, where only 18 percent of principals were in their same school six years later, and rates of principal turnover in schools with a higher proportion of minority students were much higher.

Shortage of interested applicants. The challenge of having fewer applicants than available positions is particularly true for districts' lowest-performing schools. In surveys of principals, urban districts are more often characterized as challenging environments because of insufficient resources and high student needs (Cooley & Shen, 2000; Crosby, 1999). In another study, urban principals reported greater job pressure than did their peers in non-urban schools (Portin, 2000).

Diversity. Some attention is now being paid to the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the leadership labor force, particularly in comparison with the student and teacher populations. In recent years there have been some gains in diversifying the leadership pool, but further progress is still needed. Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, and Chung (2003), for example, found that over a recent 15-year period, there was a dramatic increase in the percentage of current administrators who are female, but only a modest increase in the percentage of those who identify as members of racial/ethnic minorities.

Leadership to Improve Low-Performing Schools

Leadership to improve low-performing schools depends upon both effective leadership practices and effective district practices to support leaders' work. Recent research points to practices that are most likely to influence positive school change and improvements in student learning.

Effective leadership practices. The multifaceted sets of challenges that leaders of low-performing schools face in their efforts to improve schools may require unique leadership skills and competencies (Leithwood et al., 2004). Identifying this skill set requires understanding both the common characteristics of the low-performing school context and the leadership practices found to be most effective in improving conditions in them. The longer that schools are labeled as low-performing, the more difficult it is to turn them around, and the more skillful school leaders must be (Orr, Byrne-Jimenez, McFarlane, & Brown, 2005). Just being labeled a failure, researchers have found, was a barrier to collaborative ways of working, adding to the turnaround challenge (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005).

Recent research suggests that some leadership practices are more effective than others in turning around low-performing schools and offers important insight into how leadership candidates for such schools might be better prepared. Williams et al. (2005), for example, found that higher-performing schools with high percentages of low-income children were more likely than similar but lower-performing schools to make academic achievement a priority, implement a coherent, standards-based curriculum and instructional program, use assessment data to improve student achievement and instruction, and ensure the availability of instructional resources. Watts et al. (2006), in their analysis of 12 Arizona elementary and middle schools that beat the academic performance odds for low-income Latino children, identified similar instructional and organizational factors concerning focus, assessment, and leadership. They also identified the importance of developing collaborative solutions, sticking with a reform program over time, and tailoring reform strategies to meet individual students' needs.

Orr, Shore, Berg, and Meier (2008), in their work with several persistently low-performing schools, found that each had some capacities (such as an energetic leader or grant support for a comprehensive school reform model) on which to build improvements in teaching practices and student learning, but each also had significant limits in its ability to use new resources and strategies, organize its focus, and engage in self-examination to change ineffective instructional and organizational practices. The authors argued that districts and states need to integrate and coordinate the oversight and support provided to the schools and give priority to leadership and organizational capacity-building strategies to enable schools to develop and sustain improvement.

In looking at schools that beat the odds (and those that do not), it is clear that district leadership, accountability, and support contributed to the schools' accomplishments, and that principals cannot become effective in a vacuum. In addition, while it is likely that few current principals have the essential skills and school improvement capacities identified by this research, they can be developed through better preparation and development. Thus, district-based leadership preparation and follow-up leadership development and support that address these challenges by focusing on strategies shown to improve low-performing schools would be essential.

Effective district practices. Several researchers have identified how districts can best strengthen their organizational and leadership practices to improve schools with challenging conditions. These best practices serve as broader framing principles and strategies for district reform and implicitly suggest areas for more relevant leadership preparation and leadership support. Waters and Marzano (2006), for example, synthesized available research to identify four district leader practices that most contributed to district improvement and performance:

- Establishing non-negotiable goals for instruction and achievement
- Monitoring these goals
- Providing sufficient resources
- Decentralizing authority to principals while holding them accountable

Other researchers looked at systemic strategies and practices to support urban district reform: coherence, redefinition of the principal's role, a systems perspective, and leadership development and support. Madda, Halverson, and Gomez (2007) found that district initiatives are often in conflict with one another or with school practices. They concluded that districts that pursued coherence through their reform initiative design processes created better alignment and support, which was more likely to result in successful implementation at the school level. McLaughlin and Talbert (2002), using survey and case study research, found that reforming districts requires a focus on the whole system as the unit of change, including *principal reform leadership,* which includes enabling principals to set high standards and maintain a focus on teaching and learning.

Other multi-case study research on district reform also suggests a reform agenda focus that redefines the role of principals to include a focus on instructional leadership, delegating responsibility, using data to guide instructional decisions, and supporting the PD of teachers (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Similarly, Resnick and Glennan (2003) argued that districts must give priority to creating powerful teaching and learning—which are most essential for high-quality learning opportunities for students—and concluded that to do this, districts need "organized support for a new form of educational leadership" (p. 161). They recommend that principals be supported to "take the lead in shaping a focused culture of instruction within their schools" (p. 163) and that school leaders develop instructional leadership skills through sustained (rather than episodic) training involving joint inquiry and problem-solving that "promotes coherent language and practices throughout the district" and models "learning community behaviors" (p. 169).

Leadership Preparation

The nature, quality, and availability of university-based leadership preparation is framed by the institutions that provide preparation and their distribution nationwide, expectations and criticisms of the field, approaches to program redesign, and district roles for program design and delivery.

The changing landscape of leadership preparation. Traditionally, most school and district leaders were prepared for leadership certification and licensure through university-based leadership preparation programs, of which there are estimated to be almost 500 nationwide (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007). Regional comprehensive colleges and universities were the most common provider, representing 55 percent of all types of institutions with such programs.

There have been recent shifts within and among these institutions. Baker et al. (2007) found that the number of new programs and the number of candidates prepared annually have dramatically increased in recent years, particularly among regional institutions. Other types of changes are occurring as well. Murphy (2006) reported that there has been growth in the number and types of alternative leadership preparation pathways, including district models (such as those described in this report), entrepreneurial models (such as New Leaders for New Schools[6]), and experiential models, which offer waivers that substitute work experience for coursework. These alternative pathways create competition and diversify the field; however, Murphy stresses that alternative is not necessarily better. While such programs often "share a good deal of common ground with university-based programs" (p. 55), they also raise questions about program quality because there is "very little empirical evidence on these [programs]" (p. 55), including any evidence of their effectiveness.

Expectations and criticisms of the field. The nature of leadership preparation has also been changing in recent years, through the influence of external criticisms, national standards setting and accountability, and the changing nature of school leadership itself.

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6.   This is a principal training program, based in New York and Chicago, and founded in 2000. See www.nlns.org.

Over the past 20 years, university leadership preparation programs have been harshly criticized (both from those inside the field and out) for their low quality (Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988), lack of rigor (Bridges & Hallinger, 1997), outdated content, inappropriate pedagogy, and poor student recruitment and retention strategies (Bredeson, 1996). In addition, these and other reports accused programs of having low admission standards and allowing students to self-enroll and progress through a series of courses that lacked coherence and had little connection to actual leader practice in schools (Levine, 2005; McCarthy, 1999).

As a mechanism for improving programs, critics look to state policy levers and national accreditation processes, such as the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), to facilitate program reforms (A. Jacobson et al., 2002; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002, 2008).

Preparation program redesign. In recent years, many educational leadership preparation programs have redesigned their program content and delivery to align with national standards and state requirements and to have a greater impact on graduate careers and school outcomes. The primary national standards, now adopted by most states, are the Interstate School Leadership Licensure, first developed by the National Policy Board in Educational Administration in 1996 and recently updated with extensive review and field input. These are the six standards:

1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning

2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth

3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment

4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources

5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner

6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural context (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2008).

These standards are the foundation for national accreditation for leadership preparation programs (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002). New accreditation criteria require that programs demonstrate students' learning and career outcomes in alignment with these standards. Most states have adopted or built on these standards for their own program accreditation purposes, and some added requirements for program redesign (Toye, Blank, Sanders, & Williams, 2007).

There is some evidence that these standards and accreditation expectations are leading to program change. For example, by 2005, 205 programs nationwide had submitted applications for accreditation review; of these, 76 percent were approved by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and ELCC (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2005).[7] Other programs may seek accreditation through other state or national entities, depending on their state's requirements.

Study results show that the most successful innovative programs (often funded through foundation or federal support) are designed to focus closely on preparing candidates as instructional leaders, have knowledgeable faculty, integrate theory and practice well,

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7. Some states have a contract for NCATE review of programs, while others have a partnership agreement with NCATE for state-based review of programs leading to joint accreditation (e.g., Idaho and Kentucky). Only programs in "NCATE review" states are accredited through ELCC. See www.ncate.org/documents/stateRelations/NCATEStatePartFeatures2008.pdf for more information.

stress the principalship as a career, and include support for students through cohorts[8] and other structures (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2009; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). In turn, the graduates of one set of innovative programs who later became principals were more likely to be described by the teachers in their schools as supportive leaders who focus on instruction (Orr & Orphanos, 2007).

District potential to influence school leader preparation. School districts' needs for well-prepared leaders go beyond the national standards and expectations for leadership preparation programs. Given the criticisms of university programs and the universities' varied capacities and incentives to redesign their programs, there has been ongoing discussion about district options that would have the most potential to improve the content and quality of leader preparation. For example, should districts seek ways to build meaningful partnerships with university programs in the hopes of influencing needed changes in program design and content? Or, should districts design and operate their own leader preparation programs—tailored to the needs of their schools?

Answers to these questions have led to an emerging view of the district in the role of a *consumer* of leadership preparation program graduates (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Fry, O'Neill, & Bottoms, 2006). While universities may view their students as their consumers—because they pay the tuition and complete the coursework and degree requirements—it is the districts, by virtue of hiring the most qualified among program graduates, which are the

actual consumers of university preparation programs. However, rather than passively select among the universities' "products" (i.e., their graduates), as has been the common practice, districts could instead actively define and influence who is being prepared and how, thereby altering the candidates' competencies and readiness for school leadership.

Consequently, districts, based on their hiring and supervisory practices and experiences with universities' graduates, are de facto evaluators of university-based programs' effectiveness. Yet, until recently, districts have not focused on the influence that this role gives them. Like consumers of any product, districts can use their "purchasing power" to make their needs and priorities known—articulating their preferences for leadership skills and competencies, and favoring the supplier(s) that can deliver both quality and quantity in a timely manner. This consumer role can expand to include collaborative program design and delivery that ensures that program content and methods match the needs of districts' schools.

Case studies have shown the potential of districts to influence university leadership preparation programs and of universities to adapt their program design and delivery to best meet districts' needs (S. L. Jacobson, 1998; Peel, Wallace, Buckner, Wrenn, & Evans, 1998; Whitaker, King, & Vogel, 2004). Increasingly, educational experts and policymakers call for greater district participation in preparation programs as a means of improving relevance and quality (Fry et al., 2006; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Grogan & Robertson, 2002; U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

One highly touted approach is the New York City (NYC) Leadership Academy,[9] designed for both leadership preparation and leadership development on a large-city scale (Stein & Gewirtzman, 2003). Drawing on their development work, Stein and Gewirtzman assert the best model for program redesign uses a co-construction approach. They suggest that by shifting the consumer focus to the districts, universities and districts could construct a reciprocal system of accountability—where districts hold universities accountable for the quality of their graduates, and universities in turn obtain information on the quality and effectiveness of their graduates as leaders, which they may use for program improvement and effectiveness assessment. This approach requires new ways for university faculty and district officials to work with one another, using sustained dialogue, fostering a sense of purpose toward and ownership of shared outcomes, and integrating cycles of reflection and learning for continual program improvement.

Prior research on district-university partnerships for leadership preparation suggests that most relationships fall along a continuum from rudimentary university consultation with districts to the co-construction relationship (Grogan, Bredeson, Sherman, Preis, & Beaty, 2009). Yet, the above research suggests that greater district involvement in program design and delivery would yield better leadership preparation.

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8. In leadership preparation programs, a cohort is a group of candidates who are admitted at the same time, take the same sequence of courses, and do their fieldwork as a group. Prior research has shown that cohort structures offer powerful support for learning that can enhance and deepen leadership preparation and model collaborative learning as a leadership competency (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000).
9. Launched in 2003, the NYC Leadership Academy is an independent nonprofit organization that recruits and develops effective school leaders.

The Wallace Foundation's Investment in School Leadership

In 2000, The Wallace Foundation decided to make leadership the sole focus of its education improvement efforts. Drawing on emerging evidence that effective school leadership provides a "critical bridge" between most educational reform initiatives and opportunities to improve students' lives (Leithwood et al., 2004), the Foundation set out to fundamentally improve the preparation and training of education leaders and the conditions that support their ability to lead improvement efforts in schools, districts, and states.

As much as anyone in public education, it is the principal who is in a position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond single classrooms, and that ineffective practices aren't simply allowed to fester. Clearly, the quality of training principals receive before they assume their positions … has a lot to do with whether school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of these jobs.

—Christine DeVita, President, The Wallace Foundation

A core aspect of The Wallace Foundation's education leadership initiative has been to provide direct support to 24 states and to select mostly urban school districts within many of them. In addition, the Foundation also supported research addressing many of the important gaps in the field's understanding of issues related to developing and sustaining effective education leadership, which in turn informed the work of the funded districts through interim and final reports.[10] The Foundation made urban districts (including small cities) a priority for these investments, because of the particular challenges they face, their pressing school improvement needs, and the large number of children that they serve. In particular, among other activities, the Foundation provided support to numerous urban districts to improve the quality of their leader training, including preparation and PD.

One working hypothesis that has emerged from the Foundation's efforts is that improved leadership quality requires that states and districts work to create effective, well-coordinated, and "cohesive leadership systems." The aim is to create a system-wide, coordinated approach to state-, district-, and school-level policies and practices. Such a system might be able to significantly improve student learning by strengthening the standards, the training, and performance of education leaders, and the conditions and incentives that affect their success. Leadership preparation is one aspect of such a system, and goes beyond the usual understanding of preparation as a one-time event, occurring at the beginning of an aspiring leader's career. Instead, a system would address the growing belief that districts need to have a *well-aligned continuum of preparation and development* that begins with high-quality preparation at universities (or elsewhere), is followed by support for beginning school leaders through induction, and includes ongoing, high-quality PD opportunities tied to district needs and priorities throughout a leader's career.

Part of the emerging lessons from the Foundation's work with states and districts was a greater understanding of how districts

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10. For more information about Wallace-supported research, see www.wallacefoundation.org.

can become forces of change in improving the leadership preparation field. In general, questions about how districts are positioned to best improve leadership preparation and PD arose, including *What approaches and strategies constitute high-quality leadership preparation?* And *How should districts design and deliver leadership preparation programs?*

In addition, the Foundation also raised questions regarding how state policy requirements could best inform leadership programming, competition from district programs, and collaboration with district partners on program redesign. Such questions guided the request for the evaluation research and undergird this study's research design, analysis, and implications. Differences in the eight study districts' choices and approaches provide useful insights for understanding district and university options.

To evaluate these questions more broadly, we drew on relevant theoretical perspectives on organizations, considered their applicability to illuminating our research, and developed a conceptual model to guide our evaluation research.

Conceptual Framework

We first considered the ways that districts can exert influence that would yield high-quality candidates by entering the leadership preparation field. A review of available research from the education and organizational fields generally suggests two possible strategies: (1) they could develop their own preparatory programs and services either on their own or in collaboration with local universities, and (2) they could be a change force that would alter the leadership preparation field through direct and indirect strategies. Consequently, we drew on two sources of organizational theory to guide our investigation of this work: consumer actions and actions when entering a new field of work (drawn from neo-institutional theory), and inter-organizational relations and inter-institutional collaboration.

Definitions of the Theories

Defining innovation. We began by defining innovation and the conditions for organizations to be innovative in developing new practices, such as improved leadership preparation. Lubienski (2003) considers innovation "in the 'product development' sense—whereby providers develop new or substantively altered products for consumers" (p. 401). He distinguishes innovation from diversification, which, in this context, is merely a different way of providing the same product. He used this distinction to examine charter school creation and school choice policies. Charter schools and school choice were to be means of encouraging experimentation and diverse options, to improve academic outcomes, and to incorporate externally defined (i.e., the consumer's) expectations and standards. These assumptions parallel the ideas about how district involvement might yield innovation in leadership preparation.

The three necessary conditions for organizations to bring about innovation and action are ideological conflict, will, and

capacity. As Burch (2007) learned from analyzing educational reform approaches, when longstanding approaches come under scrutiny, their core ideas are questioned and best practice approaches are debated. This scrutiny yields a strategic opportunity for new actors and approaches to redefine the problem and develop innovative solutions. Such efforts, however, require both will and a capacity to reframe the problem and the core ideas behind it (Burch, 2007; McLaughlin, 1990): in this case, the inadequacies of conventional preparation and how its content and delivery could be different.

Consumer actions as agents of change. Next we considered how district actions might induce organizations—that is, universities that operate educational leadership programs—to change their practices. Such actions take place within an organizational field with specific contextual influences. Organizational experts, in developing a *neo-institutional theoretical perspective,* have concluded that local and institutional actors (in this case, universities, school districts, and state education agencies), rather than economic markets and competition, are more likely to influence organizational action and change (Levin, 2004; Powell, 1991). Neo-institutional theory focuses on an organization's broader environment, defined as its *organizational field* (Scott, 2001). This field includes the key players in an organization's operations—its suppliers, consumers, regulators, and competitors (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In this study, the key players are the school districts and aspiring leaders as suppliers and consumers, state education agencies and national and regional accreditation agencies as regulators, and

other universities as competitors. In addition, institutions—the providers of university-based leadership programs—exist within a web of normative, cognitive, and regulative elements, called "pillars" (Caronna, 2004; Scott, 2001).

Neo-institutional theory also suggests that there are several organizational forces that limit the possibility for organizational change (as new or existing actors). The organizational field includes a range of environmental pressures and constraints, including homogenizing forces (i.e., professional values and practices), cultural expectations, and conventional responses to uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Using these attributes, Lubienski found that while charter schools provided diversified alternatives for parents and were innovative in their governance and organizational practices, they were not innovative in their educational approaches. In fact, they often employed an even more traditional educational approach than non-charter schools.

In extrapolating from Lubienski's charter school research, it appears that an organization's capacity for change within its broader organizational field requires clarity about the needs being addressed, modifiable programs, and feedback mechanisms on the quality and effectiveness of new approaches in order to counteract the homogenizing forces that promote the status quo. Finally, organizational change is likely to emerge from a combination of cultural and market influences, and depend on the local conditions (Orru, Biggart, & Hamilton, 1991).

Inter-organizational relationships. Two other theoretical ideas guided the investigation of how districts and universities related in developing new approaches to leadership preparation.

Coupling theory, drawn from organizational studies, helps to frame the nature of district capacity in terms of the tightness or looseness of relationships and actions within an organization (either district or university) and between them (Weick, 1976). *Inter-organizational relationship theory* underscores the influence of shared goals and objectives, processes for governance and action, and contributed resources on the effectiveness of partnerships and collaborations (Langman & McLaughlin, 1993). Such factors focus attention on the organizational qualities that can enhance or constrain the relationship between districts and universities in shared work, such as leadership preparation.

Application of the Theories to the Influence of Districts on Leadership Preparation

The insights from neo-institutional and inter-organizational theories, in turn, can be used to uncover patterns between district-university relationships and improved leadership preparation approaches that are more innovative and effective in producing aspiring leaders who are well-prepared and able to effect school improvement. The above research suggests that seven factors are critical for districts to be able to alter how aspiring leaders are prepared locally:

- Ideological conflict over how the leadership preparation problem and approaches are framed

- Organizational will—the need and desire for organizational change in leadership preparation

- Organizational capacity to reframe the problem and create the necessary conditions for trying innovative solutions

- Access to and investment in innovative ideas to change leadership preparation approaches and to improve outcomes

- Modifiable programs that can be altered for new or redesigned approaches

- Supportive regulatory conditions

- Evidence of effectiveness and organizational feedback

The need for different and better leadership preparation and the question of whether university-based leadership preparation programs have the capacity to redesign themselves sufficiently to meet local district leadership needs are now widely discussed topics nationally. (To some degree, The Wallace Foundation's efforts to encourage districts to reframe the way that they defined their leadership needs and engage more directly in the preparation of their own candidates informed this discussion.)

The districts had sufficient impetus for change—i.e., their *organizational* will—based on the pressure they experienced to improve their schools with the available leadership capacity. Urban districts share a combination of drivers for change:

- Persistently low-performing schools

- Mounting accountability pressures from the state, requiring new district action

- Leadership turnover

- New district reform approaches that are increasingly dependent on different leadership capacities than had existed previously

These change drivers, coupled with Wallace funding (and funding from other public and private sources), encourage districts to enter into the leadership preparation field more aggressively in order to improve the quality of the leadership candidate pool.

The above research suggests that districts may employ different consumer actions to change their capacity and that of other institutions (particularly local universities and intermediary educational agencies) to prepare high-quality candidates: They can become actors in the leadership preparation field themselves or take steps to change the local leadership preparation environment. Their aim would be to bring about innovation in leadership preparation. Thus, an overriding question is whether a district's assumption of the role of active consumer within the leadership preparation field would yield new, more innovative solutions or would instead result in merely a diversification of existing options.

Equally critical is the district's capacity to modify, directly or indirectly, existing leadership preparation programs. Modification encompasses the organizational arrangements for a program, including the roles and responsibilities of districts and universities in designing and delivering it. This includes the capacity to work together and the relationship they create for shared work. It also includes the organizational arrangements of the program within larger institutional environments: within the district's and the university's own organizational contexts. Together, they present different opportunities for change.

Another critical factor is the broader regulatory environment. Leadership preparation is framed by state regulations for leadership certification and licensure and leadership preparation program registration. These regulations can either constrain or enhance districts' efforts to alter locally available leadership preparation programs and to improve their outcomes.

A final condition for change is the availability of evidence on the benefits of alterations to the leadership preparation programs and the efficacy of feedback mechanisms to reinforce and sustain change efforts. Whether and how program outcomes are tracked, reported, and used as evidence could shape a district's role and the efficacy of their leadership preparation efforts.

About This Report

For this report, we drew on this conceptual research to investigate how the eight Wallace-supported districts each invested in principal preparation, and the relationship between the districts and their local universities with respect to the design and delivery of leadership preparation programs. The goal was to determine the feasibility and efficacy of the new role of districts in leadership preparation as consumers of preparation program graduates, depending upon the consumer approach taken, and to assess the resulting impact on districts and leadership candidates.

Methods. The Wallace Foundation contracted with Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), which engaged three principal investigators and a team of researchers to develop eight district cases studies and conduct a cross-case analysis report on key findings.

The resulting report is based on more than 160 interviews with district and school personnel, university officials and faculty, and program participants and graduates, conducted during 2008 (with follow-up interviews in 2009), and on eight case studies on districts' leadership preparation and their relationships with local universities. Thus, the primary findings reflect the status of the programs in 2008 and early 2009, unless where noted. The research questions were the following:

- How are *districts using their influence* as consumers of university preparation programs to create needed changes in curricula, internships, selection, and recruitment?

- To what extent do Wallace-funded leadership preparation programs reflect the *core quality features* of effective leadership preparation described in the research literature?

- How do *tightly coupled relationships* between districts and universities affect the quality of preparation programs being developed and implemented, the quality of leaders, and the creation of a continuum of leadership development?

Lessons from the research. Several lessons emerged from this research study. They centered on five broad areas, which are explored in more detail in subsequent chapters:

- How districts use various consumer actions to influence the quality of locally available leadership preparation

- How districts rethink the scope and nature of leadership preparation for urban schools, including new practices and strategies

- How districts organize for or influence leadership preparation within their central office and in their relationships with local universities and other entities

- How leadership preparation fits within a district's broader approach to school improvement, and how context influences district efforts

- How district engagement in leadership preparation yields more, better-prepared leaders and benefits both the district and the local universities

This report has implications for both districts and universities as it can inform their current and future investments in leadership preparation. It offers illustrative examples of the different approaches used by the eight districts and a discussion of the benefits, challenges, and limitations of each approach.

The report is organized into eight chapters, the first of which is this introduction. The subsequent chapters are the following:

- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the eight districts, their educational challenges, and their approaches to leadership preparation.

- **Chapter 3** presents three consumer-directed approaches used by districts to invest in leadership preparation: setting leadership standards and expectations, developing their own programs, and collaborating with local universities.

- **Chapter 4** discusses the innovations and common practices related to core leader preparation program features, focusing primarily on candidate selection, program content, and internship experiences.

- **Chapter 5** examines the nature of district-university relationships that emerged from these approaches, exploring how tightly structured the coupling relationship is and the benefits and limitations between a district and university and between the affiliated program and other district functions, and other university units.

- **Chapter 6** presents the primary state policies and how they influence district and university approaches to leadership preparation.

- **Chapter 7** summarizes the primary benefits and challenges for districts and universities when investing in district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs, including the production of new, better-prepared leaders.

- **Chapter 8** presents the findings, exploring the relationships among district approaches, district-university relationships, and the programs that were created or redesigned. It also presents the conclusions and implications of the report's findings for districts, universities, and funders of similar efforts in the future.

Chapter 2

The Districts' Leadership Needs and School Improvement Approaches

This chapter provides a brief demographic profile of each of the eight school districts in the study and a description of the districts' leadership needs and history, relationships with affiliated universities, strategic reform approaches, leadership preparation approach, and challenges related to low-performing schools. The eight districts received funding from The Wallace Foundation for various periods between 2002 and 2009 to develop and test innovative ways to improve the preparation of school leaders and the conditions that affect their success. The information reported here covers the period of our investigation: during academic year 2007–08 and fall 2008. This historical perspective of the districts serves as a backdrop for consideration of some of the strategic investment decisions they made as they began and continued their leadership initiatives. During that time, The Wallace Foundation provided support to their work through periodic national conferences in which the Foundation profiled new practices, technical assistance on relevant matters such as curriculum and assessment, and program officer support.

The eight school districts in this study were the following: Boston Public Schools (Massachusetts), Chicago Public Schools (Illinois), Fort Wayne Community Schools (Indiana), Jefferson County Public Schools (Kentucky), Providence Public Schools (Rhode Island), Springfield District 186 (Illinois), Springfield Public Schools (Massachusetts), and St. Louis Public Schools (Missouri).

Boston, Mass.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) is a large district of 143 schools and faces many of the challenges common to urban districts. In 2008, BPS enrollment was 56,168; it had declined by almost 10 percent between 2003 and 2008. The student population was 39 percent African American, 37 percent Hispanic, 13 percent White, 9 percent Asian, and 3 percent "other." Nineteen percent of the students were English language learners (ELLs), while 72 percent were eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals in school.[11]

To address challenges and improve student achievement, then Superintendent Thomas Payzant developed the Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement and used them to frame BPS's reform agenda: effective and culturally relevant instructional practice and a collaborative school climate; data-driven instruction and PD; investments in instruction-based PD; shared leadership for sustainability; effective use of resources to support instruction and student learning; family and community partnerships; and effective, efficient, and equitable school and district operations.[12]

This reform agenda centered on a five-pronged approach: Create common expectations for all students; establish a curriculum that gives students access to rigorous content; establish common, high expectations for instructional practice; provide support for teachers; and

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11. See *Boston Public Schools at a Glance* (October 2008), www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/ BPS%20at%20a%20Glance%2008-1027.pdf.
12. See *The Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement* (2007), www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/ Seven%20Essentials%20of%20Whole%20School%20Improvement.pdf.

create assessments that provide information to guide instruction and hold schools accountable for results.

Boston's early reform agenda stressed high-quality leadership at the school and district levels. Among the strategies to support leaders and school improvement were the creation of leadership teams that met biweekly, establishment of cluster leaders to coach principals from a group of schools, subdivision of comprehensive high schools into smaller learning communities, and the training of leaders in collaborative coaching and learning methods.

Indeed a major tenet of the district's systemic reform initiative was the development of leaders. The superintendent established a new district office, the School Leadership Institute, to offer a continuum of leadership development programs to prepare, support, and provide a network for school leaders.

As a result of these reform efforts, Boston students have demonstrated consistent and sustained improvement on the statewide Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exams since the tests were first administered in 1998. On the grade 10 mathematics exams, for example—which students must pass in order to graduate—55 percent of Boston students passed in 2007, which was more than four times the 1998 passing rate of 13 percent.[13] In 2006, BPS was awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education.[14] Yet, despite these gains, BPS continued to struggle to improve student learning and achievement. In 2008, for example, only

18 of 136 schools (of those that had data for the state to assess progress—four schools did not have sufficient data) met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as defined by federal and state laws, for both English language arts and math, and the district as a whole did not make AYP.[15]

In the early 2000s and in the early stages of his reform work, the superintendent invited leaders from area colleges and universities to discuss the district's leadership challenges and its interest in developing a "home grown" approach to preparing principals to lead Boston schools. Over several months of discussions, a plan to create the Boston Principal Fellowship program (BPF) was devised. The program was developed by the district's School Leadership Institute and the director (at that time) of principal preparation at the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMass Boston).

In developing the BPF, the superintendent and district staff, in collaboration with selected university administrators, created The Ten Dimensions of Principal Leadership, which provided the underpinnings for the district's leadership development strategy. The Ten Dimensions were Understanding and Managing Self, Resilience, School Culture and Climate, Learning and Teaching, Supervision and Evaluation, Data, PD, Shared Leadership, Resources, and Family and Community Engagement. These were used to frame program content, field experience, and assessments.

In 2003, BPF launched its first cohort of aspiring leaders (primarily teachers) with

support from foundation grants and other federal funding. Program participants, called Fellows, were selected through a multi-step process beginning with nominations and other types of recruitment, a lengthy application process, and face-to-face interviews with district staff. The program combined a full-year, paid internship in a district school with a series of courses and seminars taught by district staff, university faculty, and other local experts. The Fellows completed four cornerstone[16] (formative) projects and a capstone (summative) project, including a portfolio of their work and reflections throughout the program, which was assessed at program completion.[17] Upon successful completion of the district-based program, BPF Fellows were eligible to receive a Massachusetts Initial Principal License. They also had an option to apply earned credits toward a master's degree from UMass Boston (through an agreement with its continuing education department). In return, Fellows had to make a three-year commitment to the district. At the time of the data collection for this report, beyond course approvals, UMass Boston faculty no longer played a role in the design and delivery of the BPF program.[18]

In 2006, Superintendent Payzant retired and was replaced in 2008 by Carol Johnson, who continued to support and expand the district's vision and commitment to the program. By 2008, 47 candidates had completed the program; 8 had been placed as assistant principals, and 29 had become a principal.

13. See *Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. Individual School Results by Performance Level: 1998–2007,* at http://bostonpublicschools.org/files/MCAS%20School%20Results%201998-2007.pdf.
14. Established in 2002, the Broad Prize (given by The Broad Foundation) is awarded each year to honor urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among low-income and minority students.
15. See Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data, at http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/ayp/ayp_report/district.aspx?orgtypecode=5&linkid=30&fyCode=2008&orgcode=035000.
16. The four cornerstone projects covered Analyzing Instruction and Supporting Improvement, Family and Community Engagement, Managing People and Organizations, and Scaling Up Instructional Improvement.
17. See *The Boston Principal Fellowship. 2008–2009 Program Description,* www.bostonsli.org/BPF_Desc.pdf.
18. The UMass Boston faculty member, who was instrumental in launching the program, subsequently moved to Harvard where he continued to be actively involved with the BPF program.

Chicago, Illinois

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is the third-largest school district in the nation. In 2008, it had 655 schools, serving 380,787 students.[19] Like in Boston, student enrollment was declining and had dropped 12 percent over the previous five years. The district served a diverse student population: 48 percent African American, 38 percent Hispanic, 8 percent White, and 3 percent Asian. Many of the students had special needs: 75 percent were economically disadvantaged, 16 percent were ELLs, and 13 percent had disabilities. The district was not making AYP; in 2008, more than half the schools were designated as "in need of improvement." Less than 69 percent of CPS students graduated from high school.

When he began in 2002, then Superintendent Arne Duncan initiated sweeping district reforms. The major goals were the following: (1) to create the Office of Postsecondary Education and charge it with tracking students after they graduated; (2) to improve high schools by closing some and replacing them with new, smaller schools; (3) to fire some school staff and reopen schools under new management (i.e., a "turnaround" strategy[20]); (4) to infuse classrooms with new curriculum and materials; and (5) to raise the eligibility standards for principals.

A central tenet of the district's reform agenda was its Human Capital Initiative to "identify the issues, challenges and improvements required to attract and retain the best teachers and principals."[21] A key aim, according to district documents, was to "improve the quality of principal candidates by developing and implementing an effective system wide approach to principal preparation based on best practices."[22]

Despite declining enrollments, Chicago faced a large principal shortage. Typically, the district experienced an average turnover of 60–75 principals a year. But, as part of its aggressive reform agenda, the district used buyouts and incentives to encourage many more principals to leave. By 2007, the district sought to replace 174 principals or other school leaders, affecting 25 percent of its elementary and secondary schools. In addition to replacing a large number of school leaders, the district faced two other challenges. First, there was significant unevenness among the schools in the number of leader applicants for open positions ranging from only 2 to 100 or more, depending upon the school. The second challenge was the district's decentralized leadership selection process. Local School Councils, working with advice and recommendations from Area Instruction Officers, hired new principals from the district's larger pool of eligible candidates. These Local School Councils would often have differing viewpoints on the essential qualities of an effective school leader. To reduce the imbalance in candidate selection options, the district strove to gain greater control over the pool of qualified applicants.

In 2002, while developing its broad reform approach, the district created a work group to focus on improving leadership preparation and candidate quality. Among the partners were Active Chicago Public School Principals, the Chicago Principals and Administrators

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19. See *Interactive Illinois Report Card,* http://iirc.niu.edu/District.aspx?districtID=15016299025.

20. A turnaround strategy is one that strives to effect rapid school change by replacing the principal and a large portion of the staff, as well as implement other school improvement strategies. It is part of the local and federal accountability strategies for chronically low-performing schools. Chicago created an Office of School Turnaround to support this work. See *The Chicago Public Schools Turnaround Model,* www.cpsturnaround.org/cps/.

21. See A Letter from CEO Arne Duncan, *Chicago Public Schools: Human Capital Initiative,* www.hci.cps.k12.il.us/memo.html.

22. See Principal Preparation, *Chicago Public Schools: Human Capital Initiative,* www.hci.cps.k12.il.us/prep.html.

Association, the district's Department of Human Resources (HR), the Leadership Academy and Urban Network for Chicago (LAUNCH) of Northwestern University, the local Principal Review Board, and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). At that time, Chicago had five local universities with graduate leadership preparation programs: DePaul University, Loyola University, National-Louis University, Northwestern University, and UIC. Concordia University, located in a Chicago suburb, also prepared a large number of leadership candidates. Only one, UIC, is a public institution.

In 2003, the district—drawing on the work group's efforts and with support from local universities, the public education fund, private foundations, and human capital advisors from local businesses—developed a leadership development strategy to implement the leadership goals of its reform agenda and created the Office of Principal Preparation and Development (OPPD), a branch of its HR department. Over the next few years, the district identified five core leadership competencies (based in part on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC] standards[23]) to be used in filling principal positions and for principal evaluation. The district's five competencies and related success factors are the following: (1) Develop and articulate a belief system through voice and action—*related success factors:* strategic thinking, service leadership,

impact and influence; (2) Engage and develop faculty—*related success factors:* team leadership, developing others; (3) Assess the quality of classroom instruction—*related success factors*: instructional leadership, accountability; (4) Facilitate/motivate change—*related success factors:* driving for results, leading and managing change, building and maintaining collaborative relationships; and (5) Balance management—*related success factors:* operational excellence, planning and organizing.

The district then created a rigorous eligibility process for candidates seeking to become part of the district's pool. At the time of our study, this process was being revised for more targeted candidate placement, by narrowing the pool eligible for selection by the Local School Councils.

In addition, the district took steps to give priority to selected university-based and alternative leadership preparation programs and to provide paid, full-time internships for candidates from those programs. The district selected as partners UIC, New Leaders for New Schools[24] (which is affiliated locally with National-Louis University), and Teach For America's (TFA) partnership[25] with Harvard University to prepare candidates for school leadership positions. With the district's support, UIC's College of Education and Department of Policy Studies built on its newly developed Doctorate in Education (EdD) in Urban Education Leadership, which also prepared candidates for state certification in school

and central office administration. Its program enrolled 20 candidates a year, selecting approximately 1 out of 4–5 applicants. Candidates completed 88 hours of graduate coursework (which focused on change leadership) and a year-long, fully funded internship in a Chicago public school. Candidates received up to two years of follow-up support once they became principals. To support the program, the district funded the candidates' salaries during their full-time internship (using foundation funding), identified potential principals to serve as internship supervisors, and provided small monetary stipends for candidates to undertake school-based projects. Since 2002, the program has had 40 candidates who completed their one-year residencies, all of whom have been hired for leadership positions in Chicago public schools, many of which are among the highest-needs schools.

Meanwhile, Northwestern University's LAUNCH program, which had been a primary producer of leadership candidates for the district, lost its status as a CPS partner in 2007 because too few of its graduates demonstrated that they had developed the district's five core competencies.

23. The ISLLC standards were written by representatives from states and professional associations in partnership with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 1994–95, and published, with foundation support, by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 1996. Their purpose was to stimulate discussion on leader expectations and help various stakeholders enhance the quality of educational leadership. States use these standards in developing their own educational leadership standards and licensing policies. (www.ccsso.org/projects/state_action_for_education_leadership/isllc_standards/)

24. New Leaders for New Schools is a national not-for-profit organization that prepares highly qualified candidates for urban school principalships, using rigorous selection, intensive training, and a one-year residency model.

25. A partnership launched in fall 2007 by TFA, the Chicago school system, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education to prepare leaders for schools. With financial support from The Chicago Public Education Fund and the Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation, TFA and CPS recruited high-performing TFA alumni to attend a year-long, fully funded school leadership program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and return for a one-year paid residency in a Chicago school. After the residency, candidates were assigned as principals to a Chicago public school. See School Leadership Initiative's projects, www.teachforamerica.org/after-the-corps/advancing-alumni-leadership/school-leadership-initiative/.

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS) is Indiana's second-largest school district, serving 31,606 students in 53 schools in 2008. The student population was approximately 56 percent White, 25 percent African American, and 11 percent Hispanic. Although only 5 percent of the students were ELLs, they spoke more than 75 different languages. More than half (56 percent) of the students were economically disadvantaged.[26] Although the district's test scores were typically above the state average and met its overall performance goals, there were dramatic disparities among subgroups—particularly African American and special education students—and the school district did not meet AYP in 2008. In 2007, 73 percent of White students were proficient, but only 45 percent of African American students and 54 percent of Hispanic students attained proficiency.

The district's approach to school reform was based on Jim Collins's "hedgehog principle" (Collins, 2001) of focusing all of its efforts on one priority: student achievement. The district's current strategic plan for improving student achievement has three major priorities:

- Achieving and maintaining academic excellence

- Engaging parents and the community

- Operating with fiscal responsibility, integrity, and effectiveness

To achieve academic excellence, the district's objectives included developing a rigorous and relevant educational program, supporting measurable and continual improvement, facilitating effective instruction, and creating safe and supportive schools. Two key strategies were ensuring a cohesive leadership system to implement district goals, and fostering district-wide professional learning communities. The district's reform work has been supported by the HOPE Foundation (time period).[27]

The district averaged 10–15 school leader vacancies annually. However, according to a Wallace grant coordinator, more important than filling vacancies was the district's focus on "moving can-do principals into struggling places" by using leadership development as a driver for supporting FWCS's systemic, instructionally focused reform, including its PD work with teachers. According to the superintendent, Wendy Robinson, principals represented a critical link in the accountability chain: from the superintendent to the teachers.

Historically, the practice in FWCS had been to "tap" future school leaders by using more conventional criteria (e.g., nominating coaches and physical education directors for high school principalships based on their management and student relations skills). With its shifting focus, the district has changed its recruitment criteria to focus on instructionally proficient teachers with demonstrated leadership potential.

FWCS invested in its (post-certification) leadership development program primarily to ensure that the district was preparing a specialized cadre of leaders ready to step immediately into its schools and to perform at the high level expected of all FWCS employees by the superintendent. Rather than collaborate or compete with local programs in certification-related preparation, the district created three district-based preparation programs to precede and follow university-based certification preparation in order to encourage interest in leadership and bolster readiness for leadership position placement:

- Investigating Series (meetings for individuals who might be interested in pursuing school leadership in the future)

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26. See Council of Chief State School Officers, *School Matters,* www.schoolmatters.com/schools.aspx/q/page=dl/did=5997/midx=StudentDemographics.

27. For more information, see www.hopefoundation.org/begin/media/fortwayneresults_april2010.pdf.

- Exploring Series (a more formalized program providing basic seminars and on-site leadership opportunities to individuals in the process of seeking principal certification)

- Aspiring Leaders (a year-long internship in a few schools)

Two university-based leadership preparation programs served the region, but the district did not partner with either of them for their programs.[28] FWCS drew faculty and trainers from multiple organizations and entities, rather than investing its resources solely in one group, to offer these programs. The Exploring Series used faculty from Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW). FWCS also worked with the National Staff Development Council for skills coaching, and the HOPE Foundation to provide support for elementary school principals. District staff and IPFW had recently attended Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)[29] workshops, and FWCS was considering collaboration with IPFW for a district-focused leadership preparation program.

Since its inception, 45 district candidates have completed the district-based internship program, 34 of whom have been hired as school leaders. By 2008, 14 of the 53 school principals had completed the program. If the district lacked sufficient openings, district staff extended the internship to two years to keep the individuals engaged in ongoing learning and preparation, with anticipated placement in a leadership position once one became available.

Jefferson County, Kentucky

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) is a large metropolitan-area school district in Kentucky with 89 elementary schools, 24 middle schools, 22 high schools, and 22 other learning centers.[30] In 2008 the district served a racially and ethnically diverse student population of 92,000: 55 percent were White; 36 percent African American; 4 percent Hispanic, and 6 percent "other." Students also had diverse needs: 57 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 14 percent qualified for special education, and 4 percent were ELLs.

The district had long struggled over the best way to support school integration, experimenting with busing and admissions procedures to equalize school assignments. In 2007, the courts ruled against its admission and assignment plans for placing too much emphasis on race. In 2008, the district proposed new school assignment plans that both met the court's rule and strived to maintain racial balance district-wide, by incorporating a student's race, ethnicity, income, and disability into the equation for school assignment.

The district's superintendent from 1994 to 2008, Steven Daeschner, stressed district-wide accountability and achievement, using assessment results to focus school improvement work, in order to help all children achieve to high levels. Under his leadership, the district's systemic reform initiative included the following:

- A district-wide reading program

- District-wide math and science initiatives

- Professional learning communities for teachers and administrators

- A formative assessment focus to adjust instruction to meet students' needs

- Support of teacher PD on improved instructional effectiveness through differentiated instruction and Response to Intervention,[31] among other strategies

According to the 2007–08 school year state report card, 125 out of 155 school sites were rated as successful on the state's Commonwealth Accountability Test. The district met its annual NCLB performance objectives for all students combined but not for two subgroups: African American students and students with disabilities. As a result, the district was designated as not meeting federal AYP.[32]

The superintendent was replaced by the school board in 2008, and the new superintendent, Sheldon Berman, brought an expanded vision of the role of education. Under his leadership, the district

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28. The programs were based at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne and at Indiana Wesleyan University.

29. SREB is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works with leaders and policymakers in 16 member states to improve Pre-K through postsecondary education. Among its initiatives are efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of school leaders through the application of standards, use of high-quality training modules, state policy guidelines, and district-university partnerships for preparation.

30. See National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/100_largest_0506/tables/table_a10.asp.

31. Response to Intervention (RTI) is a method of academic intervention designed to provide early, effective assistance to children who have difficulty learning. RTI seeks to prevent academic failure through early intervention, frequent progress measurement, and increasingly intensive research-based instructional interventions.

32. See Kentucky Testing Report Archives, http://applications.education.ky.gov/catsreportsarchive/Default.aspx.

formally approved four goals to guide systemic reform: "Enhance teaching, enhance effective leadership, strengthen organizational culture, and improve organizational effectiveness."[33] The goals were included in the district's theory of action: "JCPS wants students to be prepared to achieve their goals, follow their dreams and help create a more just society."[34]

Under the previous superintendent, the district had experienced high levels of leadership turnover and challenges in filling leadership positions with quality candidates. For example, in 2002, when the district began its Wallace-funded initiative, 28 principals (20 percent of all principals) had left the district. To address this turnover, strengthen candidate quality, and ensure that the race and ethnicity of district leaders mirrored the student population, district staff invested in leadership preparation and development.

The district's initial approach to leadership preparation combined a partnership with one local university, the University of Louisville,[35] with a variety of district-based program offerings for aspiring, new, and experienced school leaders. These programs were later pared down and reorganized into a more coherent and sequenced series of programs as a continuum for leadership preparation, based on the ISLLC standards. In 2007–08 and 2008–09, this work was focused even further, through a district-university process of developing leadership standards to guide leadership preparation, and by expanding the district partnership to include three more universities (Bellarmine, Spalding, and Indiana University Southeast). The district's continuum of leadership preparation evolved into four levels, which could be taken as a sequence and were increasingly selective:

- **Introduction to School Leadership:** A one-year program designed for K–12 teachers interested in developing their instructional leadership skills.

- **IDEAS and University Collaboration/University Program Redesign:** A year-long program offered in conjunction with the University of Louisville and three other universities to prepare candidates for initial principal certification. In 2007–08, the district had 38 applicants for these programs, and 24 (63 percent) were accepted. Of the 24, 18 (75 percent) completed the program.

- **Principals for Tomorrow:** A year-long program designed for K–12 teachers and certified staff who are in non-teaching leadership roles and have completed a principal preparation program.

- **Internship:** A full-year, full-time, paid internship was available each year for up to six aspiring principals who had completed principal certification. The district also provided support for new and experienced school leaders, including induction support, mentoring, and ongoing PD. Since 2002, 52 percent of the current elementary school principals completed the district's internship program.

Between 2002 and 2008, the district has had 111 candidates complete a district-university affiliated leadership preparation program (initially through just the University of Louisville, and later through three other institutions as well). Of these, 19 percent completed the Principals for Tomorrow program, 8 percent completed a district internship, and 28 percent became a school or district leader. It is worth noting, as well, that 66 of the new principals and 70 of the new assistant principals hired between 2004 and 2009 had completed their leadership preparation at one of these four institutions.[36]

33. See *2008–09 Comprehensive District Improvement Plan and Strategic Action Plan,* www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Departments/Planning/DistrictPlanningSite/CDIP0809.pdf, p. 1.
34. See www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Departments/Planning/DistrictPlanningSite/CDIP0809.pdf, p. iii.
35. The University of Louisville had created the IDEAS program with JCPS prior to Wallace support (Kelley & Peterson, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2000).
36. Unpublished data provided by the Department of Administrator Recruitment and Development, JCPS, 2009.

Providence, Rhode Island

The Providence Public School District (PPSD) is an urban district comprising 23,344 students in school year 2008–09.[37] In 2008, about 60 percent of the students were Hispanic, 22 percent African American, 12 percent White, 6 percent Asian, and 1 percent Native American. More than 85 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and roughly one fifth were designated as ELLs. District enrollment had been dropping, from 27,450 in 2002 to its 2008 level, a 15 percent decline. At the same time, the district was struggling to improve student achievement and meet state assessment standards. In spring 2008, it entered its seventh year of not meeting AYP targets in at least two of three school levels (elementary, middle, and high school); 29 of 49 schools did not make AYP in 2007–08.[38] Since January 2007, the entire district had been under state corrective action.

The district had 44 schools (as well as four annexes, one learning center, and two charter schools), 2,115 teachers, and 126 school and central office administrators. At the time of its initial Wallace funding in 2002, the district anticipated a large number of school leader retirements and started looking for replacements who could address the growing accountability challenges to turn around its schools, and who would better reflect the changing racial/ethnic makeup of the city's schools.

These challenges were tackled by a series of superintendents, each serving a short tenure (three years or fewer). Since 1999, Providence has had four superintendents: Diana Lam (1999–2002), Melody Johnson (2002–05), Donnie Evans (2005–08), and Tom Brady (2008–present). Johnson had served as deputy superintendent to Lam, so there was continuity between their two administrations. However, subsequent superintendent turnover led to shifting reform approaches and changing strategies that threatened sustainability and created inconsistent approaches to leadership development as part of the district's improvement efforts.

While she was deputy superintendent, Johnson initiated the district's Aspiring Principals Program, based on her assessment of two major needs in the district: (1) to improve student achievement, and (2) to develop school leaders. In her words, "A school won't go anywhere without a strong instructional leader." To develop more and better-qualified leadership candidates, Johnson worked with the University of Rhode Island (URI) to establish the Aspiring Principals Program on-site in the district. Other forms of leadership development, particularly with the goal of turning around low-performing schools, included support from both the Rhode Island Department of Education and PPSD officials.

The district chose to work with URI primarily because of its flexibility and willingness to collaborate with the district, customize a program to fit PPSD's context, and teach on-site in the district. URI, while 30 miles away, is the state's only public university. Although it lacked a leadership preparation program, it had a good school of education and a strong research capacity. In addition, Johnson had a prior working relationship with the school of education's dean. Two other colleges in Providence also offered leadership preparation programs: Providence College and Rhode Island College (which is also a public institution). However, at the start of the Wallace-funded initiative, Rhode Island College's program had lost its accreditation (it has since regained it). The only other leadership preparation program in the state was the Principal Residency Network, which led to leadership certification but was not a degree program.

Johnson's successor, Donnie Evans, who served as superintendent from 2005 to 2008, brought a major shift in district educational reform strategy and emphasized Effective Schools principles.[39] The district adopted 10 dimensions of school effectiveness, with 10–15 measurable indicators for each; the first dimension was to have strong principal leadership.[40] Evans called his initiative "Realizing the Dream: Urban Schools for the 21st Century." During his tenure, there was a move toward creating a strong working relationship among teachers and leaders in support of a family-oriented school culture, while promoting greater standardization across the district through use of more scripted curriculum and direct instructional approaches[41] and a focus on struggling students. These changes, in turn, required a shift in assessment and curricular programs, particularly in math and reading instruction. Evans created new middle and high school directors and provided PD to support principals so

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37. See *PPSD Fact Sheet 2008–2009,* compiled by the PPSD Office of Communication, www.providenceschools.org.

38. See Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Information Services, www.eride.ri.gov/reportcard/08/default.asp.

39. According to Edmonds (1982), the Effective Schools principles were refined through subsequent research to be instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive home-school relations, and opportunity to learn and student time on task (Lezotte, 1991).

40. See *Providence Public School District: Closing the gaps.* (2007), http://education-executive.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=401:providence-public-school-district-closing-the-gaps&catid=112:northeastern-school-districts&Itemid=489.

41. *Scripted curriculum* materials are commercially prepared instructional materials that require the teacher to read from a script while delivering the lesson. *Direct instruction* is a teaching model based on the theory that clear instruction that eliminates misinterpretations can greatly improve and accelerate learning. To learn more, see Stein, Carnine, & Dixon (1998). Direct instruction: Integrating curriculum design and effective teaching practice. *Intervention in School and Clinic,* 33(4), 227–233.

that they could implement reforms at the school level, but he temporarily suspended the Aspiring Principals Program for one year.

His successor, Tom Brady, was only months into the position at the time of our study. At that time, he had not proposed a new district reform plan but had assured the school board that he was not planning to dismantle district reforms and start over. Instead, he was examining what worked in Providence first. Among his strategies, however, was a plan to resume the Aspiring Principals Program and continue the partnership with URI.

As the district's reform approaches changed, its Aspiring Principals Program did as well. The program was originally aligned with the Institute for Learning (IFL) Principles of Learning,[42] but it evolved to focus on leadership skills development using curriculum modules developed by SREB, which are aligned with the ISLLC standards and SREB's 13 Critical Success Factors for Principals.[43]

When the program first started, the district hired a program director who became an adjunct faculty member at URI and taught many core program courses; two other URI faculty members and some district staff also taught courses in the program. The program was delivered on-site through the PPSD Leadership Office, with curriculum and research courses and an internship seminar taught by URI faculty. In 2009, under the leadership of Tom Brady, the district planned to initiate a fourth cohort of candidates. The program was redesigned again, in part to reflect Rhode Island's newly adopted state leadership standards.

Since the program's inception, 59 candidates had graduated by 2008, 55 percent of whom became school or district leaders, and most of whom continue to work in the district.

Springfield, Illinois

Located near the geographic center of Illinois, Springfield is the sixth-largest city in the state and is both the capital and a county seat. In 2008, its school district, District 186, served approximately 14,000 students in its 33 schools (as well as four alternative schools and one early learning center). Twenty-one schools were designated as Title I.[44] Its student population was diverse: 53 percent were White; 37 percent African American; 2 percent Hispanic; and 7 percent "other." Nearly 60 percent of the student population was classified as low-income, 19 percent had Individual Education Plans, and less than 1 percent were ELLs.

The district had 35 principals (for 33 regular schools, one early childhood center, and one charter middle school). A managing principal at the district office oversaw four alternative/adult centers with help from four on-site assistant principals. Because most principals were lifelong residents of Springfield and had principal tenures at the same school far longer than the average of 4.3 years (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, & Orlofsky, 2006), demand for new principals was low compared with other urban districts of comparable size.

The district's academic performance was mixed. District 186 had consistently had six to nine schools—most at the secondary level—on

42. The nine IFL Principles of Learning, which are designed to help educators analyze the quality of instruction and opportunities for learning that they offer to students, are as follows: Organizing for Effort, Clear Expectations, Fair and Credible Evaluations, Recognition of Accomplishment, Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum, Accountable Talk®, Socializing Intelligence, Self-Management of Learning, and Learning as Apprenticeship. See http://ifl.lrdc.pitt.edu/ifl/index.php?section=pol.

43. With Wallace support, SREB produced 19 training modules for school leaders to support the redesign of leadership preparation programs. (See www.sreb.org/main/Leadership/Modules/modulesummaries.asp.) For a list of the 13 Critical Success Factors, see www.sreb.org/main/.../06V47_Leadership_Curriculum_Modules.pdf.

44. See Springfield Public Schools, www.springfield.k12.il.us/downloads/basic/87462/DistReportCard08.pdf.

the Academic Watch Status lists since 2001; three Title I schools and the district as a whole did not make AYP in 2008.[45] The district was designated as under corrective action (Year 2), primarily for not meeting assessment benchmarks for low-income students and students with disabilities. However, its graduation rate of 89 percent exceeded the state rate of 86.5 percent, and the graduation rate of its low-income students was close, at 85 percent.

To address its needs and challenges, District 186 focused its reform efforts on restructuring secondary schools and providing ongoing PD to ensure that all teachers and principals had the support they needed to implement the changes. Among these approaches was an investment in several leadership preparation programs and strategies, which made up a continuum of leadership preparation, leading to initial school leadership positions.

In 2002, Diane Rutledge, then the superintendent of District 186, worked with the chair of educational leadership programs at Illinois State University (ISU) to co-construct a preparation program for aspiring principals in the district. ISU is 75 miles north of the district and a public university with a strong public service mission and a very large school of education, which had a long history of district collaboration. The school district made this arrangement, despite the fact that two other universities offered leadership preparation programs within the city: University of Illinois at Springfield (which has a partially online degree program) and Quincy University (a private, religiously affiliated institution

with an off-site program in a Catholic high school in Springfield). The superintendent and department chair had gotten to know each other through prior statewide work and out of this relationship and commonly shared expectations for leadership, formed this program.

In 2002, with funding from The Wallace Foundation, the school district and ISU forged a partnership and developed a six-semester program, ISU/D-186, that combined an embedded internship (45 hours per semester) with weekly six-hour courses, taught on-site, some based on ISU's existing standards-based courses and others revised specifically for District 186. Candidates prepared a comprehensive portfolio of their internship experiences and completed a capstone project as their culminating experience.

Since its inception, the ISU/D-186 program graduated 35 candidates, of whom 19 (54 percent) became school leaders, including 11 who became school principals by 2009.

To complement this unique leadership preparation program, the district also created a full-time, full-year, paid internship for four to five candidates who are assigned to specific schools. Despite the conclusion of Wallace funding and turnovers in district and university leadership, both institutions continue to sponsor the partnership program, and the district is continuing the paid internship, although serving fewer candidates.

Springfield, Mass.

The Springfield Public Schools (SPS) is a mid-sized urban district in Springfield, an economically depressed city in southwestern Massachusetts. In school year 2007–08, the school system served 25,223 students in grades PreK–12. The student population was primarily Hispanic (50 percent) and African American (26 percent).[46] Many had special needs: 78 percent were from low-income households eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 23 percent did not speak English as their first language, and 23 percent qualified for special education (all at rates 50–120 percent higher than the statewide averages). The district lagged significantly behind state averages on all 2006–07 school performance indicators: higher dropout, suspension, and grade retention rates; and lower attendance, graduation, and college plan rates. Students performed far below the state average on all academic indicators across grade levels—particularly in middle school math, where only 10–13 percent of students in grades 6–8 scored *proficient* or higher on statewide assessments.

The district has 30 elementary schools, 2 K–8 schools, 7 middle schools, 5 high schools, and 9 schools in its Springfield Academy for Excellence (spanning K–12); there are also 4 charter schools in the district.[47] In 2008, 27 schools were designated as needing corrective action or restructuring, and the entire district was designated as under state corrective action.[48]

45. Ibid.
46. From *Springfield Public Schools Composite Performance Index for the Years 2000–2007,* www.sps.springfield.ma.us/deptsites/grants/content/Dr%20%20Burke%20Presentation%20CPI%20011008%20Final%20with%20revision%20for%20White%20020108.pdf
47. *Quick Facts about the Springfield Public Schools, 2*(2), September 11, 2009, www.sps.springfield.ma.us/webContent/SPSQuickFacts.pdf.
48. *2008–2009 NCLB Report Card – Springfield,* www.sps.springfield.ma.us/deptsites/grants/NCLB08-09/Springfield%20District%20NCLB%20Report%20Card%202008-09.pdf.

When SPS was initially funded by The Wallace Foundation, the district faced a shortage of quality leadership candidates and anticipated a significant number of retirements, including a 90 percent turnover in central office officials and an 80 percent turnover in school building leaders. In addition, the ethnicity of the existing district leadership did not mirror that of the student population.

Since it received initial Wallace funding, the district has had three superintendents, which shifted its district reform approach over the study period. Under the leadership of Superintendent Peter Negroni at the time funding was first received, the district had adopted Resnick's approach to school improvement,[49] which included the IFL Principles of Learning and a strong emphasis on instructional leadership. This approach used a coaching strategy to develop teachers and other staff, which was a departure from the conventional supervisory approach used by school leaders in the district. Superintendent Joseph Burke, who served from 2003 to 2008, focused systemic reform efforts around a commitment "to continuous improvement for all students, faculty, and administrators" and organized improvement strategies to maximize the performance of all student learners, productivity of all adult learners, and the quality and delivery of support for student and adult learning.[50]

As part of both superintendents' approaches, the district created a PD center and then applied for and gained permission from the state to prepare and grant certification to principals and teachers. After discussing its leadership preparation needs with several local universities, district staff formed an affiliation with the University of Massachusetts Amherst

(UMass Amherst). At the same time, district staff designed what became its Leadership for Educational Achievement in Districts (LEAD) program[51] based on their own best leadership development experiences, including Research for Better Teaching (RBT),[52] SREB's leadership preparation curriculum modules,[53] and Harvard University's case study-based learning approach. While this was primarily a district-based program, officials wanted to draw on UMass Amherst resources and enable candidates to earn credit toward a master's degree. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) with UMass Amherst stated that the district would generate a cohort of candidates each year, while the university would offer reduced tuition for 15 credits in the 21-credit program, offer on-site courses and an internship seminar, and approve two district program courses for credit toward a master's degree.

The key features of the LEAD program consisted of a highly selective process to identify candidates (fewer than half the applicants were accepted), a cohort structure, and coursework and an internship designed around the five domains of state professional standards for administrators: Leadership, Administration, Equity, Community Relationships, and Professional Responsibilities. Courses and program experiences were taught by faculty from two other universities, an RBT specialist, district staff, and UMass Amherst faculty. Candidates completed a 10-week, full-time, paid internship in a district school, a case study project in which they proposed a plan to turn around a low-performing school, and a culminating portfolio to be evaluated by district staff. Students could take additional courses at UMass Amherst to complete their master's degree or a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study.

49. For more information on Lauren Resnick, the founder of the IFL, and her approach, see http://ifl.lrdc.pitt.edu/ifl/index.php/home/.
50. See Springfield Public Schools, www.sps.springfield.ma.us.
51. Funded by The Wallace Foundation.
52. Founded in 1979, RBT is a training and consulting group that works to strengthen organizational culture and to institutionalize the study of teaching within schools and throughout school districts. (See www.rbteach.com/rbteach2/about.html.)
53. *SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules.* See www.sreb.org.

Since beginning, the program has graduated 80 leadership candidates, many of whom (65 percent) advanced to leadership positions locally; 17 of the 80 had become principals by 2009. Of all current school and district administrators, about 40 percent were LEAD program graduates (excluding those in acting positions).

In spring 2008, the district hired a new superintendent, Alan Ingram. He brought his own strategies and approaches to district improvement, including using student achievement results for feedback and continual improvement of all district systems. As part of that strategy, he has been reviewing evidence of the effectiveness of all district programs, including the LEAD program. Once he has analyzed its impact on student achievement, he will decide whether to maintain the program, reform, or eliminate it.

St. Louis, Missouri

The St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) had been in distress for many years, wracked with the loss of accreditation, state takeover of the governance structure, excessive staff turnover, and a revolving door of superintendents. Student enrollment in the district was declining steadily: In 2008, enrollment was down by 15,000 students (54 percent) since 2000, due in part to the district's longstanding desegregation settlement, which permitted African American SLPS students to transfer to county school districts. Eighty-one percent of SLPS students were African American and 14 percent were White. Nearly three quarters of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Of the 84 schools in

the district, only 7 met AYP targets in 2007 (increasing to 11 in 2008), and the district's dropout rate was 23 percent (compared with 4 percent statewide).

Between 2003 and 2007, the district lacked a coherent approach to school improvement and made little academic progress. During this time, it had six different superintendents (including interim superintendents). The district lost accreditation in March 2007 due to its persistently poor performance, and the state appointed a three-person board to supersede the power of the elected school board. In turn, the new board appointed a superintendent in fall 2007. Given sharp declines in student enrollment and a $36 million budget deficit, the district was taking steps to close more than a dozen schools.

With a rise in an aging principal cadre, imminent retirements, and a declining student achievement rate, the district saw the need to invest in acquiring what officials described as "break the mold" school leaders. District officials explained that many veteran principals, while committed to the district, were traditionalists with limited interest in newer reform initiatives aimed at raising student achievement.

Under its immediate past superintendent at the time of this study, the district began to develop a comprehensive school improvement plan that was in direct response to the plummeting student achievement levels. The plan focused on strengthening the quality and effectiveness of school leadership through improved preparation, continued development, improved supervision, and performance-based evaluation. In addition, prior to The Wallace Foundation's involvement, the

district instituted a reform to standardize curricula across school sites by reducing the number of acceptable curricula that schools could choose. The district also sought to weed out ineffective teachers and to help others improve their instructional abilities. Despite the turnover in superintendents, the district had maintained a focus on these priorities.

As part of this reform work, SLPS established the Office of Leadership Development in 2005 to coordinate its leadership initiatives. District staff hired to implement the leadership-related school improvement strategies gave priority to developing and supporting individuals who were ambitious, entrepreneurial, highly committed to making a difference for the children of St. Louis, and unwilling to accept the status quo or to allow low expectations and poor performance to continue to carry the day in the city's schools.

Within the St. Louis vicinity are several universities with leadership preparation programs, including St. Louis University (a private, religiously affiliated institution), University of Missouri–St. Louis (the largest in the St. Louis region), and Maryville University (in suburban St. Louis). While all offered degrees in education leadership, the latter two were eligible to enroll aspiring leader candidates who received scholarships from the Parsons Blewett Memorial Fund.[54] When first funded by The Wallace Foundation, the district started a program partnership with St. Louis University and the University of Missouri–St. Louis. However, the district found the university programs to be too traditional and to have too few connections to the district's priorities, became dissatisfied,

54. The Parsons Blewett Memorial Fund, www.parsonsblewett.org.

and investigated alternatives. Therefore, in 2004, the district hired a full-time director to head the Office of Leadership Development, who studied the NYC Leadership Academy as a possible model for district-based leadership preparation. In 2005, the district adopted a curriculum and approach for its model, the New Leaders Project, and, through a competitive bid process, selected the University of Missouri–Columbia (127 miles west of St. Louis) as its university partner for the program.

The primary reason why the district selected the University of Missouri–Columbia was that the university agreed to the district's "non-negotiables" for leadership preparation and waived the tuition fees for course credit. The program was an experience-based approach to leadership preparation, combining a full-year, nearly full-time internship with two-part course-work: an initial five-week summer "intensive" and weekly all-day seminars on standards-based topics. The program ended with a short summer session to help candidates transition to leadership positions in the district. Instruction was provided by both university faculty and district staff. Successful completion of this year-long program led to a master's degree in education and certification as a principal. Graduates were required to work in the district for five years or to reimburse the district for the full cost of the training.

By 2008, the program had graduated three cohorts, for a total of 41 candidates, 33 of whom became school leaders in the district. Though the program was suspended for school year 2008–09 as a result of leadership turnover in the district and university, a new cohort was planned for 2009–10.

Similarities and Differences Across the Districts

Although the profiles for each of the eight school districts covered in this report are each unique in many ways, we found several patterns and themes across them that begin to tell a larger story about the types of challenges they faced, the conditions that may influence districts' strategic decisions, and differences in relationships with area universities. Specifically, the districts have the common challenge of identifying high-quality leaders while turning around low-performing schools. Below is a comparison of the eight districts on their leadership needs, school performance, and university preparation program contexts, as backdrops to their investments in leadership preparation.

Leadership Needs

We found that study districts across the board were faced with two persistent challenges in addressing their school leadership needs: (1) a continuing demand for highly qualified school leaders that exceeded the number of qualified and available candidates in the area, and (2) a number of chronically low-performing schools, requiring leaders who were equipped with "turn around"[55] skill sets and dispositions to dramatically improve these schools.

In some cases, the challenges related to the sheer size of the district. Study districts ranged in enrollment size, from 28,000 students in 34 schools (Springfield, Illinois) to 381,000 students in more than 600 schools (Chicago), as shown in Table 2.1 on page 39. The usual

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55. *School improvement* and *school turnaround* both aim to improve student outcomes by changing how schools and classrooms operate. They differ in that school turnaround involves quick, dramatic improvement within three years, whereas school improvement is often marked by steady, incremental improvement over a longer period.

turnover of school leaders would create a need for a continually replenished pool of aspiring leaders that paralleled the district populations and numbers of schools. But, according to interview responses, some districts were facing unusually high demands for new leaders, while others had too many school leaders but too few among them who were sufficiently skilled for their school performance needs.

Three districts (Jefferson County, Providence, and Springfield, Mass.) faced unusually high turnover of school leaders or anticipated a large percentage of leader retirements over the next few years,

creating a need to boost the number of highly qualified candidates for leadership districts. Some districts (such as Boston and St. Louis) had a steady decline in student enrollment that resulted in school closings and, as a result, a decline in the number of school leaders needed. In Springfield, Illinois, the number of new leaders needed hit a plateau due to slowly declining enrollments. Others, such as Providence, experienced enrollment declines but had yet to close schools, so maintained their leadership needs. At least one district (Chicago) found that its efforts

to restructure and create smaller schools resulted in the immediate need for more and better-qualified candidates.

The districts' need for leaders to address instructional improvement was also defined in part by their schools' achievement performance, as assessed by their state and local accountability indicators. As shown in Table 2.1, seven of the eight districts were under state watch for under-performing, or had been identified as not making AYP as a district. For many districts, half or more of their schools had not made AYP for school year 2007–08 at the time of the study.

Table 2.1: District student enrollment, number of schools, AYP status, number of superintendents, and district leadership offices

School Districts	Number of Students	Number of Schools	AYP*	Number of Superintendents 2002–08	Central District Office for Leadership Preparation and Development
Boston	56,168	143	97 schools and district as a whole did not make AYP	2	HR Department
Chicago	380,787	655	317 schools were designated as Title I schools in need of improvement (not meeting AYP) and district as a whole did not make AYP	1**	Office of Leadership Development
Fort Wayne	31,606	53	District did not make AYP	2	Leadership Office
Jefferson County	92,000	157	42 schools and district as a whole did not make AYP	2	LEAD program, Department of HR
Providence	23,344	52	29 schools did not make AYP; district had been under state corrective action since 2007	4	School Leadership Institute
Springfield, Illinois	28,000	34	6–9 of 34 schools had been on state's Academic Watch Status lists since 2001	2	Department of Professional Development
Springfield, Mass.	25,233	55	33 schools did not make AYP; entire district was under state corrective action	2	Office of Principal Preparation and Development
St. Louis	30,000	84	73 schools did not make AYP; district was de-accredited by the state in 2007	7	HR Department

 * AYP status of all schools and districts is for 2007–08.

** At the time of this data collection CPS had been under the same CEO. Since that time, it has changed CEOs.

District Reform Approaches and Leadership Preparation Implications

To address their school improvement challenges and advance student performance, all eight districts launched new reform initiatives during or shortly after they received Wallace funding for leadership preparation. Commonly, as described above, the districts focused on instructional changes (such as new reading and math programs), formative assessments, and PD for teachers. They varied in how explicitly they focused on improving the quality of school leadership as part of their reform agenda, particularly in the early years of their Wallace funding. Over time, most of the eight districts' focus on leadership preparation and development as a formally designated reform strategy became more explicit. Designation of an office or department for leadership development reflected this priority.

Maintaining a focus on leadership preparation and development, particularly as integral to the district-wide reform initiative, was challenging, in part due to superintendent turnover. Seven of the eight districts experienced superintendent turnover during the six-year grant period at least once, if not more. One consequence of this turnover was a change in direction. Some districts developed aggressive new reform approaches to school improvement, in some cases shifting dramatically from prior approaches. In St. Louis, for example, the district shifted from being a highly decentralized system to a more centralized one that established unified curricula to support its very mobile student population. As one district official explained:

> We went from a school-based management concept where every school did [its] own thing . . . 15 different reading programs and a whole slew of other math programs [to a unified, district-wide curriculum in core content areas]. . . . It takes leadership to go from that completely site-based [approach] to a more structured leadership approach but still afford principals the ability to be creative, innovative, and out-of-the-box thinkers regarding what happens in their buildings.

Similarly, in Providence, the district's core approach to instructional improvement and its investment in leadership preparation shifted dramatically with a change in superintendents. Most of these superintendent changes also meant shifts in district thinking about the role of leadership and the district's role in leadership preparation.

In some districts, the types of new leaders needed reflected changes in district approaches to school improvement and their response to accountability performance pressures. In Springfield, Mass., for example, the district's goals were to increase the number of well-qualified school leaders who were specifically able to dramatically improve the rigor and quality of instruction in schools, initially as based on Fink and Resnick's model of instructionally strong leadership (Fink & Resnick, 2001) and later as based on RBT's model.

Some districts intentionally used leadership candidate recruitment and selection as a lever for changing their own leadership practices district-wide. For example, St. Louis wanted transformational leaders who were sensitive to diversity while also being able to facilitate adoption of a district curriculum. As one district official explained:

> [The program aimed] to prepare aspiring principals for leadership in a transformative fashion that meets the needs of a district in crisis . . . that has an extremely diverse student population.

According to this official, the district needed leaders who were capable of implementing a standardized curriculum (which the district had

recently adopted) while engaging in innovation and risk-taking to improve student performance. Other university and district officials stressed even further that the program's aim was to select and prepare a different kind of leader for St. Louis–leaders who were ambitious, entrepreneurial, out of the mold, highly committed to making a difference for the children of St. Louis, and unwilling to accept the status quo or to allow low expectations and poor performance to continue to carry the day in the city's schools.

Similarly, most districts needed more and better-prepared leaders to address these needs and challenges (while those facing a reduction in leadership needs just needed better-prepared leaders). Chicago adopted a "human capital" strategy, with the following stated goal:

> Improve the quality of principal candidates by developing and implementing an effective system wide approach to principal preparation based on best practices.[56]

All eight districts needed strategies that would enable them to do the following:

- Recruit large numbers of qualified candidates to fill immediate vacancies due to district restructuring, retirements, resignations, or reassignment for other reasons.

- Identify candidates with the skills and dispositions to effectively lead low-performing schools.

- Identify candidates with strong instructional backgrounds who are able to improve student achievement.

- Increase the diversity among school leader candidates, to more closely mirror the students and families in the schools they will serve.

- Build a pipeline of qualified candidates who are prepared to "hit the ground running" when starting as a new school leader.

Relationships with Higher Education Institutions

Far less turbulent and varied was the way that the eight districts drew on higher education institutions for support. Seven districts had multiple university-based leadership preparation programs within their cities and nearby suburban communities. Six of the eight districts had a public university in their cities.

Some districts had prior working relationships with local universities for leadership preparation, ranging from cooperating on internship placement to having a program partnership. In most districts, local universities had placed and supervised interns in local schools. In three districts—Jefferson County, Providence, and Springfield, Illinois—closer working relationships already existed:

- The superintendent (or other district official) and department chair (or leading faculty member) had a prior professional relationship through their graduate education.

- The district and university had a prior professional relationship based on other university-based work for the district.

- The district and university had a prior existing leadership preparation program partnership.

Wallace funding, coupled with district accountability pressures, created an opportunity for the districts to reexamine their leadership preparation needs and the potential of local universities to improve the quality of their preparation and its alignment to district needs. Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, describe the course of action the districts chose and the leadership preparation experiences they created.

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56. See Principal Preparation, *Chicago Public Schools: Human Capital Initiative,* www.hci.cps.k12.il.us/prep.html.

Chapter 3

Consumer Actions by Districts to Improve Leadership Preparation Program Quality

Funding from The Wallace Foundation enabled school districts to adopt a stronger consumer identity by taking bold action to improve the quality and effectiveness of the preparation of aspiring leaders, with the goal of fitting district needs. The challenge to districts was to determine how best they could exert more consumer influence over local leadership preparation leading to principal certification.

In this chapter, we look at how districts used their influence as consumers to develop better-quality leadership candidates for their schools. Neo-institutional theory generally, and the charter school research more specifically, suggests three ways that districts could alter the leadership preparation programs and services available in their area to encourage more innovative, district-aligned approaches and to improve the quality of candidates available for leadership positions (Burch, 2007; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Lubienski, 2003).

First, districts could alter the normative and regulatory elements that influence access to both positions and leadership preparation content and delivery by defining the competencies of the candidates they would hire. They would thus be focusing on the outcomes of preparation—candidate leadership competencies—rather than on the preparatory process as a means of changing the quality of candidates.

Second, districts could change their role in the leadership preparation field by becoming actors themselves in the delivery of services for aspiring leaders who meet their standards, thereby competing with or displacing existing programs. This approach combines a focus on the leadership quality competencies that districts desire with the means for developing these competencies.

Third, districts could try to change the culture governing the way that leadership preparation is designed and delivered by collaborating with one or more local preparation programs to increase the likelihood that program graduates have the qualities that districts seek among their aspiring leaders.

We found all three strategies in use among the eight districts we studied, although they were operationalized in different ways. Their approaches involved the following:

- **Becoming a more discerning customer** by defining more clearly the leadership standards and competencies expected of aspiring candidates based on district needs and conditions and using stringent selection processes to assess candidate qualification

- **Becoming a competitor** by creating one's own leadership preparation program, aligned to district-defined leadership standards, and designed to produce candidates' leadership competencies as defined by district needs and expectations

- **Becoming a collaborator** by working with local preparation programs, through contracts and other inducements, to change their candidate selection, program content, field experiences, and assessment to improve the likelihood of producing candidates with district-defined competencies

To varying degrees, we found that districts did not use just one consumer approach. Instead, they mixed approaches in their efforts to improve local leadership preparation, relying on one or two approaches as primary and incorporating some elements of the other two. Figure 3.1 illustrates the primacy of one approach with elements from the other two. Each district's choice of consumer approach appeared to have evolved over time as the district tried different strategies and gained insight about its options and influence over preparation approaches and features.

These three consumer approaches reflect different degrees of the districts' independent action to alter the pool of leadership candidates. Each places different types of demands on the districts and the universities within their organizational field—in this case the organizations that contribute to, regulate or make use of educational leadership preparation--and requires different types of resources. Consequently, each approach has different challenges and benefits, and varies in its potential for sustainability. We discuss the nature and innovativeness of each approach, and how districts used it immediately below, and follow that discussion with an analysis of the challenges, benefits, and potential for sustainability of each, particularly in altering the broader institutional field of leadership and its preparation.

Discerning Customer: Setting Standards and Defining Competencies for Aspiring Local School Leaders

A consumer strategy for districts focuses on their actions to change the normative and regulatory requirements for candidate qualification and school leader selection. The most common district action was establishment of leadership standards to clarify expectations and to use them to frame both principal selection and leadership preparation and development. Three of the districts developed new standards for one or more of these purposes:

- Boston created its Ten Dimensions of Principal Leadership to undergird its Principal Fellowship program.

- Chicago developed five core leadership competencies (drawn from the ISLLC standards, research, focus group interviews, and from the district's Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendations).

- Jefferson County developed its own district-based leadership standards as an outgrowth of two years of meetings among university faculty, district officials, and representative principals. The standards then became the basis for state leadership standards.

Figure 3.1: Districts' consumer approach to leadership preparation

Discerning Customer
Chicago, Fort Wayne, and Jefferson County

Competitor
Boston; Fort Wayne; Providence; and Springfield, Mass

Collaborator
Chicago; Jefferson County; Springfield, Illinois; and St. Louis
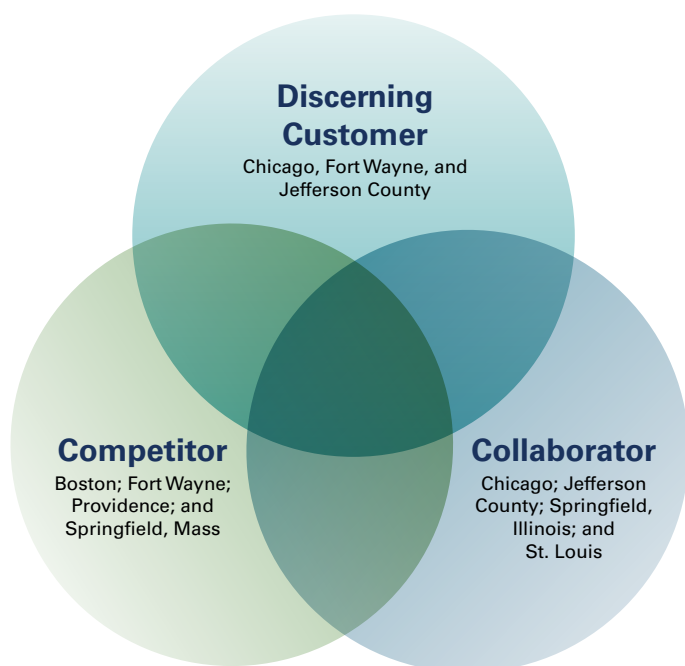
The remaining districts used state and national leadership standards as their foundation. Over time, as they undertook program development and candidate assessment work, they added to them:

- Fort Wayne established a set of standards by creating its assessment framework for leadership preparation candidates and defining qualifications for leadership selection, framed primarily by the ISLLC standards.

- Providence used the ISLLC standards to align its coursework and preparatory experiences.

- Springfield, Mass., aligned its program with the Massachusetts leadership standards, and adopted candidate assessment standards used by the NYC Leadership Academy.

- Springfield, Illinois, adhered to the standards of the ELCC (a specialized professional association of NCATE) for its university program to remain accredited.

- St. Louis used the ISLLC standards to define candidate competencies, and created a set of themes to organize its leadership preparation program content.

In addition to creating or clarifying their standards, some districts took further action to use their leadership standards and assessments to improve the likelihood of having a better-qualified leadership candidate pool and to select only the most qualified from among these. These actions typically occurred in one of three ways:

- Changing the eligibility requirements for hiring school leaders (Chicago)

- Establishing eligibility requirements for district-paid internships that are stricter than the qualifications for state leadership certification (Fort Wayne and Jefferson County)

- Changing the leadership standards that local preparation programs must use to obtain or retain district-affiliate status or preferred provider status (Chicago and Jefferson County)

Below is a summary of how three districts used these consumer actions as a primary leadership preparation improvement strategy.

Chicago

Through its broader Human Capital Initiative, Chicago took several steps to clarify its needs and expectations for school leaders, to use the expectations to increase the rigor of its principal selection, and to apply them in other areas of leadership preparation and development. The district created a Blue Ribbon Task Force of civic and educational leaders and conducted research, committee work, and focus groups to develop its five core leadership competencies. They mirrored some of the core ideas in the 1996 ISLLC standards but were focused on district priorities (e.g., assessing the quality of classroom instruction, facilitating and motivating change). The district in turn was using the competencies as the basis for its leadership framework, including leadership preparation; the development of a new, more rigorous principal eligibility process that identified highly qualified candidates; leadership development; and support for candidates' readiness as new principals. The Office of Principal Preparation and Development (OPPD) also used these competencies to support other leadership development and evaluation actions and resources. The district was exploring how to differentiate its candidate pool even further, particularly to identify candidates who were well-qualified for the district's different types of school leadership needs (e.g., for persistently low-performing schools, small schools, and selective-admission schools).

At least one local leadership preparation program—the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC)—adopted these competencies as part of its candidate assessment system. Program candidates had to complete a comprehensive portfolio—including a self-assessment based on the five core competencies and an instructional leadership essay—and program faculty had to provide feedback. The most qualified candidates then would have an oral interview that included situational role-playing.

A de facto outcome was that candidate attainment of these competencies became a form of program evaluation, when aggregated for the passing rates of each program's graduates.

Fort Wayne

Fort Wayne created two assessment criteria to identify effective candidates for leadership positions. The first was a rigorous eligibility process for candidate selection as integrated into its post-preparation, pre-principal internship. Candidates were nominated by their district or building leaders and interviewed individually. In the past, candidates had to complete a TriMetrix™ leadership competency assessment.[57] Candidates who were not accepted into the internship program received detailed feedback about their competencies and readiness, with suggested areas for growth.

The second form of assessment was an evaluation of candidates' performance in their internship. Candidates compiled evidence of their internship accomplishments in a portfolio, to then be assessed. District staff were in the process of

developing an assessment matrix for these portfolios that incorporated TriMetrix, the ISLLC standards, and the leader practices highlighted in leadership effectiveness research (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The long-term plan was to align this assessment with the assessment of candidates hired for leadership positions and the formative assessment of principals' professional growth plans.

Jefferson County

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) developed a set of leadership standards that it used as the basis for JCPS sponsorship in leadership preparation programs. These standards became guides for affiliated programs' content and design and a basis for a rubric for screening candidates for the district-sponsored internship, and hiring new principals. These standards were also being taken into consideration as the district explored a new principal evaluation system.

To develop these standards in alignment with the district's leadership needs and priorities, key district staff held biweekly meetings for two years with faculty from the initial leadership preparation program partner and a few experienced principals. The group's first goal was to create new standards for school leaders based on what one district official described as "what principals need to know and be able to do." During the end of the second year, district officials drew in faculty from other nearby institutions that had preparation programs as well. In addition, two principals on the committee became faculty at

these institutions. As a result, faculty from four institutions participated in some or all of the standards development process.

When the state began to work on setting standards for leadership preparation, it gave significant attention to the new JCPS standards, adopting and modifying them for statewide use. These standards are now required for candidate eligibility for participation in leadership preparation programs and have been adopted by the state for program registration. They are being used to change the criteria for candidate eligibility for leadership positions and to set expectations for local leadership preparation program content.

Standards Benefits, Challenges, and Potential for Sustainability

Developing standards enabled these districts to clarify the competencies that they needed in their school leaders. The most common sources used were the national ISLLC standards and their own processes for developing standards, which involved input from district officials, local professional associations, and university faculty. A few drew from available research or their own locally conducted focus group research.

How the districts used their new standards determined the extent to which they could alter both the quality of the pool of candidates for leadership positions and the effectiveness of the individuals who became school leaders. Districts tended to use their standards as general guidelines for district policy and the content of preparation programs, as the foundation for

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57. Based on behaviors, values, and attribute/competency analysis, the TriMetrix™ system enhances organizations' hiring and promotional protocols. See www.trimetrix.us/about-us.html.

assessment of candidates in these programs, to determine eligibility for district-funded internships and school leadership positions, and as the basis for district supervision and evaluation. Most districts that had developed standards were at the beginning stages of extending them beyond general guidelines in order to use them for principal selection and evaluation decisions.

Both the development and the use of standards and related candidate evaluation assessments appeared to yield benefits for the districts and their local universities. For the districts, standards provided clarity in expectations and increased the number of school leaders who had the qualities they needed, as determined by program and district assessments. The long-term benefits of this standards investment work will be evident once newly prepared candidates have served as principals for several years. In the short term, standards have enabled some districts to begin to fashion a more coherent continuum that integrates leadership preparation and expectations for principal selection and supervision.

The standards-setting process, and the use of common standards in other district assessments, appeared to provide a means through which district officials and local universities grappled with and clarified their priorities for school leadership and the necessary knowledge and skills for their leaders, particularly to support low-performing schools. This was not a quick process, taking from many months (as in Chicago) to two years (as in Jefferson County), thereby allowing time for districts to explore their local leadership needs and conditions, and consider expert resources and national standards.

In the universities that participated in the standards development process, faculty learned how principals' work had changed in recent years, which helped them create more appropriate new standards for their programs. To varying degrees, the universities were then able to change their program content and assessments to reflect the new standards.

While time-consuming, the districts' standards development work entailed little direct financial cost—just district staff time for the standards discussions and, if they undertook this effort, use of the results to redesign their school leader selection and supervision processes. The only cost to universities was the faculty time needed for both standards-setting and course and program redesign.

Recent turnover in superintendents and the subsequent shifts in districts' visions of leadership and school improvement, as described in Chapter 2, illustrate the limitations of sustaining improved leadership preparation and improvement of leader quality through standards-setting and assessment processes. Continually reexamining leadership standards, as districts' visions of leadership evolve, seems to make it difficult to sustain consistency in expectations and the continuum of development that programs need. It is a complicated approach to changing the leadership preparation field, given the multiple ways that standards must be articulated within and among program experiences—selection, content, internship experience, and assessment—and within district programs and hiring processes in order to influence leader practices. This change strategy is highly dependent on the extent to which both districts and universities adopt practices that prepare, support, and assess candidates and leaders according to agreed-upon standards.

Competitor: Creating Their Own Leadership Programs

A second type of consumer action is for districts to change their roles in the leadership preparation field by themselves, in effect, becoming producers of leadership candidates. Districts did this in two ways. First, several districts created additional leadership preparation experiences as part of a continuum of leadership preparation, either to precede a formal leadership certification program—such as an orientation to school leadership—or as a follow-up to certification, through a seminar series or another intensive internship, as will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Alternatively, some districts created their own freestanding leadership preparation programs. The districts' approaches are described below followed by a discussion of the benefits, challenges, and potential for sustainability.

Fort Wayne

At the time of our evaluation research, Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS) was the only one of the eight districts that had not employed strategies to change the quality of leadership preparation by local universities. The reasons for this choice were unclear and may reflect a historic lack of prior collaboration with local universities. But, district officials had just returned from SREB training on district-university partnerships and were very interested in

exploring this option with their local state university, suggesting openness to collaboration as a change strategy.

Up until that point, however, the district had chosen to change the quality of leadership candidates locally by becoming actors themselves in the initial and latter phases of the preparatory process. The district created several program experiences that preceded and followed formal preparation for leadership certification.

The most intensive and selective was a freestanding program, Aspiring Leaders, designed to enhance leadership candidates' initial university-based leadership preparation. Intended for those who had completed or were in the final semester of their administrative credential program, it was also the most selective of the programs that the district created. It provided a paid, year-long, full-time internship and was coupled with a series of PD sessions on the content and skills essential for site leadership in FWCS, and individual and group reflection meetings. Aspiring Leaders was aligned with the leadership expectations in the district, the ISLLC standards, and the district's core leadership beliefs about effective practice. The program emphasized instructional leadership, balanced against the district's specific policies and procedures. Participating candidates had to complete a culminating portfolio of their internship accomplishments.

Providence

The district's superintendent took steps to create a district-focused leadership preparation program as a means of improving leadership and schools; this was an outgrowth of its district reform agenda. When Providence was first funded by The Wallace Foundation, its superintendent considered partnering with existing educational leadership programs. However, she decided instead to work with a university that lacked a leadership preparation program but was willing to customize a program for the district's context and to have its faculty teach in the district.

The district began by building the program around the IFL Principles of Learning, which it had already adopted for instructional reform. Over time, district interest in the IFL Principles of Learning waned, however, and Providence gradually adopted several SREB modules to serve as the program's foundation.

To be selected for the program, candidates had to meet the admissions standards of URI's Graduate School of Education and provide a portfolio to demonstrate their knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership. After an initial screening, applicants were interviewed by a team of central office staff, building administrators, program graduates, and faculty representatives. Interviewed candidates made a short presentation on "the greatest challenge facing a Providence principal in today's educational environment and how you, as principal, would meet the challenge." From the 50 candidates who submitted portfolios in 2008, about 15 were expected to be admitted.

The 18-month, 36-credit program was organized into six instructional strands: curriculum and instruction, organization and management, leadership, technology, teacher development, and assessment and accountability. The director of the district's Leadership Office and other district staff taught most of the courses (and were appointed as university adjuncts). University faculty members also taught a few courses (such as research) and serve as advisors to the cohort. Candidates completed two district-based, nine-week, paid internships: one that primarily comprised job shadowing and observing and one that had specific internship responsibilities. Candidates were assessed by the district through a series of group projects and a culminating project. The university provided credit for coursework, and graduates' transcripts were evaluated by the state in order to receive principal certification.

Boston

Given the achievement challenges of this district and the superintendent's commitment to effective urban school principles, the superintendent decided to develop a "home grown" approach to customize leadership preparation that would align more closely with district needs and priorities. District officials began by initiating conversations with leaders from area colleges and university graduate schools of education. Eventually, the superintendent asked a faculty member at UMass Boston to work with other district staff to develop what became the Boston Principal Fellowship (BPF).

Foundation and federal support enabled the district to establish a School Leadership Institute within the district offices and to launch the BPF

in 2003. The district also obtained state accreditation to offer its own school leader certification program.

The BPF program aims to select candidates with strong leadership potential, a commitment to continuous learning, and a willingness to deeply challenge their own leadership beliefs. BPF officials' intent is to develop a cohort that will continue to grapple with the challenges of BPS schools and become effective problem-solvers around those issues and develop a capacity to taking a learning approach to change.

The BPF admissions process consisted of three components: a written application, a day-long performance assessment for semi-finalists (working through different challenging scenarios, such as having a difficult conversation with a teacher), and an interview for finalists. Screening teams of primarily principals and BPS central administrators were involved in each step of the screening process. Selected Fellows included some who were already certified, had a master's degree or were also in a doctoral program, as well as those seeking initial certification and an educational leadership master's degree.

Fellows worked for a full year, four days a week, in a residency-type internship. The courses were provided in a series of 17 short and long courses and seminars that explored Boston's Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement and Ten Dimensions of Principal Leadership. District staff members, faculty from various local universities, and other local experts served as instructors. Candidates assessed their leadership competencies in each dimension at the beginning of and throughout the program to gauge their progress toward meeting each standard. The district recommended qualified candidates for leadership certification by

the state. The district had arranged with UMass Boston to provide course credit for candidates' work in the program toward the completion of a master's degree in education.

The district managed the program, determined whether it would be offered, and oversaw candidate selection and program assessments. The university served in a supporting role to the district's program and did recommend candidates for certification, but would confer a degree for candidates who applied for this option.

Springfield, Mass.

With encouragement from The Wallace Foundation and state policy flexibility, Springfield Public Schools (SPS) obtained state accreditation to operate its own school leader certification program and to recommend qualified candidates for certification. The primary reason why the district chose this strategy, according to district officials, was the encouragement from the Foundation. The leadership preparation program was developed in conjunction with an improved leadership pathway and principal selection process.

District officials designed the program from the ground up, basing the preparatory experiences on their vision of effective school leadership and essential skills and competencies, aligned to state certification requirements. Candidates were selected by the district through a rigorous, multi-step process, including an application with questions about experience relevant to the challenges of urban school

leadership, a leadership assessment, the Gallup PrincipalInsight™ system,[58] and an interview with a team of three to five current administrators and LEAD graduates. The district typically admitted about half its applicants.

District staff constructed the program around two core leader-directed, teacher development processes—teacher observation and teacher supervision—that used approaches developed by RBT and were organized as two foundational courses. They added an intensive summer institute that covered a range of leadership topics, primarily grounded in district systems and processes (such as management, facilities, and information systems), and incorporated a summer-long intensive project: collaborative school improvement planning for a low-performing case study school. Candidates were assessed on both their work in this project and the portfolio of internship accomplishments they compiled. They also completed a paid, 10-week, district-based internship in either the fall or the spring.

The district selected UMass Amherst as a program partner to support the interns through on-site supervision and an internship seminar, provide a course on urban education issues, and offer a means of articulating candidates' coursework into a master's degree program (which candidates earn after completing three additional courses). An initial MOU framed their relationship and their agreement on reduced tuition to cover institutional costs.

While never signed, the MOU was used as the framework for roles, responsibilities, and coursework.

District-Based Program Benefits, Challenges, and Potential for Sustainability

In "doing it on their own," districts had the opportunity to create preparatory experiences that stressed their own leadership competency priorities and assumptions about how to develop leaders. Through candidate selection and assessment strategies, course organization and content choices, and more well-defined and supervised internship experiences, districts could tailor their programs to their specific leadership priorities and school improvement approaches. In three cases, this meant embedding an intensive, full-time internship (ranging from 10 weeks to a full year) inside a preparation program, while the fourth added an internship as a post-preparation experience. Three districts started their designs by focusing on quality teaching and learning as foundational to preparatory experiences, and gave little attention to the theoretical foundations that conventional programs address (McCarthy, 1999). In three of the four examples, universities provided primarily a supporting role in program delivery, certifying the coursework and the student assessments as evidence of competency attainment to be used to award graduate credit toward a degree and certification;

58. Information about the PrincipalInsight™ system—Gallup's "latest advancement in principal selection"—is available at www.gallup.com/consulting/education/22105/PrincipalInsight.aspx.

in all three, university faculty taught in the program, but only as a formal university arrangement in two of the programs.

This approach was expensive, in terms of both the staff time to develop and manage the program and the paid internships. It was also highly dependent on continued superintendent commitment to direct action for leadership preparation as a reform strategy.

As a leadership preparation field change strategy, this approach most significantly influenced other preparation programs in the area through diversification. While at least one university in the broader community or nearby region of three of the districts had the benefit of learning alongside the districts as contributors to their programs, there was no formally constructed opportunity for other universities to learn about potentially better ways to prepare school leaders, particularly to suit the districts' needs. The impact of the districts' programs on these universities existed primarily in the extent to which an additional entrant to the local leadership preparation field created competition. We return to this issue in Chapter 5.

Collaborator: Working with Universities

The third consumer action was directed at the universities and involved trying to alter the normative and cultural expectations that framed the work of a few institutions that provided leadership preparation within each district's community. Four districts—Chicago; Jefferson County; Springfield, Illinois; and St. Louis—took steps to improve local leadership preparation programs by collaborating with local universities and negotiating decisions about program design specifications, program content, and candidate assessment. Although there were several reasons why the districts chose this approach, the main reason was that all four had prior working relationships with local universities on leadership preparation. However, they did not limit themselves to maintaining an exclusive relationship with their prior partners.

To communicate its expectations for leadership preparation and encourage leadership preparation programs to alter their programs in ways that prepared candidates for the district's needs and priorities, each district used one or more of the following strategies:

- Providing scholarships for students to be used for tuition in district-preferred programs

- Contracting competitively with local preparation programs

- Designating an institution as a preferred provider (selected by the district to receive greater support and resources for their candidates than other institutions received)

- Formalizing a partnership to co-construct a program

These university-directed strategies ranged in their scope and potential as organizational change mechanisms that work by inducing institutions to alter existing programs or offer district-specific programs.

Jefferson County

Jefferson County used three of the four strategies—candidate scholarships, contracting with local programs, and designating institutions as a preferred provider—as its means of influencing local leadership preparation programs to change how they prepared leadership candidates to align with the district's needs.

First, the district established a system of awarding scholarships (in the form of reimbursement for two completed graduate leadership courses) to district-selected leadership preparation candidates to be used at one of four institutions. In turn, the four local universities competed with one another to recruit eligible candidates at an annual meeting hosted by the district. Second, the district contracted with these local institutions annually, with the universities outlining their program plans, including their alignment with district leadership standards, for district approval. Third, the district designated these four institutions as its preferred program partners, expanding from an initial arrangement with just one institution. As part of this preferred status, the district arranged for facilitators from the other district-based leadership preparation programs to serve as adjunct faculty in the universities' leadership preparation programs. The combination of this preferential status—as earned through program alignment with district standards—and the shared staff helped to integrate the leadership preparation programs' offerings more closely with district leadership priorities.

From interviews and observation of meetings, it is apparent that even this small financial support, coupled with preferred provider status, encouraged local universities to be open to and flexible with district staff. More important, the universities' faculty members were willing to adapt their programs' focus, design, and content to meet the district's expectations, in order to maintain this relationship.

St. Louis

St. Louis Public Schools used three university-directed change strategies—a competitive contract, preferred provider status, and co-construction of program content—as a means of inducing one local university to design an innovative leadership preparation program to meet the district's leadership needs and priorities. District officials wanted something different from their earlier grant-funded partnerships with a local university, which had produced a sound but fairly traditional program: a more extensive collaboration with its university partner, beyond funding, or as one district official said, a partner who "will come into our district, leverage our dollars, and [say] 'Let's make something new.'" Among the district's stipulations was assurance that admitted candidates wanted to become school leaders (not just gain a salary increase), that the district would have more input into the curriculum and delivery of instruction for a cohort comprising St. Louis candidates only, and that this curriculum would be designed specifically around the district's "non-negotiables," which, the district believed, would increase the probability of developing strong leaders who were prepared to lead. Another district priority was to model the preparation program after the NYC Leadership Academy.

The district used a competitive grant process to select a university partner. It circulated an RFP among local universities, asking for both a financial commitment and a willingness to be part of a "co-constructed principal development program" and adhere to the district's "non-negotiables." As one program director explained:

Some of those non-negotiables meant having people on the ground with us who are willing to walk in schools with us and who are willing to process candidates while they work, who are willing to take our realities of a district and create a curriculum and not a book that has fake scenarios that are real for somebody but certainly not us.

Using a rubric to evaluate the proposals submitted, the district ultimately selected the University of Missouri–Columbia for its willingness to waive tuition (the university sought only funds to cover faculty costs and related expenses), its philosophy of leadership and education, and its willingness to adhere to the district's priorities.

The district instituted a rigorous, multi-staged selection process to identify program candidates, which included an essay, interviews, and a role play—all assessed with district-developed rubrics. After selection by the district, candidates also had to meet the university's academic qualifications to be admitted.

Some university faculty were co-located at the district office to facilitate district-based course content. In addition, courses were co-constructed and taught by a district-university faculty team and focused on issues and district priorities around which faculty integrated conventional course content.

Chicago

Chicago's primary university-directed change strategy was to confer preferred provider status. This was one of the outgrowths of the district's Human Capital Initiative.

Local institutions had to compete for preferred provider status, based on the district's new standards and five core leadership competencies and on the provider's ability to meet the district's preparation expectations. UIC was one of two partner-designees (the other was an alternative program, New Leaders for New Schools, which partnered with National-Louis University in Chicago. As a result of this designation, UIC program candidates were eligible for full-year, paid internships in district schools and were mentored by district-selected principals. To ensure that it remained competitive, UIC applied the district's five core leadership competencies and assessment process to its own candidates as a requirement of program advancement. So far, 100 percent of the candidates who completed their first-year residencies have met the district assessment requirements and were hired for leadership positions.

Springfield, Illinois

District 186's primary university-directed change strategy was a combination of conferring preferred provider status and co-developing a leadership preparation program with ISU. The district used its six qualities of an ideal principal (see Chapter 4) to guide candidate selection, program content, and field experiences. The program was initially developed with advisory committee oversight and guidance, but the committee disbanded once the program was under way. In 2002, when the program was first initiated, university faculty drafted a 22-page proposal to the district outlining the program components and roles and responsibilities. Since then, the program has been managed informally, without a contract or signed agreement.

Candidates were evaluated for admission by the district and the university, who focused on their instructional leadership qualities and their ability to do graduate-level work. The six-semester program had "embedded fieldwork" throughout, during which candidates completed 270 hours of fieldwork. Evening classes, held for six hours weekly in the district, were taught by both university faculty and district staff, and were supported by online learning.

The program aligned with the regular ISU program with two exceptions: (1) Some courses were taught by District 186 personnel, and (2) candidates had to complete a capstone course designed and delivered by the district. Candidates also needed to develop a professional practice plan, maintain a practicum log, create artifacts appropriate for inclusion in their portfolios, and complete online self-assessments at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the program.

Program Collaboration Benefits, Challenges, and Potential for Sustainability

Districts' use of funding-based inducements and collaboration to direct a university's change strategies appeared to be powerful means of creating new or redesigning existing leadership preparation programs. In all the examples here, districts gained cooperation from local universities to create programs that met district approval and were designed according to district-provided candidate competencies or program guidelines.

Each program required different levels of new resource investment, both financial and in-kind, by districts and universities. Preferred provider status required the least resource investment: district staff time to create the program expectations and to review and qualify one or more institutions. Funding-based inducements appeared to become more influential when

coupled with candidate financial support as well, in the form of tuition or a paid internship. The other forms of consumer action directed at institutional change—scholarships, contracts, and program co-construction—all entailed district staff time to create specifications, select one or more institution partners, and participate in the partnership, as well as financial contributions to institutions either directly or indirectly through scholarships and paid internships for candidates.

Given the staff time and financial resources invested, it is likely that this type of consumer action will be vulnerable to changes in district leadership and in the focus of district reforms. In addition, because consumer action centers on changing universities as the means of improving leadership quality, it is also vulnerable to changes in university leadership—at the program, department, and school of education levels in particular.

This university-directed action creates competition among local universities: They might vie for access to district-supported candidates (if district support for candidates is available), for the status of being a preferred program provider, and for financial support for program delivery (if such funding were to be provided). From interviews with university officials whose programs had this status, it appeared that such status was both symbolically and financially important, which underscores the culture-changing potential of this district action.

In these districts, the university-directed change strategies were made possible by one or more foundation grants and other

sources. Consequently, the collaborations may be difficult to sustain without new funding. One solution, used by Springfield, Illinois, was to scale back the number of paid interns and to incorporate administrative internships into the district's staffing structure as a separate program experience. Another solution, used by Jefferson County, was to scale back the form of support to a very modest amount—in this case, tuition for two courses. It appeared that even this small amount was still enough to be an incentive to encourage teachers to pursue a leadership career and to induce preparation programs to modify their program design according to district specifications.

The Influences Determining the Consumer Approach Used

Several conditions appeared to be associated with a district's choice of consumer change strategy, including the district's preference for starting its own program, its prior relationships with local universities, and the district's size and the number of local universities.

District Preference to Create Its Own Program

For some districts, Wallace funding gave them an opportunity to start fresh in approaching leadership preparation, after exploring options with local universities and, in two cases, after gaining state and

Foundation encouragement. In Boston and Springfield, Mass., the state had created regulations that enabled each district to launch a district-based leadership certification program. In Providence, state regulations were lax enough to enable districts to offer a district-based program. Unlike in the other seven districts, Providence candidates were not required to complete a state-approved program for state leadership certification; they only needed their transcripts to be evaluated. In Fort Wayne, the district focused solely on creating post-certification preparatory experiences, thereby bypassing the issue of alignment with state certification requirements and enabling the district to be innovative on its own terms.

An Existing District-University Relationship

The four districts that chose consumer strategies aimed at changing leadership preparation programs all had prior relationships with leadership preparation programs (either the current partner or another one). In at least one district, this was a longstanding, productive working relationship. Wallace support enabled these districts to reexamine their existing relationships and program designs and to revisit questions about the leadership skills and capacities needed by their school leaders. It appears likely that the prior relationships contributed to the willingness of these districts to work with local universities on program development, even if they ended up in partnerships with other universities instead. In addition, at least one district official explained that her

district preferred to take this approach, rather than develop its own program, because the district saw it as yielding more sustainable change to local programs post-grant funding.

District Context

In looking further for patterns among the districts' choice of consumer approach, we considered how district size, leadership needs, and number of local universities may have contributed. We found some modest patterns, which are suggestive but not conclusive:

- The largest district—Chicago—did not create its own program; only the smaller to mid-size districts chose this option.

- The districts that developed their own leadership preparation programs were more able than larger districts to meet most of their new leadership needs with the candidates prepared by their own programs.

- Districts of all sizes—small, mid-size, and large—used the other consumer actions to improve leadership candidate quality: collaborating with local universities, giving preferred provider status, or using standards to assess graduates' leadership quality when hiring.

- There appeared to be no relationship between the consumer actions taken and the districts' leadership needs. It may be that the accountability challenges facing districts and the need for more strategically capable school leaders were similar in kind, if not amount, across the districts.

- The number of universities in or near each district ranged from two to eight.[59] However, this number appeared to be unrelated to the consumer change approach chosen by a district (e.g., St. Louis has a number of universities in the immediate vicinity, yet chose collaboration with just one that was not nearby because of its willingness to adopt the district's preparation approach).

Summary

In looking across the consumer actions of the eight districts, we identified three general strategies that the districts used to alter the quality and readiness of their school leader candidate pool and new hires: (1) becoming a more discerning customer in defining expectations for school leaders and evaluating candidates, (2) becoming a competitor by developing their own program, and (3) becoming a collaborator to redesign existing university-based programs. Districts typically began with or relied primarily on one strategy and then tended to combine strategies in their efforts to improve candidate quality and local leadership preparation.

Each approach placed different demands on the districts and universities, required different resources, presented different challenges and benefits, and varied in its potential for sustainability. In comparing the three strategies, it appeared that the districts' standards development work entailed the least cost (besides the time needed to do this work) and seemed to have the greatest potential to change both the

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59. Satellite programs operated by more distant universities made counting local university-based leadership preparation programs more complex, and such programs are therefore not included for the purposes of this study.

outcomes—the candidates themselves—and the institutions and programs within the larger leadership preparation field.

Using inducements to alter local universities' programs—through scholarships, competitive contracts, or co-constructed programs—was more costly but enabled quicker, more finely tailored program redesign and continual program modification to meet districts' changing needs. One co-constructed program (Springfield, Illinois) was continuing without external funding, suggesting the potential for sustainability.

Becoming an actor in the leadership preparation field themselves gave districts the most control over the outcomes—in terms of candidate competencies—and the processes of developing these outcomes through district-defined preparatory experiences. They relied on local universities for instructors and for awarding credit toward a master's degree, without necessarily engaging their faculty in reforming their own programs. These district-based programs proved to be the most costly and time-consuming option for districts, however, and may be the most vulnerable to changes in district leadership and the district's reform approach.

Given the challenges of program sustainability, particularly in light of district and university turnover and fiscal limitations, it would seem that a combination of the first two strategies—establishing standards and collaborating with local universities as preferred providers in program redesign—may be the most efficacious and sustainable among the consumer change strategies.

The next question is whether these strategies—by altering expectations for candidate outcomes and influencing program design and content—yielded more innovation in leadership preparation and new approaches to preparing candidates for urban schools, particularly those with challenging conditions. The next chapter examines the nature and quality of the preparation program features created through these district actions.

Chapter 4

Innovation and Change in the Nature of Leadership Preparation

In this chapter, we describe what the eight districts accomplished with their leadership preparation program investments, how their program choices were similar or different, and how each district met its own challenges around program design and delivery. We return to the notion of innovation, applying Lubienski's (2003) definition and his distinction between *innovation* and *diversification.* Given this distinction, we would expect the district-university affiliated programs to be educationally and organizationally different from conventional leadership preparation programs, in accord with the research literature on innovative leadership preparation. More important, the differences should not simply be a diversification of program options. Instead, the programs should differ in ways that substantively increase the likelihood that candidates will develop leadership competencies that support school improvement and are aligned with district practices and priorities.

Our first consideration was the identification of new or redesigned elements of leadership preparation among the programs of the eight districts. Drawing from a growing body of research on quality preparation program features, particularly those that most significantly influence graduate outcomes, we identified eight key features of quality leadership preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Orr, 2006):

- Vigorous recruitment and selection

- Well-defined and well-integrated program theory

- A coherent curriculum

- Active-learning strategies

- Quality internships

- Knowledgeable faculty

- Social and professional support

- The use of standards-based assessments for candidate and program feedback and continuous improvement that are tied to the program vision and objectives

We used these features as a framework for evaluating the extent to which innovative program features were being implemented.

In determining which leadership preparation programs to investigate, we selected only those programs that prepared candidates for state school leader certification and had some form of *affiliation* with the districts for leadership preparation. We defined affiliation as involving some form of formal arrangement in candidate selection, program content development, internships, or assessment, for a university in a district-based program or a district in a university-based program. District-university partnerships are a form of affiliation, but other arrangements were included as well. As a consequence of this sampling decision, we excluded the programs of Fort Wayne and those of other districts that did not lead to school leader certification from the analyses below with one exception. We begin with situating formal certification-focused preparation within a continuum of leadership preparation leading to an initial school leader position. In Chapter 5, we discuss these other programs further. To further determine which program features could

be considered innovative, we juxtaposed the district-university affiliated programs with existing descriptions of conventional leadership preparation. The U.S. Department of Education (2004) characterized conventional programs as lacking vision, purpose, and coherence; students could self-enroll without the program faculty's consideration of their previous leadership experience, and progress through discrete courses without connection to actual practice or local schools.

We also sought to identify the influences on the development of innovative practices, anticipating that district officials would draw on their own experiences, the available research literature, and experts in the field, including local university faculty. By applying Burch's (2007) analysis of innovation among actors in school reform, we would expect that districts would not be constrained by the same normative and cultural contexts as university-based programs and have different contexts and resources from which to draw new ideas and practices. Given that district officials and staff periodically met with one another and Wallace staff throughout the grant period, it was assumed that some of the officials' ideas grew out of these meetings and were informed by the Foundation's support of research and best practices on leadership and its preparation.

Redefining the Scope of Leadership Preparation

We first sought to uncover what the districts and their affiliated universities offered or required as *leadership preparation*. We took into consideration both the preparatory experiences that existed within formal district-university affiliated programs that led to leadership licensure or certification and those that the districts added to precede eligibility for initial leadership positions. Next, we charted all the district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs and experiences, and looked for patterns in how districts defined the scope of preparation.

Table 4.1 on pages 58 and 59 presents the types of district-initiated leadership preparation experiences and programs we found across the eight districts. We identified six types of preparatory experiences, with all eight districts offering at least three—and some as many as five—to their leadership candidates:

- **Teacher leadership development or pathways.** Five districts either encouraged National Board Certification for teachers or created teacher leadership positions, such as instructional coach or content specialist.

- **Introduction to school leadership through a seminar or other PD experiences.** Although this type of experience is not required for program advancement, four districts offered a seminar or PD activities to increase candidate awareness and understanding of the principalship and the district.

- **Formal leadership preparation.** Seven of the eight districts worked with one or more universities to offer a leadership preparation program that leads to state licensure or certification and is tailored to district priorities.

- **Long-term internship.** Seven districts offered a lengthy internship either as part of the formal leadership preparation program or immediately following it.

- **Other forms of preparation.** Five districts offered additional preparatory experiences, including a year-long seminar on district operations (Fort Wayne and Jefferson County), planning and job readiness coursework (Providence and St. Louis), and continued leadership coaching (Chicago).

- **Post-preparation internship.** Three districts (Fort Wayne, Jefferson County, and Springfield, Illinois) offered full-year, post-preparation internships to four to five program graduates, funded by the district and Wallace grants.

Table 4.1: Continuum of leadership preparation programs and options by district*

District	Teacher Leadership Pathway	Introduction to School Leadership	Preparation Program Leading to Certification	Internship Experience Within the Leadership Preparation Program Leading to Certification	Other Preparation	Post-Certification Internship
Boston	NA	Exploration of the principalship program	District-based program in cooperation with UMass Boston	1-year, full-time, district-paid	Not included	Not included
Chicago	National Board Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) as an alternate route to leadership certification	NA	• UIC EdD coupled with IL Type 75 certification, if candidate does not already hold such certification • New Leaders for New Schools in partnership with National-Louis University	1-year, full-time, district-paid with mentor principal and support of a UIC Urban Education Leadership coach	At least 1, sometimes 2 years of post-internship coaching	Not included
Fort Wayne	NA	Investigating Series: meetings for those interested in pursuing school leadership	[Local university programs are not district-university affiliated]	[Local universities manage internships without the district's input]	Exploring Series: year-long seminar on district operations	Aspiring Leaders Series: 1-year, full-time, district-paid
Jefferson County	NA	Year-long seminar	Partnerships with 4 university-based programs (with small student scholarships for some candidates to attend them)	100-hour internship	Year-long seminar on district operations and processes (optional)	1-year, district-paid
Providence	Instructional coaching (formerly through IFL)	Exploration of leadership courses	District-based program, partnering with URI (which does not offer a leadership preparation program)	9-week internship *and* 9-week residency—full-time, district-paid (reduced to one 9-week experience for the 2009–10 academic year)	Summer coursework for an initial leadership position	Not included
Springfield, Illinois	NBPTS as an alternate route to leadership certification (a state option)	NA	Partnership with ISU (signed MOU)	45 clock-hour practicum per semester for embedded fieldwork activities during all 6 semesters; ISU clinical professor trains district mentors and supervises practicum	Not included	LEAD grant funds supported 4–5 one-year, full-time internships for program graduates or others; district-funded internships separate from LEAD for other interns requested by schools [Note: This internship option existed prior to Wallace grant.]

(cont.)

NA = not applicable

* Only some of these program options are an outgrowth of the districts' support from The Wallace Foundation.

District	Teacher Leadership Pathway	Introduction to School Leadership	Preparation Program Leading to Certification	Internship Experience Within the Leadership Preparation Program Leading to Certification	Other Preparation	Post-Certification Internship
Springfield, Mass.	District created an instructional coach role	NA	District-based program with some university involvement and an MOU with UMass Amherst	10-week, full-time, paid by district in 2nd year	Not included	Not included
St. Louis	Options include: (1) State's Select Teachers As Regional Resources (STARR) program (teachers teaching teachers) (2) Instructional and literacy coach	Beginning in fall 2009, new program recruits were involved in year-long PD activities, process observation (teaching and/or leadership competencies), and performance assessment	District-university collaboration	1-year, 4-day/week, district-paid in 1 or more schools (the 5th day each week is spent in class)	Program completers receive mentoring and PD (e.g., visits to candidates in school sites; technology-based PD; seminars) for 1+ years to support those who have not yet been placed, and to develop new administrators	Not included

NA = not applicable

We learned that when looking at the combination of programs and options each district offered, we found that all eight districts had expanded the scope of preparation beyond what was minimally required for leadership licensure or certification (as noted in Chapter 6, "Licensure Requirements") or was defined by conventional leadership preparation programs. Their scope of preparation included more experiences geared toward learning school and district systems and procedures and more applied learning experiences, and it took more time to complete (typically, three to four years instead of one to two).

This expanded scope resulted in a broader and progressively more in-depth leadership preparation continuum. Several districts offered preliminary leadership orientation through teacher leadership development,

introductory seminars, or differentiated teacher leader positions. All eight districts offered full-time internships; most did this as part of a preparation program leading to certification, but some offered a longer internship after program completion for a smaller number of candidates.

Finally, most districts included formal learning experiences about district operations, either during or after candidates' formal certification program was completed. Although the districts did not restrict access to each program or component to only the candidates who had the prior preparatory experiences, they did encourage this sequence for interested candidates.

We concluded from this review of the scope that districts recognized that preparing candidates for more challenging

schools and leadership positions required more preparation than existed in a conventional program. The scope and length of these combined preparatory experiences appeared to match the leadership challenges that the districts experience—i.e., the work was challenging and difficult and more preparation was needed to help aspiring leaders be ready.

In addition, by establishing these preparatory experiences as separate entities, districts afforded candidates multiple pathways into leadership, thereby enabling them to move at their own pace and to enroll when they were ready, while not restricting access to only those who completed leadership preparation programs for certification that were formally affiliated with the district. By using multiple preparatory experiences, each with its

own selection requirements, some districts had multiple opportunities to assess candidates' readiness and to offer concrete suggestions and opportunities for improvement. Thus, when combined, these programs and experiences formed a progressive, increasingly challenging candidate pipeline from classroom teaching to school leadership.[60]

Redesigning the Program Model

The primary building blocks of professional preparation leading to certification include the following (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009):

- Induction—recruitment and selection for leadership preparation

- Curriculum content

- Instructional delivery system

- Structure of preparation programs

- Field experiences (including internships and other field-related experiences)

According to analyses of leadership preparation programs based on literature reviews and statewide surveys, programs typically select candidates based on their capacity to do graduate academic work, using academic performance indicators (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009). Programs tend to require a similar set of courses focusing on leadership and organizational theory. In addition, they usually follow the standard academic calendar for higher education (with courses offered one or more times per week on a semester or quarterly basis), but common variations of this scheduling model include executive-style scheduling, with intensive coursework in a condensed schedule offered on weekends or in summer sessions. Candidates typically complete a program of study part time while working full time. Programs also vary on whether they admit candidates as members of a cohort that will complete the same program of study in the same sequence. Finally, while field experiences are commonly required, they vary in scope, length, and relationship to coursework (Black, Bathon, & Pointdexter, 2007; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009; Pounder & Hafner, 2006).

To see the extent to which conventional preparation attributes were modified among the districts studied, we began by looking at the organization and structure of the district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs. As noted above and as shown in Table 4.2 on pages 61 and 62, seven of the eight districts have an affiliated program that leads to certification. The programs of Fort Wayne are excluded from this analysis because none lead to certification. The majority of the programs lead to a master's degree or Certificate of Advanced Study (one leads to a doctorate and one is certificate-only, with an option to complete a master's degree). The master's degree-based programs range from 30 to 39 credits. Most programs offer their coursework on-site in district offices, and organize candidates into cohorts that then progress through a common set of courses and field experiences.

Taken together, these organizational features appear to enable the programs to be more accessible to candidates and to increase opportunities for coursework that draws on the districts' resources, personnel, and context as part of the program experiences.

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60. In several districts, these programs and experiences also helped provide clarity and shift leadership expectations among constituencies within the district and school communities as well.

Table 4.2: Organizational features of the district-university affiliated programs (leading to state leadership certification)

District	District-Supported Leadership Preparation Program	Location	Credits	Schedule	Cohort and Number of Candidates Per Year	Degree or Certification	Accreditation and Program Recognition
Boston	Boston Principal Fellowship Program	At the district offices	36	1 year, 4 days/week for fieldwork and 1 day/ week for seminars (90 days of seminars throughout the year)	Cohort, n = 12	Eligible to be recommended for state leadership certification, with an option for a master's degree or Certificate of Advanced Studies	• State-approved certification program only • Affiliate (UMass Boston) is a candidate for TEAC*
Chicago	UIC Urban Educational Leaders Program	At the university or in schools	88	Courses are scheduled over 4 years, with 1 year for a full-time internship	Not a cohort, n = 20	• Leads to EdD • Eligible to be recommended for state leadership certification	State-approved
Fort Wayne	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jefferson County	University of Louisville (one of 4 partner institutions, used for illustration)	At the university or in a school or district office	30	5–6 semesters	• Partial cohort (n = 5–8 JCPS scholarship students in 3 dedicated courses together) • The district enrolled 16–25 students per year in 4 universities	• Leads to MEd or MS • Eligible to be recommended for state leadership certification	Affiliate (University of Louisville) is NCATE/ELCC-approved and UCEA member**
Providence	Aspiring Principals Program	At the district offices	36	18-months: late-afternoon courses and summer institute	Cohort, n = 15–20	• Certification and MA degree • Eligible for state leadership certification	• State-approved • SREB recognition as a model program • State recognition as a model program*** • Affiliate (URI) is NCATE-approved
Springfield, Illinois	ISU	At the district offices	39	6 class hours weekly over 2 years, including 2 summers	Cohort, n = 15–20	• Leads to a master's degree or post-master's certification-only • Eligible to be recommended for state leadership certification	• Affiliate (ISU) is NCATE/ELCC-approved • ISU is a UCEA member

(cont.)

Note: None of Fort Wayne's leadership preparation programs lead to school leader certification so are excluded from this analysis.

NA = not applicable

* For more information about TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council), see www.teac.org/index.php/membership/teac-members/?page_id=45&Sort=2&Ref=2. TEAC candidates are institutions that are in the process of applying for accreditation approval.

** UCEA (University Council for Educational Administration) is a consortium of higher education institutions committed to advancing the preparation and practice of education leaders for the benefit of schools and children. See www.ucea.org/membership-policy-and-procedur/.

*** See www.ride.ri.gov/hqlp/Recruitment_Candidate_Pool/ProvidenceLEAD.aspx.

District	District-Supported Leadership Preparation Program	Location	Credits	Schedule	Cohort and Number of Candidates Per Year	Degree or Certification	Accreditation and Program Recognition
Springfield, Mass.	LEAD program (Springfield)	At the district offices	21	Varied schedule over 2 academic years, including a 5-week summer institute	Cohort, n = 16–21	Certificate-only program. Eligible to be recommended for state leadership certification, with an option for a Certificate of Advanced Study (3 courses) or a master's degree (5 courses)	• State-approved program for certification only • Affiliate (UMass Amherst) is NCATE/ELCC-approved
St. Louis	New Leaders Project	At the district offices	30	1 year: summer institute followed by full academic year (4-day, full-time internship and 1 evening and 1 day of seminars each week)	Cohort, n = 12–23	• Master's degree • Eligible to be recommended for state leadership certification	Affiliate (University of Missouri–Columbia) is a UCEA member and TEAC candidate

District-university affiliated programs were fairly similar in their credit requirements and scheduling for several reasons. First, their preparatory experiences had to meet state program registration guidelines, aligning to their requirements. Second, district officials all had completed a conventional preparation program, so their familiarity with how to organize and deliver a program was equally steeped in conventional approaches. Third, seven of the eight district-university affiliated programs, to varying degrees, were aligned with universities to enable their candidates to earn a master's degree (or doctoral degree, in one case), either directly in the program or through additional coursework following program completion. These degree-bearing programs had to adhere to state or national accreditation requirements.

While the course requirements were comparable across programs, we found the method of delivery varied. The greatest variation occurred in how instructional time was scheduled and courses were sequenced. For example, two programs—Boston and St. Louis—scheduled coursework (one, or one-and-a-half days per week) around full-time internships (four days per week), while four programs used a combination of weekly courses and summer institutes. The certificate-only program in Springfield, Mass., scheduled courses around instructor availability and preferred more intensive course experiences. Programs ranged in length from one to four years. Most of the district-university affiliated programs provided some or all coursework on-site at district offices or schools.

Finally, the district-university affiliated programs varied in their state approval and national accreditation. Two—Boston and Springfield, Mass.—were state-approved programs sponsored by their district. In Providence, the program enabled candidates to earn credits that could be used for state leadership certification. Four other programs were affiliated with universities that had state-approved programs (two of which, University of Louisville and ISU, have national ELCC [the specialized professional association of NCATE] recognition and are UCEA member institutions).

These organizational features suggested that the district-university affiliated programs, to varying degrees, took steps to organize learning experiences in new ways (particularly through co-location, alternative scheduling, timing, and use of cohorts) within existing state and university regulatory constraints.

Vigorous Recruitment and Selection

The first program feature we examined was candidate recruitment and selection. One step in improving the quality of a district's leadership candidate pool is changing who is recruited into programs, the expectations for candidate qualifications, and the selection criteria for determining eligibility.

As noted in Chapter 2, throughout the grant period, districts clarified the leadership challenges of different types of schools, the leadership qualities that they determined were most essential, and the types of leaders they needed. These clarifications were used, to varying degrees, to define who was recruited, the types of evidence sought about aspiring candidates, and the means of determining admissions.

Recruiting Among Their Own

Almost all the districts' programs began by focusing on creating a leadership pool from among their own teachers, as a means of "growing their own." The district-university affiliated programs therefore gave priority to individuals who were already familiar with a district's needs and challenges and had committed to a career in the district schools. Providence district officials strongly supported tapping potential leaders from within their system because they believed that their shared history and context would facilitate stronger mentoring relationships and greater credibility. Only one district made the leadership preparation opportunity available to non-district candidates, but later amended this decision to limit program participation exclusively to candidates who worked in the district.

The districts or their affiliated programs used several candidate recruitment strategies, by encouraging candidates to apply or be nominated by others, and by circulating information and holding informational meetings. For example, Springfield, Illinois, and its partner university, ISU, created a recruitment brochure that they mailed to prospective candidates each time they prepared for a new cohort. Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) hosted an annual Aspiring Leaders Fair to inform potential candidates about leadership preparation opportunities through JCPS scholarships and the programs offered by the four affiliated universities.

Adding Eligibility Criteria for Recruitment and Selection

Most district-university affiliated programs added to or replaced the list of qualifications for candidate eligibility as one critical step toward improving candidates' caliber. This list generally included the following:

- An expressed commitment to leading a school in the district

- An expressed commitment to working in challenging leadership conditions, such as "transforming chronically low-performing schools where the leadership need is most evident," as described by one district official

- Strong instructional leadership skills, as evidenced by prior leadership experience relevant to the challenges of urban school leadership, and outstanding classroom instruction

- Instructional leadership readiness, as evidenced by letters of recommendation from principals and other district leaders familiar with the candidate's work

- Leadership disposition (i.e., temperament and characteristics desirable in a leader, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management)

In many cases, the districts' work on leadership standards informed their affiliated programs' recruitment and selection criteria by clarifying certain qualities, particularly pertaining to instructional leadership, commitment to challenging conditions, and leadership dispositions. The qualities used for candidate selection became, in some districts, an extension of the district's vision for education. As one superintendent explained:

> My goal is to have one, two, or three world-class candidates for every opening we have.

> We're investing in programs that can give us multiple candidates each year, not a candidate. So, in that sense, scale matters. But again, I'm much more concerned with quality than I am with quantity.

Thus, candidate selection (as well as preparation, principal selection, and induction) had to be aligned with the district vision and values to ensure that "we're going in the same direction," as one superintendent explained.

Revamping the Selection Process

To identify candidates who were the "best fit" for their local conditions, and to obtain information to rate leadership potential qualities, some district-university affiliated programs added new steps or adapted existing selection process steps. All district-university affiliated programs looked for candidate interest in leadership in letters of intent and application essays or for evidence of leadership accomplishments in letters of recommendation and application information.

In some cases, district-university affiliated programs experimented with different types of information that would demonstrate candidates' leadership potential and readiness, and incorporated screening processes that yielded new information and means of assessment. Several districts' programs screened applicants in ways that mirrored selection for actual leadership positions, such as having candidates participate in multiple types of interviews and using a rubric to assess them. For example:

- In Jefferson County, candidates were co-interviewed by district staff and university faculty before submitting applications. The application components were blinded to remove candidates' names and identities and scored using rating rubrics by pairs of JCPS facilitators or district office staff. A district official determined which candidates were eligible for the district's scholarship, while the universities evaluated the recommended candidates for university-defined eligibility.

- In Providence, candidates made 15-minute presentations on the "greatest challenge facing a Providence principal in today's educational environment and how you, as a principal, would meet the challenge."

- In St. Louis, candidates completed an on-site writing exercise, participated in several realistic demonstrations of leadership potential through role play and a presentation of a lesson plan, and participated in a group interview and (if needed) an on-site interview. In each step, district staff scored candidates using rubrics to determine their potential to be a strong instructional leader and to demonstrate strong instructional competence, as well as their capacity for critical and reflective thinking, growth and learning, and persistence.

- In Springfield, Mass., candidates' leadership dispositions were assessed based on the Gallup PrincipalInsight™ system.

Selections were decided by either the district only, the district and then the university, or the district and university together. For example, in Chicago, both district and university personnel sat in on the interviews and reviewed the candidates, whereas in Jefferson County, the district evaluated the candidates using its criteria, and then the universities weighed in, using their own graduate school criteria. Depending on the program affiliation model, candidate assessment included both leadership capacity (such as Springfield, Illinois's assessment of leadership potential as aligned with the district's definition of an ideal principal) and academic readiness (based on standardized assessments and transcript reviews). A former Springfield, Illinois, district official explained how the district evaluated an applicant:

> We [looked] at the leadership opportunities that [applicants] had already availed themselves [of]—were they teacher leaders in their buildings, [did they participate] on their instructional or site leadership teams?

As part of the selection process, several districts required that their candidates agree to work in the district after program completion in return for the full-time internship and program support:

● Chicago required a three-year commitment.

● Springfield, Illinois, required members of the first two cohorts of its LEAD Program (the program's formal name) to remain in the district for five years and to actively pursue leadership opportunities.

● St. Louis required candidates to work for five years or to reimburse the district for the full cost of the training.

Through the opportunities created by the programs' internships and the more rigorous selection criteria and processes, several programs reported that applicants, in general, possessed the prerequisite skills and attributes necessary for admission to the program.

After using other criteria and selection processes, St. Louis revamped its selection process to include a try-out period. For its next cohort, program officials planned to have New Leaders candidates undergo a seven-month screening process that includes a paper application, interview, site visit to a classroom or other work environment, and finally a group interview. Selected candidates would then enter the "New Leaders Training Corp" for two semesters of monthly PD, observations at their work site or group sessions in the district, and performance assessments.

This will conclude with a "summative assessment" for final selection into the New Leaders Project.

Defining and Adopting Leadership Standards and Expectations

The second program feature we examined pertained to the values and beliefs about leadership and its role in school improvement, which were expressed both in explicitly defined leadership standards or competencies and in organizing themes and principles about leadership and its preparation. As noted in Chapter 2, when districts first began their programs, some already had leadership standards—most often, the national ISLLC standards (used by four districts, in part because their states had adopted them) or state-defined leadership standards (seven of the eight districts had state standards, which are discussed in more depth in Chapter 6). Chicago developed its own leadership standards and encouraged leadership preparation programs to adopt them. In contrast, Springfield, Illinois, began its program development process by discussing the attributes of an "ideal principal" for the district; the district and the university then used these attributes as guidelines for identifying and recruiting participants.

Most of the standards in use in the districts under study reflected leadership

priorities similar to the ISLLC standards for preparatory experiences and assessments: vision, teaching and learning, management and operations, parent and community involvement, ethics, and the social and policy context. They were the basis for state licensure or certification (of individuals) and accreditation (of programs).

As their programs evolved and other state leadership policy initiatives took place, some districts began to develop or revamp their leadership standards to be more explicit about local needs and expectations, and further reflect their assumptions about effective leadership for their schools. They planned to use these standards to communicate their expectations to local leadership preparation programs and to incorporate them into the guidelines for principal selection decisions and principal evaluation. Three districts (Boston, Jefferson County, and Springfield, Mass.) in two states (Kentucky and Massachusetts) participated in revamping their state standards during 2007–08 and 2008–09, and a fourth district's state, Rhode Island, adopted its first school leadership standards in 2009.

Two districts (Springfield, Mass., and St. Louis) adopted the NYC Leadership Academy's Leadership Performance Standards Matrix[61] to assess candidates' performance in the program.

In using standards and clarifying their expectations for leadership preparation, the districts created leadership competencies and program leadership themes to frame program content and delivery.

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61. The Matrix was adapted from *Assessing Educational Leaders* (2003) by Douglas Reeves. It is available online at www.nycleadershipacademy.org/aspiring/approach/performancematrix.

These are compared in Table 4.3. An analysis of these competencies and themes suggests that districts and programs placed greater emphasis on assessment, the use of data, and school change through transformational leadership practices, than the ISLLC standards. They were less explicit in competencies and themes pertaining to school management and family and community engagement. These emphases are consistent with the districts' priorities for leading school improvement.

Table 4.3: A comparison of selected district-defined leadership competencies and affiliated programs' leadership themes

Thematic Categories	Boston's Ten Essentials for School Leadership	Chicago's Five Core Leadership Competencies	Providence's Instructional Strands	Springfield, Illinois's Ideal Principal Qualities	St. Louis's Core Program Themes or Assumptions
Vision building	Not stated	Develop and articulate belief system through voice and actions	Leadership	Not stated	• Equity and excellence • Leadership
Developing others	• Supervision and evaluation • PD • Shared leadership	Engage and develop faculty	Teacher development	• Values relationships • Communicates well	Collaboration
Assessment and data	Data	Assess the quality of classroom instruction	Assessment and accountability	Understands data and their use in ensuring that learners' needs are addressed	Inquiry and reflective practice
Curriculum and instruction	Learning and teaching	Not stated	Curriculum and instruction	Has extensive knowledge of curriculum	Teaching and learning
Transformational leadership	• Understanding and managing self • Resilience • School culture and climate	Facilitate/motivate change	Not stated	• Is flexible and willing to take risks • Is open to constructive criticism	Organizational change
Management	Resources	Balance management	• Organization and management • Technology	Not stated	Not stated
Community	Family and community engagement	Not stated	Not stated	Has a strong sense of community	Not stated

Program Content

The third program feature we reviewed was course offerings and related program experiences in order to identify what content was central to the districts' leadership preparation. Experts have argued that innovation in program content centers on inclusion of new content, a focus on the centrality of student learning, and coherence among program elements around a common vision and a core set of values (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). Thus, we explored how the content was innovative and what sources were used as the basis for program content. We analyzed how the content reflected the districts' preferences for leadership, districts' resources and processes, and the urban conditions of their schools and communities. We began, however, with the content development process itself to learn how new content was identified or created.

Development of Course Content

Course content in areas such as instructional leadership and urban education issues tended to draw from existing university-based courses or new modules developed by intermediary organizations supported by The Wallace Foundation, particularly SREB and the NYC Leadership Academy. Course content in such areas as school improvement and district processes and issues tended to be district-developed and organized around hands-on learning projects.

The process of developing course content varied within and among programs; the content was developed by university faculty, district personnel, or both. Springfield, Illinois, provided a model for how both could work on content together: ISU

professors typically developed course syllabi and then sent them to District 186 for review and possible modification before finalizing.

However, identifying areas for course content did not entail simply identifying gaps in existing programs or the needs of current district principals (although the standards-setting work of some districts provided insights). In some cases, developing course content was quite challenging, given multiple institutional priorities and standards. The interplay between university and district staff was most evident in St. Louis, where the university faculty juggled state and national leadership standards and expectations for university courses, while adapting to the needs of the St. Louis district and its use of the NYC Leadership Academy curriculum. A faculty member described the curriculum adoption process:

> I taught Curriculum Assessment and Learning . . . [in St. Louis and] on campus. I worked with [a district representative who] would usually sit in on my classes with me. If I was missing a piece or if there was something that was not really congruent with the whole philosophy, then we would talk about how [the topic] needed to be modified for an urban district. [In the beginning] I e-mail them the syllabus. The framework and the objectives are the same because we have to meet state standards and ISLLC standards—standards that the university has agreed upon with the state for certifying administrators. But at the same time, I use the materials from the New York [City] Leadership Academy . . . [I'm using the] training binders, and . . . charts . . . I take what they already have, and then

the current articles that were recommended by the Academy in New York and so, you get two sets of things going on here.

Although this particular interplay was not typical of all programs and all courses, it underscores the challenges that existed as districts and universities worked to construct or realign courses to meet institutional expectations and state and national standards.

Our interviews and candidate feedback (from our interviews or on program evaluations) revealed that many programs were continuing to develop their course content and learning experiences, particularly to incorporate more authentic work and applications within the courses, and to meet newly developed standards more closely. Candidate feedback underscored the tension that programs experienced in finding the right mix and balance between knowledge about leadership and school improvement and practical applications. In some cases, candidates complained that course content and assignments were too academic and abstract, lacking sufficient district application—or, conversely, that they were too focused on principal tools and practices, with insufficient investigation of theory and research in which to situate the work.

Organization and Coherence of Content

All seven district-university affiliated programs articulated an overarching focus and core values and beliefs about leadership and its preparation. To varying degrees, the programs tried to structure content and learning experiences around them, while simultaneously aligning them with district and state standards and certification

requirements, and integrating theory and practice learning. Among the districts' efforts to organize learning, strive for coherence, and balance theory and practice were these:

- Boston Principal Fellowship (BPF) was designed around its Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement and Ten Dimensions of Principal Leadership. These framed the course requirements and completion of a series of cornerstone and capstone assignments as part of the candidates' field experiences.

- Chicago's UIC doctoral program aimed to prepare candidates to transform low-performing schools and districts, and its preparatory experiences were aligned closely with the five CPS core leadership competencies. This priority was reflected in specific courses on curriculum, instruction, and urban school leadership, as well as in full-time internships in challenging schools, with coaching from adjunct instructors.

- Providence's Aspiring Principals Program organized its curriculum around its six instructional strands, selected to address the key issues that new principals faced as they worked to reform schools.

- Programs such as ISU/D-186 (the affiliation between ISU and Springfield, Illinois) explicitly stated an intention to offer a balanced curriculum of academic and practical content and to provide assignments throughout all courses that aligned with real school problems and the district's vision for improvement.

- The LEAD program in Springfield, Mass., began with a focus on preparation of instructional leaders but, over time, evolved to give more attention to the urban issues facing the schools and to the use of data to guide decision-making and instructional improvement. Such attention was reflected

in changes in assignments, particularly the case study research and school improvement planning that candidates were required to complete.

- St. Louis's New Leaders Project aimed to prepare those driven by the mission to transform low-performing schools in a challenged district by focusing on teaching, learning, and school and community engagement. By interweaving weekly seminars with a year-long internship, district and university staff focused on problems of practice and issues as they emerged, linking course content and hands-on learning assignments.

In most cases, course content was offered in a conventional course format (or a modified format) within district-university affiliated programs: weekly class sessions held over the fall and spring semesters. There were two exceptions. Springfield, Mass., used a combination of schedules to take advantage of instructors' availability and to offer intensive course experiences where warranted. The district also incorporated a five-week, non-credit seminar series to focus on district-related topics and to support the candidates' case study research and school improvement planning.

The other exception was St. Louis. Its New Leaders Project curriculum was described by district staff and university faculty as fluid and "round" (like a highway roundabout with continuous opportunities for entry and exit), rather than following a conventional course sequence. Course topics were introduced as the program coordinators felt they were appropriate, consistent with the cycles of the academic year, current issues and priorities of the district, and learning needs of the program candidates. There were no discernable boundaries around content or activities like discrete courses, although it was represented that way on candidates' transcripts. As one faculty member explained:

You don't do [one course] this six weeks and [a different course] the next six weeks—that's not it. For a semester, if you have nine credit hours, that might be three different courses, but it's topic-oriented, and they'll [the formal courses] be in and out—and it will be totally integrated.

In St. Louis, there was much evidence of topics that were tightly linked to processes in the district and to the real-life challenges of school leadership, and a deeper level of attention paid to practical knowledge than is present in most university-based programs.

District-Relevant Program Content

In looking at program content, we focused on four main areas that we thought were most relevant to the districts' leadership needs and school improvement priorities: (1) instructional leadership, (2) school improvement, (3) district processes and issues, and (4) urban education issues. The programs varied greatly in the extent to which their content stressed these areas and how explicitly they did so.

Instructional Leadership

All seven district-university affiliated programs had courses that covered instructional leadership, although their content varied in scope, breadth, and explicitness. Some programs included courses that looked generally at the principalship, while others focused more narrowly on content for teacher observation, supervision, and development.

Instead of using traditional, theory-driven, university-developed courses, two districts' programs adopted curriculum

modules that were created by intermediary organizations with a focus on application and reflective practice. Providence began with IFL's principles as applied in the school learning walks (visits to classrooms throughout the school to develop observation and analytic skills for assessing the quality of teaching and learning). Later, the district added SREB instructional leadership course modules that focused on instruction and adapted them to the Providence context. Courses were taught by school district leaders who were trained by IFL and SREB faculty. Training on these modules was funded in part by The Wallace Foundation and other grants.

Springfield, Mass., converted the RBT model into a course on observing and analyzing teaching and learning. The RBT model was very explicit about how to observe and develop quality teaching, as illustrated by a class observation (excerpted from the case study report):

> During one class session, the instructor had candidates view film clips of teaching in order to identify the relationship between teacher actions and student behavior and engagement. Their observations led to a discussion of how to follow up with the teacher—what to say, what kind of feedback to offer, and how to deliver it. The instructor outlined a constructive feedback process in which the observer shares what he/she sees and then uses open-ended questions to ask for the teacher's thoughts and feelings about what is going on in the class. Through class discussion and two more rounds of video observations, the instructor stressed the importance of helping teachers to discover insights into how to improve his or her teaching, not be

told, and how to give different types of feedback, building on the good work that is evident.

Change Leadership and School Improvement

Change leadership[62] as a content focus that is part of, or complementary to, instructional leadership was less explicit in the program content and was often described by program officials as "stressed in" or "woven into" the courses. There were four exceptions. Two districts, Chicago and Jefferson County, had an affiliated university with an explicitly defined course on change leadership. A third district, Springfield, Mass., developed students' change leadership capacity through a summer institute built around school improvement planning. Finally, Boston's program was organized around strategies and approaches for school improvement and complete projects related to school improvement practices, which included analyzing an area for improvement in their school, serving on the school site council to address this area, and working on the whole-school improvement plan with the school's instructional leadership team.

District Operations and Processes

All eight districts incorporated instruction on district operations and processes into their leadership preparation continuum, but rarely as an explicit course within the formal program. Several patterns emerged:

● Jefferson County had district liaisons serve as adjunct faculty in its four affiliated universities to teach or co-teach one or more program courses, infusing district examples into the class sessions.

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62. In discussing *change leaders,* Fullan (2001) explains that such "leaders must be able to operate under complex, uncertain circumstances" (p. xiii). Wagner et al. (2006) add that to be effective in leading "transformational improvement processes in schools and districts," leaders must understand why it is hard for individuals and organizations to change, and must be able to take action to help them "actually become what they need and want to be" (p. xvi).

- Boston, Providence, and Springfield, Illinois, had district administrators teach several courses, weaving in district operations, particularly in coursework on human and fiscal resources and educational technology.

- Springfield, Mass., included a similar series as a non-credit, mandatory summer institute within its formal leadership preparation program that addressed various aspects of district operations, policies, and procedures.

- Chicago and St. Louis had central office staff and principals make presentations on district processes throughout the program.

- Fort Wayne and Jefferson County offered a post-preparation seminar series on district operations and processes.

It appeared from our interviews and reviews of program materials and course syllabi that content for the district operations courses and seminars was largely drawn from how the districts themselves managed operations, as well as their processes for supporting schools through supervision, oversight, and coordination of services.

Throughout our site visits, we learned that program candidates greatly valued these experiences, both for the content—understanding how the district functioned—and for the networking opportunities with district officials and staff. For example, throughout the coursework, the St. Louis program introduced the candidates to how district offices carried out their work by inviting central office leaders (e.g., from human resources, operations, curriculum and instruction) to be guest lecturers.

Urban Education Issues

The districts' schools, as noted in Chapter 2, face considerable educational and socioeconomic challenges that add considerably to the complexity of leadership and school improvement. We had expected to find that the district-university affiliated programs explored these challenges and their implications in program courses. However, only some districts' programs did so, either explicitly, through a focus on urban educational issues, or more generally, as topics within courses on school-community relations. In St. Louis, the program had candidates engage in activities that explicitly addressed the equity and cultural diversity issues of that district primarily through seminars connected to their internship experiences. An intern in St. Louis noted the learning benefits:

> The difference is when you go to the university, they prepare you broadly so you may be successful in any school, sometimes with the ideal situation. Going through the cohort set me up to deal with real situations in urban schools where I would be working.

In Chicago, UIC, as a doctoral program, offered two courses (Education in an Urban Environment and the Urban School Principalship) that addressed leadership and urban education. The content of these courses appeared to be drawn from the university-based faculty's own course designs and information about the districts' educational and demographic contexts. Finally, Springfield, Mass. required a course in urban issues, taught by UMass Amherst faculty.

Instructional Approaches for Leadership Capacity-Building

How programs structure candidates' learning and engagement with program content is as important as the content itself. According to Taylor, Cordeiro, and Chrispeels (2009), leadership preparation candidates need a pedagogical approach that engages them in identifying and resolving ill-defined, complex problems that are typical of school leadership. This competency cannot be achieved by merely acquiring information; it instead requires learning that enables constructing knowledge that informs practice. This learning approach focuses on both the whole, as well as discrete, parts of knowledge and the linkages among the parts. McCarthy and Forsyth (2009), in their review of the history of leadership preparation, point out that a major program redesign thrust in recent years has been to shift from an empiricist approach to pedagogy to a constructivist approach, which empowers the learner by focusing on learning, rather than on teaching; and on creating, rather than consuming, knowledge.

Conventional programs usually divide knowledge into discrete courses without linkages or attention to the whole. Alternatively, programs using a constructivist paradigm and holistic approach—such as problem-based learning, case methods, action research, and the active use of cohorts for pedagogical purposes to create a community of practice—enable practi-

tioners to focus on both the whole and its parts (Barnett et al., 2000; Copland, 2000; Taylor et al., 2009).

We coupled the emphasis on constructivist learning with a view about the levels of engagement that programs expected from their candidates as learners, as reflected in the depth of course content. We considered two dimensions: the type of knowledge and the level of knowledge engagement. For the type of knowledge, we drew on de Jong and Ferguson-Hessler's (1996) four types of knowledge—situational, conceptual, procedural, and strategic—and the quality and depth of knowledge. For engagement, we drew on Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, from developing understanding to enabling application and analysis of knowledge (B. Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956).

First, we examined the instructional methods used to facilitate candidate learning in the courses and related experiences and how they might be constructivist in nature—by enabling application and analysis of knowledge, rather than simply understanding. We observed a few classes in each of our seven district-university affiliated programs, focusing on the means of engaging candidates in their learning. Some districts' programs, in particular, made extensive use of experiential learning approaches, such as immersing students in analyzing and planning for high-need schools and assessing their leadership options.

In our site visits, we observed frequent examples of class-based learning activities that enabled candidates to apply what they were learning to district-like situations or

to construct learning for other candidates based on their own work. The use of experiential learning strategies varied within and among programs, as observed and illustrated below:

- In the UIC classes, instructors used lecture, PowerPoint presentations, a scripted role-playing activity, and question-and-answer exchanges, with modest attention to the candidates' school contexts.

- In Springfield, Mass., the LEAD program classes were held in a large PD conference room, with a plethora of hands-on materials (sticky notes, newsprint, scissors, and tape). Throughout the day-long summer classes, instruction varied from mini-lectures with PowerPoint presentations to videotape analyses and individual and small-group work on assignments related to the discussion topic. Work from prior discussions was evident around the room, which displayed model school designs constructed from drinking straws.

- St. Louis's New Leaders Project relied significantly on experiential learning during classroom sessions. The participants frequently worked on activities that simulated the real work of principals—using real data to diagnose problems and identify appropriate solutions in collaboration with members of their cohort, faculty, and other field experts.

Course-related assignments and capstone projects also tended to be constructivist in nature, because they created opportunities for candidates to learn and develop skills related to district leadership tasks,

most commonly developing a school improvement plan or other district-required reports and communications:

- Boston required its Fellows to complete a series of authentic field assignments loosely linked to coursework and internship experiences. These "cornerstone" projects included opportunities to develop specific competencies in analyzing instruction and supporting improvement; engaging the family and community; managing people and organizations; and scaling up instructional improvement. Assignments included conducting a learning walk, participating on a school site council, conducting teacher observations, leading groups, developing a school budget, serving on a personnel selection committee, working with the Instructional Leadership Team to strengthen an area of academic weakness in their school, visiting another school, and interviewing district leaders.

- The ISU/D-186 program required project-based assignments in all courses. For example, in Organization Development, candidates worked in two-member groups to review a school improvement plan and then collaboratively write a letter—as the principal—to the board of education to describe the type of data collected and the recommended changes to the plan to ensure student learning. In addition, candidates conducted an action research project about a school's PD needs, using interviews with a district administrator, a principal, and two teachers as the major data source.

- In St. Louis, an initial summer institute activity had candidates working in groups to create a new school, based on a simulation.

We also looked at the types of knowledge, in both course content and as used in assignments. We found that some programs focused significantly on technical skills and knowledge—such as how to use district data or how to complete observation documents (as noted in the examples above)—rather than more strategic knowledge development, such as how to use data as an organizational change strategy or how to ensure that PD was based on principles of adult learning.[63] Given the importance of strategic knowledge development for problem-solving and complex change, we saw this as a limitation in course content.

Finally, although we were not able to conduct a thorough content analysis of similar courses across all programs, we were able to look in depth at the course syllabi in two district-university affiliated programs. We saw strong differences in the courses we sampled with respect to whether programs strived for candidate understanding or awareness in a content area or in regard to application and use of knowledge in authentic problems of practice. District and university officials interviewed about the source of the core knowledge for these courses described the standards that they used or developed to clarify "what principals need to know and be able to do" and district issues, offices, and personnel—much of which was procedural rather than conceptual knowledge. We also looked at the core readings and assignments for a sample of supervision courses from three programs and found stark differences in how narrowly or broadly the programs focused on the nature and practice of supervision, particularly as a means of improving individual teachers or as they fit within a system of instructional improvement strategies.

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63. For a more in-depth analysis of knowledge development in two districts' programs, see Orr & Easley II (2009).

Redefining the Internship and Other Field Experiences

A fourth area for program innovation is the use of the field experiences, including the internship. A cornerstone of the districts' leadership preparation, within or beyond formal preparation programs leading to certification, was their investment in intensive, lengthy, and authentic internships. Their expectations for the internship were often equal to or greater than their course-related expectations, making them equally important preparatory experiences.

ELCC, the national accreditation organization for leadership preparation programs, outlines six program standards for what candidates are to learn (aligned with the six ISLLC standards, identified in Chapter 1) and a seventh standard on internship quality. ELCC defines "internship" as follows:

> The internship provides significant opportunities for candidates to synthesize and apply the knowledge and practice and develop the skills identified in Standards 1–6 through substantial, sustained, standards-based work in real settings, planned and guided cooperatively by the institution and school district. *(National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002)*

For its internship standard, ELCC outlines six sub-standard attributes to define these qualities further and to clarify that internship experiences should enable candidates to earn course credit.

After analysis of existing internships in leadership preparation programs in SREB's southern region and its own research on critical leadership success factors, SREB proposed the following attributes of quality internships, which reflect many of the same principles outlined by ELCC:

- Be collaboratively designed between universities and school districts

- Have activities that are anchored "in real-world problems principals face, [provide] for appropriate structure and support of learning experiences, and [ensure] quality guidance and supervision" (Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2005, p. 8)

- Have explicit school-based assignments to apply leadership knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking

- Be developmental

- Offer opportunities to work with diverse students, teachers, parents, and communities (Fry et al., 2005)

The internship itself is to be supported through handbooks or other materials that clearly define expectations for the nature of the experiences, ongoing supervision by knowledgeable program faculty, opportunities to work with principals who model the desired leadership behaviors and who know how to guide interns' development and work, and rigorous evaluation of interns' performance on core school leader responsibilities (Fry et al., 2005).

Drawing on the ELCC and SREB standards, we reviewed the districts' internship programs by focusing on the length, scope, nature, and authenticity of the work, and the extent to which the internship was designed to provide a developmental trajectory for interns' growth. We also looked at internship management, including supervision, support, and oversight.

As noted above, in some districts the internship existed within a formal leadership preparation program. For others, it was offered as a post-preparation experience to only a few individuals; in these cases, eligible candidates had two internship experiences: a shorter internship within a preparation program, and a lengthy, more selective post-preparation internship. Typically, we found that an overriding practice among the districts was to situate a longer, full-time internship (either inside a preparation program or following it) within a leadership preparation continuum that led to candidate readiness for assistant principal (AP) or principal leadership positions. For several districts, a paid, full-time, full-year internship was an opportunity for candidates to try out and further develop their new leadership skills and competencies. For other districts, the paid, full-time internship was a means of increasing a candidate's leadership preparation.

Internship Qualities

The first internship quality we examined was **length.** The majority of districts sponsored a full-time, full-year (or close to full-year), paid internship either as part of or immediately following a formal preparation program. The length and timing of the internship in relation to the formal preparation program included the following arrangements:

- Two districts required shorter, full-time internships as part of their certification programs. Springfield, Mass., supported a 10-week paid internship during the program's second year, whereas Providence supported two 9-week, full-time, paid experiences—an internship and a residency—during different times in the program.

- In Boston, Chicago, and St. Louis, a full-time (80–100 percent), year-long internship was part of the district-university affiliated leadership preparation program.

- In Fort Wayne, Jefferson County, and Springfield, Illinois, the district offered a year-long internship following completion of a formal leadership preparation program as a separate district-managed experience for a limited number of candidates (with all candidates completing shorter internships as part of their programs).

The second quality we examined was the **scope and nature of the interns' work.** In some districts (typically those with an initial internship within a university-based program or as part of the district's own preparation program), interns' shorter experience was more introductory in nature; interns primarily did job shadowing of an experienced principal or documented aspects of the principal's work. While these experiences enabled candidates to gain awareness about leadership work, it did not enable them to develop their own leadership competencies.

In the longer, full-time internships, interns had administrative responsibilities that enabled them to exercise leadership. In some instances, particularly for the year-long internships, candidates assumed responsibilities that site researchers described as typical of APs. For example, one district—District 186 in Springfield, Illinois—had created four or five one-year administrative intern positions annually. Middle schools and high schools could use a teacher salary allocation from their budget to fund a teacher on special assignment as an administrative intern. Interns typically held principal certification, so this was a post-preparation experience.

Several district-university affiliated programs used state guidelines and assessments to frame expectations of the types of experiences interns were to have. In Jefferson County, all leadership preparation candidates had to complete a short-term internship within one of four

affiliated universities' programs. The University of Louisville managed the within-program internship as follows:

- The program internship required a minimum of 105 contact hours.

- Candidates obtained a signed contract from their principals and faculty advisors outlining the content and duration of the program-based internship activities.

- The internship was coordinated through a required course whose instructor coordinated the student's internship work.

In Springfield, Illinois, the program's overarching requirement was that the embedded fieldwork be aligned with coursework and "provide structured, sustained, standards-based experiences in authentic settings," according to district officials. Candidates completed a 45-hour practicum each semester, accumulating a total of 270 hours of fieldwork during the program. The university provided candidates with a Guide for Students outlining specific tasks and projects to be completed. Candidates were strongly urged to work with three or more mentors at different sites during their field experience to expand their understanding of the district as a complex system. Candidates had to develop a professional practice plan, maintain a practicum log, create artifacts appropriate for inclusion in their portfolios, and complete online self-assessments at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the program.

Finally, in Springfield, Mass., LEAD program candidates did their internship in either the fall or spring and had to complete 400 hours of fieldwork (in addition to 30 hours of pre-practicum fieldwork). The project director assigned interns to master principals, preferably in unfamiliar settings. Interns then developed an internship contract with their cooperating practitioner and internship seminar instructor, based on the five Massachusetts standards for

administrators. Students had to list, on no more than two pages, their activities for the 10-week internship and the criteria for evaluating their work and its alignment with the standards. Both the intern and the practitioner signed the contract. Interns were visited several times during their internship by their faculty advisor and the project director. At the end of the program, candidates prepared a portfolio of internship artifacts demonstrating how they addressed the five standards.

In most district-university affiliated programs, interns were required to compile evidence of their leadership experience for each leadership standard. Alternatively, in the St. Louis program, the principal mentor's assessments determined the comprehensiveness of candidates' internship experiences. Each principal mentor also had to offer evidence that he or she had provided leadership opportunities and experiences, using a list of 51 possible opportunities (e.g., develop an understanding of the district's system for observing and evaluating teachers, conduct building-level meetings, and perform tasks related to the reporting of pupil progress).

The third quality we examined was **authenticity**. Commonly, districts tried to ensure that the learning experiences interns had were authentic. Offering paid, full-time internships increased this likelihood by assigning interns to temporary positions at district schools. When placing interns, most districts typically used one or more of the following learning approaches to ensure authenticity:

- Ensuring that interns had principal-like opportunities

- Assigning interns to work with principals who had been effective in improving student achievement

- Placing interns in multiple settings so they had opportunities to learn about different school conditions and leadership approaches

To increase the authenticity of internship experiences, UIC's Urban Education Leadership program focused explicitly on school change, using two coaches (a mentor principal and a principal—where possible, with exceptional performance—as a site supervisor) to guide and mentor each candidate during the program and beyond (for up to three years). Interns were assigned to help lead their schools' improvement initiatives and received a small budget ($2,500) to undertake a high-priority, school-based project.

The fourth and final quality we examined was **the extent to which the internship was developmental.** The district-university affiliated programs varied in how much they stressed this quality, and used different approaches. In some programs, the developmental nature of the experience was not particularly evident or well-developed. Other districts, such as Providence, split their internship experiences between job shadowing and authentic work, using a two-stage, developmental field experience sequence.

One district's year-long, post-preparation internship program facilitated the developmental aspects of learning through mentorship. Jefferson County trained its mentors to offer a developmental internship (post-preparation) that afforded interns progressive independence in their leadership work. The internship started with job shadowing, then moved to talking through dilemmas with the principals, and culminated in involvement in projects. Gradually, principals gave problems to the intern to solve while they observed and provided feedback.

Internship Management

Internship management includes scheduling, location, supervision, and quality mentoring. As noted in other analyses of internships, internship management influences the substance and quality of the internship experience because of the expectations, opportunities, and means of feedback to foster interns' school leadership development (Barnett, Copland, & Shoho, 2009).

Scheduling and Location

As shown in Table 4.1, there were four types of scheduling arrangements for internships: (1) short-term, embedded fieldworks; (2) short-term, full-time, paid internships during the program; (3) full-year, full-time, paid internships during the program; and (4) full-year, full-time, paid internships following program completion. Internships were either located within the school where candidates worked or in other schools, based on need, leadership expertise, learning opportunities, and the scheduling arrangement.

In two districts (Jefferson County and Springfield, Illinois), candidates had both program-embedded fieldwork experiences and freestanding, year-long internship opportunities (for a smaller number of carefully selected candidates). The unpaid, program-embedded fieldwork experiences were usually arranged by the candidates, program faculty, and the candidates' school principals. They usually mirrored state-required internship hours (105 and 270, respectively) and were often guided by required internship activities.

In two district-university affiliated programs (Providence and Springfield, Mass.), candidates had a full-time, short-term, paid internship within their program for

18 weeks (in two 9-week segments) and 10 weeks, respectively, in which they were assigned to a school other than their own.

In three other district-university affiliated programs (Boston, Chicago, and St. Louis), candidates received paid, full-time, full-year or near full-year internships in schools other than their own. In Boston and St. Louis, the program was designed around the internship experience, whereas in Chicago's UIC program, candidates' internship and coursework were designed as integrated, concurrent experiences.

Finally, three districts—Fort Wayne, Jefferson County, and Springfield, Illinois—offered free-standing, full-year, district-paid internships to a small number of highly qualified candidates who had completed (or were nearing completion of) a formal preparation program.

In the longer district-funded internships, interns were sometimes placed in two or more schools that offered diversity in both level (elementary, middle, or high school) and student population (race or ethnic diversity, poverty level, language, and school performance).

Supervision

Most typically, supervision and support of within-program internships were shared by the districts and universities. Typically, the districts selected the school sites and matched the interns. The university faculty provided internship oversight and facilitated intern learning through a concurrently offered internship seminar. Post-program internships were managed solely by district staff, who also led concurrent seminars for reflection and problem-solving.

A typical example of how interns were supervised is drawn from the Springfield, Mass., program. A university faculty member visited each intern three times during the 10-week internship—first, to develop a list of internship expectations, using the state standards, with the student and his or her principal; then at midpoint, to make sure that the internship was meeting everyone's expectations; and then at the end for evaluation. The district's project director also tried to visit each intern one or two

times on-site. Interns maintained daily logs of activities and reflections and compiled 15–25 artifacts of internship-related leadership activities, projects, and assignments. Interns met weekly with a university faculty member in an internship seminar to discuss leadership topics and issues.

Conversely, UIC had no protocol to guide mentor and coach evaluations of candidates, but used the district's core leadership competencies as an evaluative framework. Mentors and coaches gave feedback both verbally (to the candidate) and in writing (to Urban Education Leadership program directors), and described the interns' progress to date on each of the core competencies.

Quality Mentoring

A key conundrum for district-university affiliated programs was how to supervise and support interns. The districts' aim of providing interns with authentic leadership work and models of exemplary leadership often collided with the lack of highly effective principals to mentor and supervise the interns—the very reason that the districts had created their own leadership preparation programs.

To navigate through this problem, some districts limited their interns' placements to only those schools whose principals had demonstrated success in school improvement. However, this "solution" proved to be very challenging. One district that planned to select as mentors principals with extensive experience and accomplishments first used retired principals to mentor interns, but found that they lacked sufficient current experience. Next, the district tried to identify working principals who were considered exemplary—but due to high principal turnover, there were too few highly experienced principals available. The district had to settle on using principals with as little as three years' experience to mentor the interns.

As an alternative solution, program faculty in another district-university affiliated program simply eschewed principals' capacity to support

and develop interns effectively and took on this role themselves. As one program leader explained:

> If we look at the mentor principals that we're dealing with right now, it's a toss-up. Some are really good, and some are not that great.

In this case, program faculty valued a school site placement more for its challenging conditions—as a context for leadership development—than for the leadership being modeled. The leadership guidance in this program, therefore, came from the interns' university-affiliated coaches.

In contrast, for its year-long internships, Jefferson County resolved the mentor problem by identifying and training mentor principals who had demonstrated their capacity to provide a developmental experience for interns by delegating authority and responsibility to them. The district provided ongoing mentor training that combined the Santa Cruz Blended Coaching model (G. Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005) with a book study (such as reading and discussing *Leadership on the Line* [Heifetz & Linsky, 2002]).

Program Faculty Expertise

Given the programs' emphasis on being relevant to local district conditions and priorities, and on the importance of high-quality faculty, we examined the school and academic backgrounds of the core program faculty. We discovered that most programs' faculty members were former district or school leaders. Very few were academically trained, discipline-based faculty members who conducted research or published extensively in the field (although some had a doctorate and were currently conducting research or publishing). Discipline-trained faculty typically taught only a portion of a program's courses.

The exception was Chicago's UIC doctoral program, with 14 faculty members, 2 adjuncts, and seven internship coaches.

In addition, several programs, particularly the district-based programs, used adjuncts or consultants as course instructors, or, by design, used district staff as instructors for some courses. For example, in the ISU/D-186 program, two thirds of the courses were taught by university faculty and one third by district staff.

This practice had both advantages and disadvantages. Program directors could hire district staff or academic experts for specific courses, obtaining individuals with very specific expertise. For Jefferson County, this enabled each district-university affiliated university to have at least one district staff member (one of the HR department liaisons) serve as an adjunct. The disadvantage of this arrangement was that it limited the number of core faculty who could provide program oversight, support candidates' progress, and integrate course and internship experience, because program coordination was not their primary responsibility.

Authentic Assessment of Leadership Competency Development

Across the eight districts, leadership preparation assessment was integrated into program experiences. Sometimes assessments were also tied to candidate advancement along the preparation continuum (if one existed) or used as part of the selection process for a leadership candidate pool or leadership position. Assessments took a variety of forms:

- Ongoing assessment of candidates, using program standards

- Capstone or culminating projects as final, integrating assessment experiences

- Portfolio-based assessments of the internship and other related experiences

- State-mandated leadership assessments

Three programs embedded standards-based, candidate self-assessment throughout their preparatory experiences. Some aligned these assessments to coursework, an internship, or other related experiences and monitored them regularly:

- At the beginning of the program, the Boston Principal Fellowship used a rubric to self-assess their expertise and learning needs relative to each leadership dimension. They then developed a learning contract with program staff and reflected regularly on their progress toward meeting the standard in each dimension.

- The ISU/D-186 program used a Performance Assessment System (i.e., online self-assessments created by ISU faculty, also used in their regular program). Candidates completed self-assessments throughout the program to measure their progress toward mastery of program standards and to provide meaningful evaluation data for program improvement.

- In St. Louis, program assessments were linked to the NYC Leadership Academy's Leadership Performance Standards Matrix. In this matrix, participants described and rated their progress along 12 leadership dimensions. Every assignment related to one or more competency area, so the participants had concrete evidence of how well they were progressing on the standards. Assessment rubrics were provided for all major assignments, and participant performance was monitored through "accountability meetings" with an assigned facilitator.

Several district-university affiliated programs had individual or groups of candidates complete a capstone or culminating project as a means of integrating their learning and applying it to authentic district work, such as the development of a school improvement plan:

- In Boston, the BPF's capstone project was designed to synthesize the leadership in each cornerstone requirement into an overarching theory of school leadership. Each Fellow publicly presented documents on his or her theory of school leadership learning over the year and its application to the principalship.

- In Providence, candidates completed a research course in one semester where they developed a proposal, and a capstone project in the second semester. For example, in the research course, a candidate might identify a need for a teacher induction program, complete a literature review, and craft a proposal. In the capstone course, the candidate developed and presented his or her plan for an induction program (but would not necessarily implement it).

- In Springfield, Mass., candidates worked in teams of four over the summer to develop a turnaround plan for a case study school (based on an actual district school), presented the plan to the program director, staff, and other candidates, and received feedback from a master principal in the fall.[64]

- In St. Louis, as a culminating activity (referred to as the "data wall"), candidates gathered and synthesized extensive information on one school and make recommendations while drawing on a wide range of approaches to instructional, ethical, risk-taking leadership.

Several district-university affiliated programs required candidates to complete a portfolio of standards-based evidence of their performance, accumulated from their coursework or internship experiences. Frequently, candidates presented their portfolios at the end of their program experience to a panel and were then interviewed. The portfolios were analyzed by district staff, university faculty, or other program participants, often with a standard rating rubric. For example:

- Boston's Fellows maintained a portfolio to record experiences and projects, which they shared throughout the year and reflected on its relation to the program curriculum.

- ISU/D-186 had candidates compile a portfolio with artifacts demonstrating the skills they learned and providing evidence that their field experiences aligned with the performance indicators of the state standards for administrative practice. Each portfolio was reviewed and rated by two ISU professors.

- In Springfield, Mass., each intern completed three to five artifacts and reflections for each of the five state leadership standards and compiled these documents as a portfolio according to each standard. At the end of the program, candidates gave a 20-minute presentation on their portfolios, including their philosophy of educational leadership, goals, experience, and accomplishments in relation to each standard, and concluding with a statement on how their views of leadership had changed and how they were applying what they learned. The portfolios were rated by program officials, using a rubric (which they called The SPS Aspiring and Practicing Administrators' Performance

64. The case study incorporated the district's new teacher evaluation contract stipulations, with profiles of different teachers of varied experience also built into the case. Candidates used a case study report format developed by the Massachusetts Insight Education and Research Institute for the LEAD program. Each case study report was rated on its statement of mission, interpretation of data, alignment of initiatives, implementation of plan, assessment of plan, and evidence of leadership qualities.

Matrix) to record progress notes, reflections, and assessments for each indicator. The rubric included each dimension and sub-dimension, criteria for rating proficiency, and alignment to the Massachusetts professional standards.

In addition, leadership applicants in Chicago had to prepare leadership portfolios constructed around the district's five core competencies. Although not required as part of the regular UIC program, constructing portfolios was required by the district.

In four districts, candidates were required to successfully pass state licensure exams.[65] However, most program officials viewed these state exams as a certification or licensure requirement, rather than as a mechanism for providing information on candidates' learning and readiness and as feedback for the program. The exception was the ISU/D-186 program, which required candidates to pass the state assessment during the last semester of the program.

Program Assessment

Program assessment enables program faculty and their institutional collaborators and funders to learn what works and what does not, demonstrate program effectiveness, and inform program improvement.

Program assessment has become a professional practice expectation in the broader field of leadership preparation.

Nationally accredited, university-based, leadership preparation programs must demonstrate their effectiveness through a series of assessments. The most widely used national accreditation organization is NCATE. Its specialized professional association for educational leadership, ELCC, now requires institutions that prepare educational leaders to provide seven or eight program assessments. These assessments serve as evidence that educational leadership preparation programs meet national leadership standards and address candidates' mastery of knowledge, including their ability to demonstrate their understanding of teaching and learning, apply their leadership knowledge in schools and classrooms, focus on student learning, and meet state licensure requirements.[66] Alternatively, universities can seek national accreditation through TEAC and complete more general program assessment requirements, in alignment with TEAC's quality principles for leadership preparation.[67]

Given this requirement and the fact that several affiliated universities were NCATE-accredited or TEAC candidates, we had expected the universities or districts to engage in some forms of program assessment for accreditation purposes.

Instead, we found that only some districts engaged in formal evaluation of their district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs. At least two districts claimed that The Wallace Foundation discouraged them from using grant funds for this purpose, and did not use their own local funds either. In other cases, the district, the affiliated university, or both engaged in program assessment:

- Providence hired a URI faculty member to evaluate its program, focusing on candidates' assessment of the benefits of their experiences, their career advancement, and suggestions for improvement (Steitsinger, 2008).

- In Springfield, Mass., UMass Amherst conducted its own evaluation of the district-university affiliated program's blending of theory and action, use of real-life or simulated activities, and attention to Springfield (specifically) and urban issues (generally). Through the evaluation, candidates voiced a desire for even more grounding, particularly in how principals develop teachers to be more instructionally effective.

- In St. Louis, both the district and the university evaluated the program. District staff surveyed candidates on their internships and the utility of the program, and graduates on their post-preparation needs. Meanwhile, the university funded two separate, external formative evaluations, during the first and second years, to identify program strengths and areas for improvement.

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65. Massachusetts requires all leadership candidates to pass a state assessment for literacy and communications skills, rather than leadership skills.
66. For more information on these requirements, see www.ncate.org/public/programStandards.asp?ch=4.
67. For more information on these principles, see www.teac.org/accreditation/steps-to-accreditation/.

Summary

We began the chapter with a consideration of whether and how the district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs would be innovative. We were specifically interested in how their program feature choices might yield potentially more effective means of preparing candidates to become leaders who could meet the challenges of these districts and help to improve schools. Contrasting the programs' choices with conventional preparation models and the research literature on exemplary program features was instructive and helped to highlight where innovative efforts were most evident.

The single most substantive area of innovation concerned the way that several districts redefined the scope of leadership preparation for their school leader opportunities: It became a multi-year sequence of increasingly selective and demanding preparatory experiences that led to a full-time, full-year internship. The addition of several preparatory experiences, both preceding and following completion of a formal leadership preparation program, suggests that although formal programs are necessary, they are insufficient in preparing candidates for school leadership positions.

Among the eight core leadership preparation program features, district-university affiliated programs were most innovative in how they addressed the following:

- Use of an overriding program mission and objectives to organize program content and learning

- Recruitment and selection processes

- Internship experiences

- Contextualizing the coursework and learning experiences in the district issues and processes

- Creating course or program assignments that replicate district leadership tasks, such as school improvement planning and action research on problems and improvements

To increase the number of highly qualified potential leaders, districts combined two strategies: investing in developing teachers in their own districts, and ensuring that the applicant selection process for the program placed emphasis on prior instructional effectiveness and leadership potential (determined through assessments, multiple interviews, and engagement with simulated work). The districts and their affiliated universities redefined the scope and content of preparation by defining or redefining leadership competencies that framed the leadership preparation and by stressing district leadership priorities, processes, and conditions in the coursework.

A cornerstone of the districts' leadership preparation was their investment in intensive, lengthy, and authentic internships, ranging from short-term, full-time experience within a certification program to a full-time, full-year experience within a program (or post-certification, for a smaller number of candidates). The quality and management of these programs varied, reflecting in part the differences in context, resources, and program maturity.

Programs also varied in their instructional approaches (using problem-based, case-based, or simulated experiences). Generally, their instructional approaches were based on a constructivist learning approach, in which candidates grappled with messy, complex problems and used district-based data, tools, and strategies to address them, both individually and in small groups.

Across this assortment of approaches, districts and their affiliated universities took steps that were aimed at making internships more authentic to the school and district work, with a strong focus on the leadership tasks that future leaders were likely to encounter.

Three broad reasons suggest why innovation is most likely to occur in these areas of selection, content, and internship experiences:

- These content areas and activities were most similar to district work, so district leaders drew on their expertise.

- These content areas and activities were most easily modifiable.

- Changes in these areas did not conflict with state regulations for leadership preparation programs and certification attainment.

- They had access to innovative ideas from Wallace-funded organizations: SREB and the NYC Leadership Academy.

In other ways, the programs were similar to conventional programs. As Burch (2007) suggests, although new actors (in this case, districts) are in a better position to develop innovative approaches to persistent problems (in this case, leadership preparation), they have limited access to new ways of doing things and are constrained by some of the same regulatory elements that limit university-based programs. This condition appears to be most applicable to the choices made about program structure and course requirements. Consequently, few district-university affiliated programs broke away from the standard course delivery structures of discrete course offerings and requirements. We found that even after several years of Foundation funding, these programs were still works in progress. In some cases, as noted above, programs were continuing to modify their content and design to increase candidates' opportunities to learn and apply their new knowledge through engagement in authentic work. Program modifications appeared to be guided by

three aims: improving alignment to district reform approaches, developing candidates' skill development, and balancing theory and practice.

The question of whether these approaches are better than conventional leadership preparation, and are yielding better-qualified school leaders who can make positive improvements in the districts' schools, remains, however. Without comparative program assessments, that question cannot be answered. As will also be shown in Chapter 7, most programs are only now producing graduates who are being hired as school principals. The lengthy, multi-stage preparatory process, although critical, takes time. Similarly, the value of these candidates as school principals cannot be assessed until they have been able to lead for three to five years, the minimal time required to effect positive change, particularly in challenging conditions (Fullan, 2001).

What can be concluded, nevertheless, is that new approaches being implemented by district-university affiliated programs have *potential* for yielding better-prepared candidates—based on early supporting evidence. For example, each of the district-university affiliated programs (including Fort Wayne, with its post-certification approach to leadership development) has undertaken valid approaches to better, more district-relevant leadership preparation. Each has developed several strategies that are a departure from conventional preparation and serve as potential models for others to consider. The more that programs use innovative strategies and integrate them coherently around a core set of principles, the more likely it is that their graduates will be able to meet challenges in their schools.

Two cautionary notes emerged from this analysis in relation to content and internship mentoring and supervision. In several programs, where candidate feedback was available, a tension around how best to balance field-relevant theory and practical skill development remains. This is not a modest dilemma. Prior research has shown that leaders who are expert problem-solvers are able to apply knowledge-based frames or schemas to unpack messy, complex problems, whereas novice problem-solvers are more haphazard and superficial in their problem-solving. Thus, candidates need progressive, developmental experiences that draw on multiple knowledge domains and enable them to make links among the experiences when addressing messy problems (Taylor et al., 2009). Program efforts to infuse more district context and authentic leadership tasks may be sacrificing what de Jong and Ferguson-Hessler (1996) term *conceptual and strategic knowledge* in favor of contextual and procedural knowledge.

The second caution involves the challenges of providing quality internship supervision and mentoring. Inherent in the districts' need for better-prepared school leaders is an existing limit on the availability of high-quality leaders who can mentor candidates. In addition, candidates need field experiences in challenging school settings, where quality leadership may be least available or where there is little or no capacity to mentor candidates. Several programs are only beginning to work through plausible alternatives by using both district-based and on-site internship supervision, rotating candidates through multiple settings, and providing clear guidelines on the kinds of field-based activities that candidates are to complete. Further work is needed, however, possibly by combining all three strategies.

Chapter 5 Organizational Relationships for District-University Affiliated Programs

In this chapter, we turn to the way that the school districts worked with local universities to design and deliver leadership preparation programs and the implications for internal coordination as well. Our focus here is organizational: what enabled districts to create, or to support the development of, preparation programs closely aligned with local leadership needs and priorities. We want to find out how the districts worked both within their own organizational systems and with local universities, and how the structures and processes they created for doing so influenced program relevance, quality, and sustainability. Most of this analysis is based on seven of the eight districts. The eighth district, Fort Wayne, created its own leadership preparation services for graduates of university-based programs and so did not work with local universities to provide a formal preparation program leading to school leader certification. The focus on internal coordination is applicable to all eight districts.

To help frame our inquiry, we drew on prior research that looked at how organizations work together, specifically districts and universities, on a shared endeavor—either partnerships or more general relationships—and how different institutions work within the same broader field toward common goals (Browne-Ferrigno, 2004; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Grogan & Robertson, 2002; Peel, Peel, & Baker, 2002; Peel et al., 1998). Much of it is based on case studies; focuses on the structures, roles, and organizational processes used in initiating and sustaining relationships; and lacks shared definitions about the organizational relationships between districts and universities in sharing programs (thus, the term partnership is used differently across this research).

Goldring and Sims (2005), for example, show that one university-community-district partnership was successful because it concentrated on the governance structure, guiding principles, and political decision-making processes of the partnership itself. The researchers concluded that cooperative relationships can develop positively within an innovative structure that uses shared power and learning and has the strong commitment and involvement of top-level leaders (such as the superintendent and the university dean). The success of such a partnership also depends on frontline leaders who design and implement the programs, and a bridge-building leader who can reflect the priorities of both institutions.

The available research underscores the complexity and benefits of district-university partnerships for leadership preparation, and stresses the importance of paying attention to how relationships are structured in terms of the following:

- Commitment from top leaders

- Processes to support planning, decision-making, and the work of the partnership

- Clear roles and expectations for the frontline and bridge leaders who design and operate the program

In addition, Langman and McLaughlin (1993), in an analysis of inter-organizational relationships among youth-serving agencies, identified

four primary ways that organizations collaborate, representing somewhat of a continuum based on degree of inter-organizational relatedness in sharing work: coordination of services, sharing of services and resources, joint planning, and joint action. They also suggest that the success of collaborating organizations is in part dependent on three key factors:

- The extent to which the organizations' **goals** are complementary

- The development of **structures and routines** for carrying out day-to-day operations

- The **resources** (e.g., money, staffing, facilities, personnel expertise) contributed by each organization

Langman and McLaughlin concluded that collaborations typically progress through three general developmental phases:

- **Problem-setting,** in which stakeholders determine the nature and substance of their interdependence and believe that it will produce positive outcomes

- **Direction-setting,** whereby the collaborating organizations establish common values and goals

- **Structuring,** to support and sustain their collective efforts

Ring and Van de Ven (1994) came to a similar conclusion about cooperative relationships (their term for various forms of inter-organizational relationships) among business organizations that become sustainable over time. They posit that these relationships evolve with time, repeating a sequence of stages (i.e., negotiation, commitment, and execution). In addition, cooperative relationships are strengthened when the institutions (1) have congruent purposes, values, and expectations, and (2) establish a shared mission, goals and objectives, and an organizational governance structure.

We would add a shared mission, goals and objectives, and contributed resources to the initial list of critical structural elements of district-university relationships. We would also expect to find that these relationships varied from sharing services to taking joint action, as Langman and McLaughlin (1993) found, and would evolve through different stages, as Ring and Van De Ven (1994) found. Table 5.1 shows the combined list of structural elements that characterize inter-organizational relationships and can be used to differentiate the degree of collaboration and shared work.

The above research suggests that the strength and clarity of these structures and processes influence the quality of the work accomplished by the inter-organizational relationship and the attainment of its goals and objectives.

Other organizational perspectives, however, do not assume that inter-organizational work typically exists with, or requires, such well-integrated goals, structures, and processes. Some organizational experts use the concept of *coupling* to capture the variability in the nature of relationships within and among organizations. Weick argued that organizations are more tightly coupled when there is consensus on the structural elements of goals, strategy, and means of feedback, particularly for compliance, and are more loosely coupled when there is not (Weick, 2001). Moreover, looseness or tightness of units within an organization or between organizations in a relationship may enable (or discourage) innovation and new directions, and similarly may protect (or leave vulnerable) new endeavors from other organizational or environmental turbulence, such as changing political or policy dynamics.

Thus, according to this perspective, the aim of a relationship (between units within an organization or among organizations around shared work) is not necessarily to have tightly defined goals, roles and responsibilities, and processes for decision-making and feedback in all aspects of inter-organizational relationships. Instead, there may be conditions under which looser processes in some areas, such as program development and delivery, might yield better outcomes, such as better-prepared leadership candidates—whereas tighter processes in other areas, such as decision-making and oversight, might ensure better inter-organizational commitment and sustainability. Table 5.2 on page 84 summarizes essential considerations on tight/loose coupling as it applies to district-university affiliations.

Table 5.1: Structural elements of inter-organizational relationships

Shared goals and objectives, including commitment from top leaders

Key roles and responsibilities
- A bridging leader between organizations
- Program leaders who design and operate the program
- Frontline workers

Structures and processes to support planning, decision-making, and governance

Financial and in-kind resources contributed by each organization

Table 5.2: Considerations for tight/loose coupling in inter-organizational relationships

Location and degree of coupling and nature of the work
- Between organizations engaged in shared work
- Between the unit of the shared work and the larger organizational context

Goals and benefits of a coupling relationship
- Enabling innovation
- Supporting program operations
- Protecting the program from external forces

Thus, we might expect that district-university relationships would vary in the tightness or looseness of their coupling and across the structural elements of their relationship. We would need to consider the fit of the shared work—in this case, a leadership preparation program—within each institution (i.e., how tightly or loosely coupled each program was to the institution itself). Finally, we would want to consider how the tightness or looseness of the relationship between the institutions (in this case, districts and universities) influences their program approach and processes, protects the program from external influences, and facilitates or hinders sustainability.

Both the structural and the coupling perspectives stress the importance of examining how goals, roles, structures, and communication and feedback mechanisms are established for district-university affiliated programs, and how these programs are shared by and situated within their respective institutions. The coupling lens suggests that evaluating the tightness or looseness of the relationships within and between institutions would help in understanding the feasibility and limits of their efforts to create high-quality leadership preparation.

Several researchers use neo-institutional theory as a framework for looking at how organizations relate to one another within an institutional field (Burch, 2007; Powell, 1991). As noted in Chapter 1, this perspective establishes that districts and universities exist within a larger institutional field of leadership preparation, as well as the larger field of K–12 education. As districts take action on leadership preparation, they shift their role within the larger institutional field. Similarly, as universities engage more directly in preparing leaders for local districts, they shift their role in the K–12 education field. The neo-institutional perspective draws attention to the change forces contained within these larger contexts, particularly the normative, cultural, and regulatory expectations for these institutions that influence expectations for action within these fields. (The loose-coupling perspective has been used within this neo-institutional perspective to understand why policy actions among organizations that work within a shared organizational field do not achieve their intended outcomes, specifically to consider where too much or too little coupling occurs.) According to Burch (2007), using these perspectives together has illuminated the following:

. . . how educational policies and practices interact with institutional environments to shape policy outcomes . . . and [have] drawn attention to the role of non-rational factors in shaping whether and how policies achieve their intended outcomes. (p. 85)

The inter-organizational elements of goals, processes, and roles; the tight/loose coupling perspective; and the institutional field perspective can be combined and used as a framework to investigate district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs in three types of coupling relationships:

- Inter-organizationally: between districts and universities within the district-university affiliated program

- Intra-organizationally: between the district-university affiliated program and the district itself

- Intra-organizationally: between the district-university affiliated program and the affiliated university

As shown in Figure 5.1, these three types of relationships can be analyzed for their goals, structures and processes, and the degree of tight/loose coupling, as well as for how they are influenced by their broader organizational fields. The figure also combines the two broader fields in which the respective institution's work exists, although they are overlapping and not completely complementary. The figure shows both how the fields influence the institutions and their affiliated programs and how the institutions' work through the programs has the potential to influence the larger fields. Finally, the figure acknowledges the variable intra-organizational couplings within each institution that influence the potential and feasibility of the programs and their alignment with other district and university programs and operations.

Figure 5.1: District-university affiliation for leadership preparation: Structures, processes, domains of coupling, and field influences
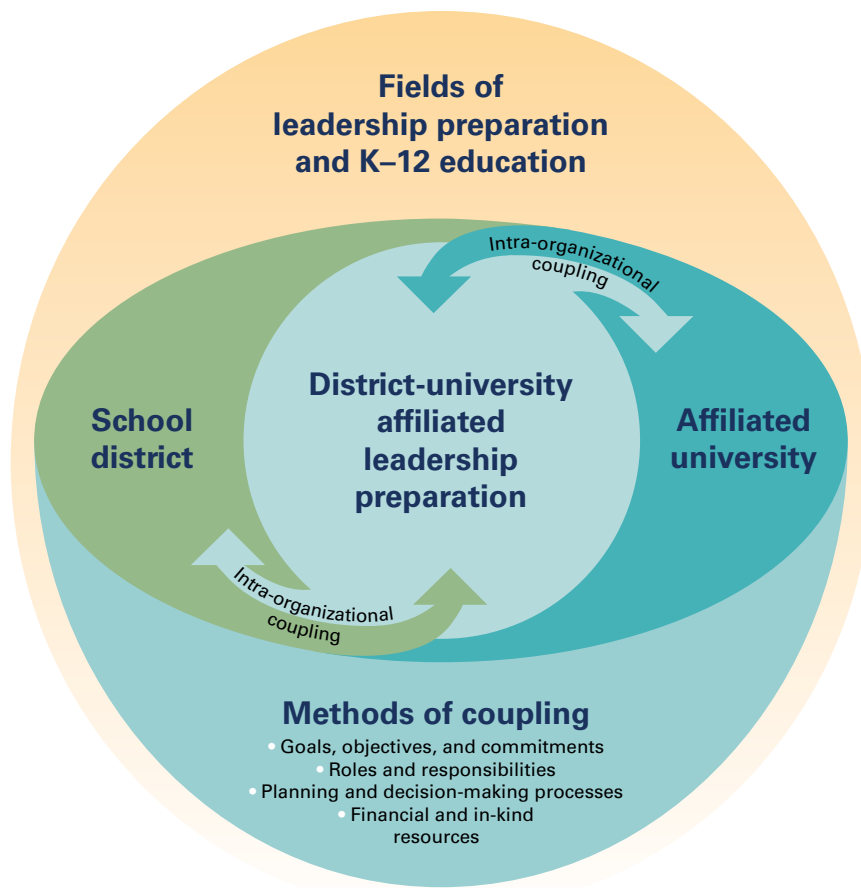
Relationship Between the District and University with an Affiliated Program

The first relationship we examined was between districts and universities, specifically how they developed and provided a district-university affiliated leadership preparation program. We identified three types of affiliation relationships: a district-initiated program with university input, a university-led program based on district standards and support, and a cooperatively developed and delivered program (as an outgrowth of funding or a collaborative working relationship). We have purposely chosen not to use the word *partnership* here to define these relationships, because, as a term borrowed from business, it implies some sort of financial exchange in the relationship, and because it has been used broadly in the leadership preparation field to encompass widely differing relationships. Instead, we focus on the types of affiliation between a district and university and, using the structural elements of inter-organizational relationships, we analyzed these affiliations for differences in their goals, objectives, and commitment; roles and structures; planning; governance and decision-making processes; and financial and in-kind resource contributions.

Shared Goals, Objectives, and Commitment

The school districts each made a commitment to leadership preparation, in response to the Wallace grant supporting such an effort, and, for some, as a component of their reform initiatives. Similarly, by becoming affiliated with the local districts for leadership preparation, the universities also made a commitment to preparation that was tailored to local needs. The question here, however, centers on the extent to which the districts and affiliated universities have had shared goals, objectives, and a commitment to their affiliated program and its purpose, and how this related to the type of affiliation.

We found that there were four ways that the districts and their affiliated universities engaged around shared goals and objectives and made institutional commitments:

- **Independent but cooperative relationship.** In Chicago and Fort Wayne, the districts were committed to quality leadership preparation but did not construct a shared program mission and objectives with their local universities.

- **Contractually developed partnership.** In Jefferson County and St. Louis, the districts established priorities for program missions and objectives, to which their affiliated universities agreed in their proposals or contracts.

- **Emergent collaboration.** Two districts, Boston and Springfield, Mass., developed their programs' missions and objectives through a lengthy process during which they met with several local universities over time. Out of this process grew both their programs' design and their commitment to a local university. A third district, Providence, selected one university as a partner but also took an active role in program design, including adopting the IFL Principles of Learning and SREB modules as a basis for its program.

- **Co-constructed collaboration.** Only one district, Springfield, Illinois, and its affiliated university, ISU, worked together to construct a shared program mission and objectives and to jointly commit to both the program and the process of working together in program design and delivery.

As these results show, the more collaborative the type of affiliation, the more likely that the district and university had shared goals, objectives, and commitments for leadership preparation.

Developing shared goals and objectives also entailed learning to respect each other's commitments and responsibilities and to understand and support the pressures and demands experienced by the other. In Springfield, Illinois, district and university leaders worked to develop a shared mission that included attention to pressures and demands that were specific to their type of institution. As a result, the university faculty members were willing to change their coursework, share teaching responsibilities, and design relevant assignments to meet the district's needs and accountability pressures. In turn, district personnel understood ISU's need to adhere to NCATE standards in program design and delivery to remain accredited.

Inter-organizational Roles and Responsibilities

Regardless of the type of affiliation, the primary roles within the district-university affiliated programs were bridge leaders, program leaders, frontline workers, and contributors to program design and delivery. All eight districts (including Fort Wayne, where the district-university affiliated program was post-formal preparation) had at least one district official or staff member who was responsible for the program and, in seven districts, served as a bridge between the district and university on affiliated program matters.

In seven districts, the affiliated university also designated a person who had primary program responsibility and served as a bridge to the district. In two cases—Providence and St. Louis—they worked on-site in the district, blurring their institutional identities. In a third case, Jefferson

County, the reverse scenario was constructed: District facilitators for leadership development also worked as adjunct faculty in the four affiliated leadership preparation programs, enabling alignment of district priorities and knowledge within each program and in relation to other programs in the district's leadership preparation continuum.

Program leaders were responsible for program oversight and coordination, candidate selection and assessment, and, at times, development and support of the coursework and internship experiences. They were also responsible for problem-solving and tracking and reporting on candidates' progress. Typically, the program leader was hired or assigned to manage the program by one of the affiliating institutions (district or university), was one of the bridge leaders, or shared leadership responsibilities with one or more other program leaders.

Where the program leader role was situated depended on how the program was constructed, as discussed in Chapter 3, and the type of affiliation. District-initiated programs (Boston and Springfield, Mass.) had district staff members as the program leaders. In districts that established standards but not programs (Chicago and Jefferson County), the universities' department chairs or program coordinators led the district-university affiliated programs. In more collaboratively developed programs, such as in St. Louis and Springfield, Illinois, program leadership was split between the districts and universities. In Providence, the bridge person, who was an adjunct at the affiliated university and worked in the district, served as the program leader.

To manage the processes for program delivery, the districts and universities formally shared the core work in one or more of these areas: candidate recruitment and selection, content and course development, course instruction, internship support, and assessment. (Chapter 4 described the different approaches that districts used for each, and how they contributed to redefining candidate selection criteria and processes, infused district processes and issues into course content, developed internship opportunities and placement, and supported more authentic assessment activities.) Depending on the program development approach and the type of affiliation, this core program work was either primarily the district's or the university's responsibility, or it was shared. In most district-university affiliated programs, district officials and staff took a more active role than university staff in candidate recruitment and selection, internship assignment and supervision, and candidate assessment; the more collaborative the affiliation relationship, the more likely these responsibilities were shared across most programs, and much of the course instruction was provided by university-based faculty, with some district staff participation in some classes (as speakers or resources). In some programs, district officials and staff taught some courses independently (Springfield, Illinois) or co-taught courses with university faculty (Jefferson County).

Table 5.3 on page 88 illustrates how one district and university mixed responsibilities. In this example, in Springfield, Mass., the program leader was district-based, and the university affiliation existed for only part of the program, but all credits earned in the district's program counted toward a master's degree.

Table 5.3: Springfield, Mass.: District and university roles and responsibilities

Types of Roles	District Role	University Role
Recruitment and selection	Panel interview conducted by a team of current administrators and program graduates	None
Coursework	• District officials teach in summer institute • District staff manage summer institute case study project	• A consultant (who taught at another university) teaches a non-credit case study course • UMass Amherst faculty teach a course on current urban education issues • Consultants from RBT and Rebus Associates teach 2 courses (with credit transferred from another university)
Practicum	Assigns interns	UMass Amherst faculty leads an internship seminar and supervises interns
Portfolio	• Case study project • Student portfolio presentation and assessment	UMass Amherst faculty provides evaluation input
Degree completion	Certification-only program	Candidates can earn a Certificate of Advanced Study at UMass Amherst with credits for the program's courses and 3 additional university courses
Post-program coursework to lead to a master's in educational leadership	Not applicable	5 additional UMass Amherst courses, provided on campus

St. Louis provides another organizational example. There, the district official and the affiliated university's department chair each served as bridge leaders, while a district staff member and university faculty served as program leaders on-site in the district, where they handled the day-to-day program activities.

Considering all the relationships between the districts and the universities with which they worked, we identified three primary ways that core work was shared, reflecting the strength of collaboration within each affiliation type:

• **Working independently,** where one institution had primary responsibility for the core work and might seek input from the other for one or more matters. This mode of shared work reflects Langman and McLaughlin's (1993) inter-organizational level of shared services. The UIC program in Chicago was one such example: UIC managed all program design and implementation decisions itself, and had district assistance with candidate selection and internship placement (because the district paid for the full-time internship).

• **Constructing parallel roles,** in which each institution had a set of responsibilities that was combined into one program. This mode of shared work combined joint planning and sharing services and resources, Langman and McLaughlin's second and third inter-organizational levels. This model was illustrated by the Springfield, Illinois, program, where the district and university each evaluated candidates on separate selection criteria, and district staff and university faculty split teaching responsibilities.

• **Blending responsibilities,** where roles were shared, and decision-making and implementation of the core work were not solely the responsibility of one institution or the other. This way of working reflects *joint action,* the fourth of Langman and McLaughlin's inter-organizational levels. An example is Jefferson County, where district staff and university faculty co-taught core courses at the affiliated university. Another

example is St. Louis, where on-site university faculty and district officials worked together to construct the weekly learning activities, emphasizing district and university priorities at different times.

Collaborative programs (that were more formally shared by universities and districts) were more likely to have tightly coupled arrangements around the core work, but even these arrangements varied in their degree of formality and explicitness. The more tightly coupled collaborations also seemed to enable more fine-tuned adaptations to each other's needs, as each partner informed and modified each other's work. For example, as shown in Springfield, Illinois, within the constraints created by university policy and accreditation standards, the university faculty willingly adapted courses to address the unique needs of the district and the learning needs of its students, rather than allow the faculty to make independent decisions about the content of their courses. In addition, the faculty also freely relinquished teaching courses to district staff who had unique expertise needed by candidates.

Planning, Decision-Making, and Governance Processes

We looked for evidence of how the districts and their affiliated universities had formally defined—and thus more tightly coupled—their program structures and processes, roles and responsibilities, and means of supporting the decision-making

and governance of their shared work. We also examined how these processes related to the type of affiliation.

In examining the seven districts with affiliated programs, we found several examples of formally defined and written agreements for the inter-institutional arrangements:

- Jefferson County developed yearly contracts with its affiliated universities that addressed program qualities.

- In Springfield, Illinois, the affiliated university, ISU, submitted an initial 22-page formal proposal for an ISU/D-186 partnership, which outlined responsibilities by the university and district in the redesign of the preparation program, and the resources each would contribute to the program.

- Springfield, Mass., and UMass Amherst began their relationship with an MOU that outlined the roles, responsibilities, and financial aspects of the program. Although it was never signed, both institutions adhered to its principles.

- St. Louis selected the University of Missouri–Columbia through a competitive grant process, in which the university's proposal served as an outline of its responsibilities for the program, including its financing.

In none of the seven sites did the district and the university incorporate an advisory committee or establish a formal meeting structure for shared governance, oversight, and problem-solving.[68]

Rather than the existence of a shared decision-making structure, it was the location of the program leader—in the district, at the university, or at both—that seemed

to determine where and how planning was done and decisions would be made. For example, in St. Louis, having district and university program leaders co-located at the district office facilitated day-to-day program planning and decision-making.

Taken together, it would seem that the more collaborative the affiliation, the more formal the planning and decision-making processes existed, although these were not highly structured and all examples lacked shared governance. To understand this better, we looked at how the program work was developed and coordinated between districts and universities without a formal decision-making process. In several sites, district and university representatives talked about the "relationship" aspect of their shared work—how well they knew each other, and how they could talk frequently and informally about program-related issues. For example, in Springfield, Illinois, district and university officials described their decision-making as collegial and responsive when changes were needed. They and other faculty and staff all indicated that their personal relationships and shared commitments were the key drivers for ensuring delivery of high-quality leadership development. We also found that in cases where the programs operated on-site in district offices or facilities, with district staff serving as adjunct faculty, this informal relationship was facilitated by frequent face-to-face encounters. District-university affiliated programs that constructed independent or parallel roles (as defined above) sometimes lacked informal interactions that could inform their work and facilitate problem-solving and creativity.

In probing the histories of these inter-institutional relationships for planning,

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68. Springfield, Illinois, did begin its program development with an advisory committee, but the committee disbanded after one year at the request of its members, who asserted that their assistance was no longer needed.

decision-making, and governance, we found that they were more likely to evolve from formal to informal, rather than the reverse. Looser, informal district-university collaborations, it appeared, were better suited to address the variety of ongoing program issues and decisions required for candidate recruitment and selection, program content, staffing and internship placement and support, and assessment. Moreover, through informal relationships, district staff members were better able to communicate their vision and priorities in an ongoing way, and university faculty could explore ways to adhere to both district expectations and university and state requirements for program delivery. It also appeared that these informal relationships—because of their flexibility and adaptability—were transferable over time (and thus sustainable) as key district and university staff retired or stepped down from their positions and were replaced by others.

However, such informality and loose interinstitutional relationships had their drawbacks. Decision-making was ad hoc, without systemic input, and there was no means for formal program review, monitoring, and feedback. In a few instances, we learned about a district or university decision that would have programmatic implications about which the other institutional entity was unaware For example, the University of Missouri–Columbia decided to defer the program for one year, without soliciting the district's input. Conversely, Providence's decision to stop its leadership preparation program was made without university input (although the two institutions later worked together to seek funding to continue the program and then revamp it to be more financially viable). Thus, it appears that more formal and more tightly coupled relationships are needed for program oversight and feedback to facilitate communication and support program sustainability.

Financial and In-Kind Resources

The development and operation of the district-university affiliated programs required both financial and in-kind investments by districts and universities. In addition to Wallace support (which typically paid for program director time and some program costs), districts and universities contributed other resources. The most commonly contributed district resources were human resources (specifically, bridge and program leaders for program design and operation), district information and expertise on operations and procedures, space for course instruction, internship placements, and internship supervisors. The most commonly contributed university resources were faculty expertise in course development and instruction and internship support, credit and degree management, candidate support, and higher education resources such as libraries and career placement centers. The districts' Wallace funds often paid for candidates' internships (as salaries or for interim staff replacements while candidates were doing their internships), tuition, learning resources for the program such as books and materials, and program leader salaries. Universities could consider contributing further by forgoing potential income—by offering reduced tuition or waiving tuition altogether, or by granting course credit for district-delivered instructional experiences or credits earned at other institutions as part of the program.

In some cases, the resource contributions to the program were spelled out in a contract or partnership agreement. For example, in its initial partnership agreement, Springfield, Illinois's District 186 outlined that it would provide meeting space, laptops for cohort members who did not own computers, and the services of internship mentors. Its Foundation grant would provide ISU faculty with "incentive" funds for PD

and purchasing needed resources. ISU's in-kind contribution to the program included travel expenses to Springfield, a clinical faculty member to serve as the practicum supervisor, videoconferencing technology to connect ISU to District 186, and candidate access to the ISU Placement Office for assistance in developing portfolios, resumés, and interview skills.

Generally, the more collaborative the affiliation, the greater the financial and in-kind resource contributions were made by both districts and universities. Districts could more easily sustain its contributions since most were in-kind. To sustain its role in the affiliation program, each university had to weigh the costs and benefits of its financial resource contributions (in terms of foregone tuition), because the university could not operate at a deficit. Moreover, as enrollments declined, as they did in the St. Louis program and for the programs of the affiliated universities in Jefferson County, universities were under increased pressure to find ways to maintain or adjust their resource contributions and maintain their affiliation, without operating at a loss.

Relationship of the Program to the District as a Whole

The second coupling relationship we examined was the relationship between the district-university affiliated program and the district itself: substantively, pro-grammatically, and organizationally. There were five dimensions to how the program fit within the district:

- The program as a component of district reform

- The program's location within the dis-trict's organizational structure

- Feedback mechanisms on the out-comes of program graduates

- Alignment of leadership preparation and district systems of principal recruit-ment, selection, and hiring

- Fit with other leadership education provided by the district

Below is a discussion of each relationship dimension: how it played out for the eight districts, the tightness and looseness of the coupling relationship, and consid-erations for the programs' efficacy and sustainability.

Leadership Preparation as Part of District Reform

Most districts invested in new approaches to leadership preparation as integral to their district reform work, as discussed in Chapter 2. For some, this investment was to support the creation of new expectations for teaching and learning. For example, the former Boston superinten-dent thought that implementing a learning-focused, human capital strategy based on his Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement would facilitate school–level change.

Generally, a district's commitment to leadership preparation varied by its organi-zational levels or units. Within the school districts, the superintendents incorporated leadership preparation as part of their reform agendas that included specific types of programs, ways of involving local universities, and intentional relationships to other leadership development and support programs and services. As noted in Chapter 2, these commitments would change over time, with superintendent turnover. Further development of a shared program mission and objectives within the district was often the responsibility of a specific district office on leadership

development, which might not be shared or integrated with other offices or units. Staff from such offices had the greatest contact with other districts' leadership preparation initiatives through Wallace conferences, technical assistance, and program officers. This contact and access to new ideas contributed to the specificity of their unit's commitment, but not neces-sarily the commitment of other parts of the district.

Program Location Within the District's Organizational Structure

The location of the program within the dis-trict's organizational structure varied across the districts, enabling different types of articulation of leadership preparation to other district leadership-related systems. Typically, programs were placed under the umbrella of one of three departments: HR (as in Chicago, Jefferson County, and St. Louis), PD (as in Fort Wayne), or curriculum and instruction (as in Springfield, Mass.). Boston, Providence, and Springfield, Illinois, each created a stand-alone office for leadership preparation.

Programs that were part of their districts' HR departments appeared to be better positioned to think and act holistically with regard to school leader recruitment, selection, placement, support, and per-formance evaluation than were programs that divided these responsibilities across multiple departments. This configuration is illustrated by Chicago's OPPD, which was responsible for the following:

- Promoting the CPS Principal Competencies as the district's leader-ship framework

- Managing the CPS principal eligibility process

- Building a pipeline of high-quality principals

- Supporting leadership development through collaboration with principal preparation programs

- Providing coherent PD opportunities for CPS principals that target school improvement

- Partnering with CPS offices and Area Instruction Officers to ensure that principals are supported as instructional leaders

- Supporting Local School Councils during the principal selection process

In this capacity, OPPD was well-positioned to integrate and promote common standards and expectations for leadership preparation and development and to support new leaders to be effective in the district's work to improve schools.

In contrast, Springfield, Mass.'s program was located in the district's curriculum and instructional division. As a consequence, the program placed more emphasis on the teaching and learning aspects of preparation than did the others, and built on instructional improvement strategies as a basis for the program, including using its school improvement planning process as a core project for candidates to complete.

Mechanisms for Feedback on Program Graduates

Given that the eight districts made investments in leadership preparation to improve the quality of their candidate pools, we had expected to find tightly coupled feedback mechanisms on the success or failure of their approaches. Specifically, we looked for both inter- and intra-organizational feedback mechanisms on graduates' performance after assuming leadership positions, and the availability of specific data on the efficacy of program graduates as principals and assistance principals—i.e., information on their placement and advancement into leadership positions, their retention over time,

the school achievement performance of their schools over time, and the career and school achievement outcomes of candidates prepared by other institutions. We also expected to find organizational processes, such as program evaluations, for districts to review the data in order to validate their investments in leadership preparation and make decisions about continued investment.

For the most part, however, such data compilations or tracking and feedback mechanisms for graduate outcomes did not exist, except informally. Two districts were making or had made one-time investments in tracking the effects of district-university affiliated prepared leaders on school performance outcomes. At the time of our site visit, Springfield, Mass., officials were compiling information on the career outcomes of program graduates over time, and were reviewing the efficacy of their district's investments by exploring the achievement gains in the schools led by graduates. This investigation was being undertaken at the request of the new superintendent.

In Jefferson County, the research and evaluation department staff had evaluated the effect of district-university affiliated program participation on student achievement gains in schools. The results, which have since been published, yielded no significant effects (Vanderhaar, Muñoz, & Rodosky, 2006). The analysis, however, only looked at the relationship between completion of a university- or district-based (non-licensure-related) preparation program and school outcomes, without ascertaining the quality of these programs at the time the leaders had completed them.

More typically, program directors had to work through their districts' HR departments to learn about their graduates' leadership placements and the preparation backgrounds of other new principals—if such information was even collected. There were no formal arrangements for tracking and sharing leadership appointment information on program graduates and

candidates from other programs, and thus no means of following up on performance gains (or lack thereof) in schools led by program graduates or in comparison with other new school leaders prepared elsewhere.

Program directors would compile information on their candidates as they enrolled in and completed their programs. Informally, they would track the career advancement gains of their graduates as well, but such information was often not documented or analyzed as career placement and advancement rates for the program within and across program years, nor was career advancement information related to program changes over time.

We explored with district officials and staff the reasons for the lack of formalized data collection and information feedback mechanisms and learned that a variety of factors was associated with the discontinuity in information feedback:

- Principal selection functions usually occurred separately from the departments that managed the programs, even for the district-based programs.

- Program graduates were usually not given special consideration in the selection process, although their program-related experiences and knowledge of district systems and processes were valued in candidate selection decisions.

- In some districts, principal selection authority was decentralized to school committees that might have been unaware of the program and its relationship to the district's reform agenda, or that lacked expertise in how to evaluate candidate qualifications for leadership approaches and fit to district reforms.

- Information on candidates' preparation programs was not collected by selection and hiring committees, so there was no way of aggregating the interviewing success or leadership advancement rates for graduates of district-university affiliated programs and other programs.

- Districts gave little consideration to program evaluation, beyond documenting program participation, descriptive assessments, and placement for reports to The Wallace Foundation.

Relationship of Program Participation to Principal Selection and Placement

In most districts, as noted, the district-university affiliated program was only loosely related to the district's principal selection and placement processes, and program graduates were not given preference. The only exception was St. Louis, where all program graduates who applied for positions were guaranteed an interview but were not given preference in the hiring decisions.

This loose relationship between the programs' preparation of candidates for district leadership positions and the district processes of hiring candidates to fill positions existed in both district-led and other district-university affiliated programs, regardless of whether the district's hiring was centralized or decentralized.

One district's hiring process illustrates how program candidates had to compete for leadership positions alongside candidates under a centralized system. In Springfield, Mass., where the program was directed by the school district, all leadership positions were filled centrally by the district's HR department. Program graduates did not receive any preference, although their preparation experience was taken into consideration during the interview process. The typical application process was as follows: All assistant principal (AP) openings were posted in the spring. Interested candidates submitted a letter of application, which was reviewed by the HR department. Qualified candidates were interviewed in person by a team of three to six administrators from across the district. The team used a set protocol of questions, and its members were trained for inter-rater reliability in evaluating the answers. The superintendent reviewed all AP and principal hires before they were appointed, and met with every principal candidate who was recommended by the interview team.

Chicago's highly decentralized leadership selection process followed a similar, multi-step review sequence that did not give program candidates preference. The district identified administratively certified candidates who were eligible for a leadership position, based on its own assessment process, which narrowed the pool of potential candidates for selection. Local School Councils, working with advice and recommendations from the district's Area Instruction Officers, had the authority to hire new principals from the district's pool of eligible candidates. However, these Local School Councils were quite uneven in their capacity to evaluate candidates' qualifications and varied widely in their priorities about essential qualities of effective leaders. Consequently, the district and its board took steps to limit the candidate pool to only those candidates whom they evaluated to be highly qualified, based on the district's new core competencies.

Program Fit with Other District Leadership Education Programs

During the site visits in 2008–09, most districts reported that they were working toward an aligned continuum of leadership development and leader education for school leaders that differentiated programs and support for aspiring leaders, new leaders, and mid-career principals. The most common strategies being tried were the provision of mentoring, coaching, or an induction program for new principals, and PD and learning community-style professional meetings (such as Critical Friends Groups[69]) for all principals. Two districts were trying out the SAM Initiative,[70] a time-management system for principals, and one district was piloting VAL-ED, a new principal evaluation system.[71] Table 5.4 on page 95 provides an overview of the continuum of leadership development for aspiring and current school leaders offered by the districts.

These combined investments in leadership development seemed to be part of a larger shift toward integrating learning as a leadership function and thus an integral part of principal supervision for some districts. For example, two districts began meeting regularly with their principals in school-level cohorts to share their work, read relevant literature, and receive training on new district policies and procedures. Three districts were providing their principals with collegial feedback, through a 360-degree survey feedback,[72] Critical Friends Groups, and professional learning community practices with other school leaders.

The creation of a leadership development continuum, for preparation and post-hire leadership development and support, was both tightly and loosely coupled with the districts. Several factors integrated these programs and strategies within the district. The district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs served as the districts' beginning points. Investments in clarifying leadership standards and expectations for the leadership preparation programs were also now having a carryover effect for these other programs. Bridge leaders for the district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs often were responsible for other leadership development programs as well.

The leadership preparation programs and leadership development programs for new leaders were loosely coupled, however, since candidates were not required to progress through all the preparatory programs in order to be eligible for school leadership positions in the district, and new school leaders may not necessarily be graduates of the district-university affiliated programs. Thus, new and experienced school leaders may experience only some parts of the continuum.

This looseness offers flexibility for the system to hire candidates from multiple sources and through multiple avenues. A consequence of this looseness is that school leaders vary in the depth of their district-influenced leadership education, with some having multiple experiences and others having only one.

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69. Critical Friends Groups are professional learning communities whose members are committed to improving their practice through collaborative learning. Groups of 8–12 educators meet at least once a month to engage in honest and productive conversations with their colleagues, focused on improving student learning and improving teacher practices.

70. The School Administration Manager (SAM) Initiative, funded by The Wallace Foundation, helps principals focus on improving instruction and learning. Principals learn to delegate some of their management responsibilities, which creates more time to spend on teaching practice, student learning, and school improvement (see www.wallacefoundation.org/Pages/SAM.aspx).

71. The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) uses a multi-rater, evidence-based approach to measure the effectiveness of school leadership behaviors known to influence teacher performance and student learning (see http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/x8451.xml).

72. Feedback that comes from all around an employee, i.e., the 360 degrees in a circle, with the individual figuratively in the center. Feedback may be provided by subordinates, peers, supervisors, and external sources, such as customers and stakeholders. It also includes a self-assessment.

Table 5.4: Post-preparation continuum of leadership development and support by district

District	Assistant Principals and Aspiring Principals	Coaching and Mentoring for New Principals; Induction Programs	Leadership Development
Boston	● Boston Principal Fellowship for those already certified for school leadership ● School-Based Administrator Program: PD support system for APs ● Instructional Leadership Institute: Instructional supervision preparation for APs interested in pursuing school principal positions	New Principal Support System for principals in their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years	
Chicago	Created a more rigorous principal selection process based on the district's new leader standards	● University provided follow-up mentoring as part of its program ● District hired 21 coaches to work one-on-one with 170 new principals	No
Fort Wayne	No	● Introductory Leader Academy/New Administrator Academy ● Administrators seminar series for those new to the district	Leaders in Action
Jefferson County	No	● Induction Support Program for principals ● Kentucky Principal Internship Program for new K–12 principals and APs: 2-year program focused on instructional leadership	● Instructional Leadership Teams supported K–5 principals in their work to improve student achievement ● Certified Teacher Evaluation Training: 18-hour training for K–12 principals on district's teacher evaluation process ● Leader Assessment Center: Provided 360-degree leadership assessment for some 3rd- and 4th-year principals ● Fostering learning community practices among principals ● SAM Initiative
Providence	No	Mentoring available for new principals	● PD on leadership topics ● Monthly Principal Leadership Seminars ● Advanced Leadership Development (10 meetings of 4 hours each)
Springfield, Illinois	No	Individual mentoring and coaching during first 2 years of service for new principals	● Monthly PD aligned with district improvement and a focus on instructional leadership ● Specialized PD for secondary-level administrators and leadership teams ● SAM Initiative
Springfield, Mass.	No	Mentoring for new principals	● Leadership development seminars using various modules on principles of learning, TQM,* and data-driven decision-making ● Fostering learning community practices among principals ● Mentor principal training
St. Louis	Monthly PD for APs (post-preparation) and program graduates who meet twice a year for post-program reflection	2 years of mentoring for 1st-year principals	Monthly PD for principals (to support district initiatives)

* Total Quality Management (TQM), from W. Edward Deming's 1982 book *Out of Crisis,* seeks to optimize the organization-wide management of quality in the industry, education, and government sectors (see http://deming.org/index.cfm?content=66).

Relationship of the Program to the University as a Whole

The relationship between the district-university affiliated program and the participating university was dependent on the following:

- Characteristics of the university

- How the university's affiliation with the district contributed to its own leadership preparation improvement work

- How program roles and responsibilities were defined and allocated within the university, and what the university-related resource expectations were

- How the programs fit within the university's organizational structure

Characteristics of Higher Education Institutions that Affiliated with Districts

Most of the universities that were part of district-university affiliated programs were public higher education institutions. In recent years, Jefferson County branched out to four institutions in its region—two public and two private. The six other districts were affiliated with one public university for leadership preparation. Public education institutions made good partners for school districts because of their comparatively lower tuition, their shared public missions, and the greater likelihood that they would be significant producers of teachers and other educational personnel for the region.

Most of the higher education institutions that were affiliated with the seven districts included community service in their missions, which by definition made them open to inter-institutional relationships. For example, part of ISU's mission was for faculty to engage in "public service and outreach activities [that] complement the University's teaching and research functions" (Illinois State University, 2010). As a result, its faculty actively sought diverse outreach opportunities, evidenced by prior collaborations with other Illinois school districts. The University of Missouri–Columbia also had a strong drive to contribute to urban school reform, as one university faculty member explained:

> There is a deep commitment by the senior leadership in this university to issues around diversity, and very specifically . . . [given that there are] two large, major urban areas with large minority populations in the inner city with school districts that have been very ineffective . . . [we had a strong] sense . . . as the flagship public university of the state-land grant—that we absolutely had to step up and do something about this.

An extension of this community service orientation was an institutional willingness to affiliate, even when the institutions were not in close proximity. Four districts developed programs with universities that were located some distance away (25 miles for Springfield, Mass., 30 miles for Providence, 75 miles for Springfield, Illinois, and 126 miles for St. Louis). The universities overcame the distance primarily by locating the program at the district itself, rather than requiring candidates to travel to the university. The other three districts worked with universities located in their cities—but even in these cases, some or all of the courses were offered on-site in the district or their schools to improve candidates' access and connections to district work.

The Program as a Way to Facilitate Reform of Existing Leadership Preparation Programs

When interviewed for this study, several university officials and faculty voiced a strong desire to reform their department of leadership preparation and become more effective in preparing leaders for the challenging conditions of their regions' schools. Thus, working with local districts on these affiliated programs helped them learn more about how to prepare candidates for leadership in challenging districts and to facilitate institutional change to improve programs generally. As a UIC faculty member explained:

> We took . . . a close look at our leadership preparation program. And we recognized that we were part of a problem, just like other schools of education that were cranking out, you know, dozens to hundreds of [certified leadership candidates].

To some extent, these lessons were dependent on where in a university the investment in a shared program existed and whether that department or division had the access and potential to share what they were learning with other programs. Within the universities, the development of a shared program mission and objectives was undertaken by the department of leadership preparation. The institutional commitments were typically made by both the departments and the deans of the college of education (in part because of decisions pertaining to faculty allocation, tuition, course and credit approvals, and

degree requirements). The exception was URI, which did not have a department or program for leadership preparation; contributions to program mission and objectives were generally made by the school of education.

Turnover in department chairs and deans of education, such as occurred at UMass Boston and University of Missouri–Columbia, limited the potential for institutions to learn from their affiliated program experiences and apply new ideas to their existing programs. In addition, the year-to-year funding arrangements between some districts and their affiliated universities, such as the contractual arrangement for University of Missouri–Columbia with St. Louis, seemed to limit the potential of their program work to inform their efforts to reform the university's other preparation programs. University faculty explained that the uncertainty about funding made it difficult for them to plan in advance or to use this program development work to benefit their other programs.

Finally, in some cases, such as with ISU, the affiliated program fit within an already existing commitment to district-university partnerships for program development and delivery, which may be why the university and district were able to sustain the program after Foundation funding ended.

University-Based Roles and Responsibilities

What had had the most impact in the relationship of the district-university affiliated program with other parts of the affiliated university was the designation of one faculty member as the primary developer

and manager of the program, in cooperation with the affiliated district. Often this person was a former district leader or had other district experience (such as the program coordinators in the four district-university affiliated universities in Jefferson County). The faculty member may have had some autonomy to make program decisions, balancing district and university needs and priorities. In at least one case (UMass Amherst), two faculty members served this function for one program, with one faculty member overseeing the candidates' experiences (e.g., supervising the internship or teaching an internship seminar) and the other person managing program logistics (e.g., overseeing faculty and courses, managing tuition payments and credit awards, and sustaining the inter-institutional relationship). Typically, these faculty members would continue to have other responsibilities within their department as well, such as teaching or program administration.

Fitting the Program into a University's Organizational Structure

Most leadership preparation programs in the United States are in university-based graduate schools or colleges of education, within departments or programs of educational leadership (Baker et al., 2007). This was sometimes but not always where the district-university affiliated programs were located in the affiliated universities.

In four districts, affiliated programs, as master's degree or certification programs, were situated within departments of educational leadership at a university's school

or college of education. This arrangement enabled the departments to share program faculty with the district-university affiliated program, mix candidates from multiple programs in common classes, and include the district-university affiliated program in broader departmental planning, program improvement, and assessments, such as for national accreditation.

In the other three districts, the programs were organizationally housed within their universities' continuing education divisions (for credit management purposes), although they "borrowed" university faculty as instructors and program coordinators. The continuing education divisions offered more flexibility for awarding credits and offering off-site program delivery. However, locating the program in the continuing education divisions appeared to limit the educational leadership department's broader involvement and potential benefits for its faculty, programs, and ongoing improvement work. It also complicated cost-benefit analyses of the university's resource investments because of the misalignment of faculty and credit management in different divisions. The exception was URI, which did not have an educational leadership department or program in its school of education that might be informed by the university's role in the district-university affiliated program.

Summary

Many of the district-university affiliated programs in the seven districts examined here were similar in their program features (e.g., localized focus, cohort structures, and recruitment of candidates from within the district) to the district-university partnerships documented in previous research. However, they differed from district-university partnerships commonly documented in that they were less likely to have been initiated by the universities, and they did not have any formal structures and processes in place. The more collaborative the relationship between district and university, the more likely that there were shared goals, objectives and commitments, designated roles and responsibilities, shared work, planning and decision-making processes, and resource contributions.

We found, despite the existence of shared work and designated roles, little evidence of formalized agreements that defined the programs' goals, roles and responsibilities, resource sharing, and communication and feedback mechanisms. Moreover, the inter-organizational relationships were more likely to evolve from formal to informal (rather than the reverse), such as drafting an MOU but then never updating it.

Looser, informal district-university relationships, it appeared, were better suited to address the variety of ongoing program issues and decision-making required for candidate recruitment and selection, program content, staffing, internship placement and support, and assessment. It also appeared that with district and university leadership turnover, a looser, informal relationship was more sustainable because it was more flexible and adaptable to changing expectations and priorities. However, such informality could also have its drawbacks, hindering systemic input or formal program review, monitoring, and feedback.

Tighter coupling arrangements appeared to be critical to facilitate communication, particularly when program leaders were not co-located, and to monitor program accomplishments and make decisions pertaining to sustainability. Without the informal opportunities for decision-making that co-location offered, districts and universities needed more formal, well-defined communication linkages to facilitate planning, problem-solving, monitoring, and feedback.

Looking at the district-university affiliated programs within their larger organizational field was beneficial, particularly considering the tightness or looseness of the coupling between the program and the district, and the program and the university. In terms of clarifying leadership expectations and creating leadership preparation and development opportunities, the district-university affiliated program and district were fairly tightly coupled. Developing more and better-prepared leadership candidates was one of several systemic district reform strategies, and its importance was reflected in the creation of central district offices for leadership and in an emerging continuum of leadership preparation and development programs and strategies. However, the district-university affiliated programs remained only loosely coupled with the districts' systems of hiring, placing, and evaluating principals, particularly around selecting candidates, informing programs about whether their candidates were selected, and evaluating graduates' performance as school leaders. This lapse hindered program monitoring and improvement, since program leaders could not evaluate the benefits of the district-university affiliated program compared with other programs.

The programs' relationship to the affiliated universities had both structural challenges and mission-related opportunities. Most affiliated universities were public institutions; therefore, their missions were consistent with program outreach, and they appeared to be more willing and able to be flexible than a private institution might be. However, this "flexibility" often meant finding ways to *work around* the existing institutional structure—such as offering the program through the continuing education division instead of the leadership department—rather than *adapting* the structure. In addition, the fiscal consequences of program affiliation may be more manageable for public universities than for private universities. The extent to which the universities used their program affiliation experience to rethink their approach to school leadership preparation generally reflected individual—rather than institutional—interest and initiative, which may be due to the newness of these programs and the need for more evidence on the benefits of new approaches. It was hindered to some degree by the resource contribution demands to sustain the affiliation, and the disruption caused by leadership turnover and changes in institutional direction.

Chapter 6

The State's Role in Improving Leadership Preparation

Among the most significant influences on a district's or university's leadership preparation work are the states' regulatory policies and requirements for school leadership licensure or certification, for leadership preparation program registration with the state education agency as authorized to grant degrees or recommend candidates for certification, and for public and private higher education in general. All are increasingly shaped by national leadership standards (specifically, ISLLC for leadership standards and ELCC for leadership preparation standards) and national accreditation (NCATE and TEAC for teacher education programs, which includes leadership preparation). Still, standards and requirements vary among the states, based on each state's history, preferences, and their stage of development in reforming leadership-related policies as part of improving schools.

States' policies for school leadership and leadership preparation evolved throughout the period of the eight districts' grant funding (approximately 2002 to 2008). To some degree, these changes were influenced by national developments related to leadership and leadership preparation policy including the establishment of national leadership standards and their adoption for national program accreditation (Murphy, 2006; Murphy, Moorman, & McCarthy, 2008; Toye et al., 2007). In addition, the six states where the eight school districts were located had concurrent Wallace grants to strengthen their leadership policies; they were encouraged to include both school and district leaders and university faculty in their policy development efforts, which unfolded over the time of the districts' own leadership development work.

In this chapter, we explore the nature of state policies and regulations that influence local leadership preparation and identify patterns and trends among the six states. We also speculate (drawing on interviews with state and district officials) about how these regulatory influences complement or complicate the districts' efforts to improve leadership preparation to suit their local needs and conditions.

For the purposes of this analysis, we examined four primary state policy levers for influencing preparation programs:

- Professional standards
- Program accreditation
- Licensure requirements
- Funding

The states in our study (Illinois [two school districts], Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts [two districts], Missouri, and Rhode Island) emphasized these levers differently as they created new or modified existing policies on leadership preparation and development—work that was often shaped and supported by grants from The Wallace Foundation.

Professional Standards

Given the increased acceptance of the ISLLC leadership standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) for practitioners and the parallel ELCC standards for university-based graduate programs in leadership preparation (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002), it is not surprising that we see similarities in policies across the six study states. As of 2006, 43 states had used the ELCC standards to shape their accreditation requirements (Toye et al., 2007). Our six states all used the ISLLC standards to some degree:

- Kentucky adopted the ISLLC standards without modification.

- Illinois and Indiana adopted and modified the ISLLC standards.

- Missouri's standards were modeled on ISLLC.

- Rhode Island modeled its recently adopted standards on ISLLC.

- Massachusetts was revising its state leadership standards, with the intent of aligning them with the ISLLC standards.

Given such high reliance on the ISLLC and ELCC standards, we can conclude that their use was bringing coherence to expectations for school leaders and encouraging alignment of the systems for leadership preparation and support around common goals and expectations. As will be shown below, however, each state and district used these standards somewhat differently to influence the components of their leadership policies and practices.

Program Accreditation

States regulate graduate-level leadership education *indirectly,* by setting certification or licensure requirements for principals, and *directly,* by accrediting universities to offer preparation programs. In some or all of the six states, state accreditation requirements set candidate eligibility criteria, regulated the internship or practicum and program assessments, and encouraged collaboration with districts. Table 6.1 on page 102 illustrates some of the variations in state accreditation policy that may have a bearing on leader preparation from state to state.

Four of the six states have a program accreditation process based on the ELCC standards, using the NCATE program review process to influence program implementation. Because of this, the four states are similar in their program expectations and assessment. Kentucky and Missouri are the two exceptions:

- Kentucky professional education units, rather than individual programs, are accredited by NCATE. In addition, the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board accredits its educator preparation programs through joint review with NCATE, but uses a state-based review process rather than a national, specialized, professional association review process aligned with NCATE.

- Missouri expects universities to be accredited through NCATE or TEAC, the two national accreditation organizations.

Five of the six states have few requirements for leadership preparation candidates' eligibility for program admission. The exception is Kentucky, whose recently revised state regulations stress both teaching experience and demonstrated evidence of leadership and influence on improving student achievement, which supports the qualifications that Jefferson County stresses for local candidate selection.

Similarly, the states had few requirements to frame the internship or practicum experience, beyond the expectations stated in the national ELCC standards. Required internship or practicum hours ranged from not being specified to 300 hours.

The states also ranged widely in whether they required universities to partner with local districts on program delivery (two states) and whether the programs led to a master's degree or certificate of advanced studies (one state). Both requirements had the potential of making preparatory experiences more extensive. Four of the six states provided guidelines on candidate assessment beyond what is required for ELCC; only two states (Indiana and Kentucky) required the ELCC assessments specifically because of their NCATE accreditation requirements. Finally, in five of the six states, the programs are reviewed every five or seven years to maintain state recognition.

In five of the states, universities were the only institutions authorized to provide coursework that leads to principal certification or licensure. The sole exception was Massachusetts, which in 2001 allowed Boston and Springfield (and six other districts) to provide state-approved preparatory experiences and to recommend candidates for principal licensure.[73] Although both districts worked with local universities on various aspects of program delivery, the district selected the candidates, documented whether candidates met the licensure requirements, and made the final licensure recommendations.

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73. For more information, see the Massachusetts Board of Education's October 2008 *Update on Educational Leadership Development,* available at www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/1008/item6.html.

Table 6.1: State accreditation standards for preparation programs

State Standard	Illinois	Indiana	Kentucky	Massachusetts	Missouri	Rhode Island
Year revised	2006	1998	2008 (current programs no longer accredited after 2011)	2003 (revision in process)	Does not accredit, but programs must register with the state and be approved before offering preparation programs*	2009
Modeled on ISLLC/ELCC	Yes	Yes	Yes	(current revision is using these standards)	Yes	Yes
Program leads to graduate degree	University must offer an accredited graduate degree program in educational administration/	Generally a master's degree, but graduate coursework is sufficient if candidate has advanced degree in related field	No	Generally a master's degree, but graduate coursework is sufficient if candidate has advanced degree in related field	• Master's degree (required of principals) • Specialist degree or certification (required of superinten-dents)	Generally a master's degree, but graduate coursework is sufficient if candidate has advanced degree in related field
Candidate assessment for licensure/ certification recommenda-tion	Not specified	• Must demon-strate growth in each professional standard adopted by state • Must have pro-fessional growth plan	Passing score on School Leadership Licensure Assessment (SLLA) and Kentucky Specialty Test of Instructional and Administrative Practices	Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's guidelines for candidate assessments	Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's guidelines for candidate assessments	Not specified
Program accreditation process	• Documentation and site visit • Board of Education approves prepa-ration programs for educational personnel** • As of 2009, must be accredited by NCATE/ELCC • Any program changes are reported annually • 80% of program completers must pass state assessment (Principal 186 Test)	• NCATE accredita-tion required • Indiana Professional Standards Board must find that program's courses and experiences fulfill state requirements • 2 years before NCATE visit, each program under-goes an Indiana Program Review through analysis of program documents	Joint accreditation by NCATE and Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board	• Documentation to determine if program is aligned with the Professional Standards and uses Massachu-setts Curriculum Frameworks in instruction • 80% of program completers must pass state educa-tors assessment	Approval reviews are conducted	Unclear (too new)
Program accreditation cycle	7 years	7 years	7 years	5 years	Approval reviews conducted every 7 years	Not specified (too new)

Source: Toye et al. (2007); updates from state websites.

* The Missouri Board of Education sets standards for and approves courses and professional programs for teachers and administrators in public and private higher education institutions. Currently, 17 programs are approved. The state approval process for leadership preparation programs is outlined in the *MoSTEP Examiner's Handbook,* available at www.dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/teached/Examiners_Handbook/.

** Thirty-two universities have approved principal preparation programs (19 of which are accredited by NCATE).

In several states, the program accreditation process has been recently revised:

- Illinois issued new standards in 2006, which actually loosened some requirements and allowed more universities to compete to prepare aspiring principals. In March 2009, though, Illinois created new regulations requiring programs to become NCATE-accredited.

- Kentucky's new standards, issued in 2008, required universities to partner with local districts in the design and delivery of programs and in the selection and evaluation of candidates.

- In 2009, Rhode Island issued professional standards requiring leadership preparation programs to have their internships approved by the state.

As these combined examples illustrate, many states were becoming more specific about the requirements for program accreditation and defining more specifically leadership standards and program delivery approaches.

Licensure Requirements

States were also changing their school leadership certification or licensure standards and laying out more specific requirements for both new principals, and those in later stages of their careers, as shown in Table 6.2. Five of the six states (all but Illinois) had *tiered licensure.* Through a tiered licensure process, aspiring principals qualify for an initial or entry-level license by completing an accredited or approved

Table 6.2: Initial licensure requirements

Qualification	Illinois	Indiana	Kentucky	Massachusetts	Missouri	Rhode Island
Years of teaching	2	2	3	3	2	3
Teaching certificate	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Master's degree	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes*	Yes
Number of leadership courses specified	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Internship	Yes**	Yes**	Yes**	300 hours	2 semesters	Yes
Test	Illinois's Principal 186 Test	SLLA (2006 cut score: 165)	SLLA (2006 cut score: 165) plus Kentucky Specialty Test of Instructional and Administrative Practices	Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure in Communication and Literacy Skills***	SLLA (2006 cut score: 164)	None
Tiers (initial, professional)	None	3	2	2	3	2
Single leadership certification or grade-based	1 certification	1 certification	1 certification	Initial certification for principals is graded: PreK–6, 5–8, and 9–12	Initial certification for principals is graded: Elementary K–8, Middle grades 5–9, and Secondary 7–12	Elementary and secondary principal certifications
Alternate route	NBPTS certification	No	Yes	State-approved district-based program	Master's plus 5 years teaching	No

Source: Toye et al. (2007); updates from state websites.

   * The master's degree must be from an approved program, and the program must recommend the candidate for licensure.

  ** The internship must be part of an accredited preparation program.

*** Although this test is required, it does not test leadership skills, knowledge of instruction, or other relevant content.

preparation program. New school leaders are licensed provisionally and must complete more preparatory activities and gain school leadership experience before advancing to the next stage of licensure, such as professional certification.

This tiered licensure process reflects a state policy recognition that new school leaders require additional development to fully gain sufficient skills as a school leader and thus must undergo further review before receiving a professional license. Regulatory details for both initial and professional licenses vary by state.

Three states also differentiate licensure by grade level—typically, elementary and secondary—suggesting specialization in leadership preparation. Four states offer alternative routes to school leadership licensure.

Initial Licensure

Initial certification or licensure requirements were comparable among the six states: a minimum of two to three years of teaching experience, graduate coursework (if not a master's degree) in educational leadership, and an internship.

Four states (the exceptions are Massachusetts and Rhode Island) required an external assessment of leadership knowledge and skills. Among them, Illinois and Kentucky developed their own assessments (Kentucky's was a state law assessment, and Illinois required the Illinois Principal 186 Test). Three states (Indiana, Kentucky,[74] and Missouri) required the nationally developed SLLA, although the passing score was different in each state.[75]

Professional Licensure

The requirements for professional licensure were less similar across the six states, as shown in Table 6.3. Advancing from provisional to professional leadership licensure required both two to four years of school leadership experience (in five of the six states) and additional professional learning, either as coursework, PD, or mentoring. Taken together, these

Table 6.3: Professional licensure requirements

Requirements	Illinois	Indiana	Kentucky	Massachusetts	Missouri	Rhode island
Years as administrator	NA	2	2	3	4	3
PD	NA	NA	Yes	Yes	No	No
Supervised induction	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA	NA
Mentoring	Yes (although not as part of tiered license)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	NA
Principal evaluation	NA	Yes	No	NA	Yes	NA

Source: Toye et al. (2007); updates from state websites.

NA = Not applicable.

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74. Kentucky has required the SLLA since 1998 and a state-specific assessment since 1999. Candidates are required to pass both assessments before certification as school principal.
75. Across the 14 states that used the SLLA, cut scores ranged from 148 to 165 (Toye et al., 2007).

requirements demonstrated an expectation that new leaders needed further preparation, in both field-based experiences and guided learning and reflection.

While every state expected new leaders to continue their PD, two states (Kentucky and Massachusetts) required continuing education, while three others (Indiana, Missouri, and Rhode Island) expected districts to monitor leaders' personalized PD plans. In Kentucky, for example, the General Assembly enacted the Effective Instructional Leadership Act (EILA) in 2000 to improve the quality and maintain the effectiveness of instructional leadership in Kentucky public schools. EILA required continual PD (42 participant hours of instruction every two years) for those in an educational position requiring an administrative certificate (e.g., principal, assistant principal, supervisor of instruction, guidance counselor). PD experiences had to be approved by Kentucky's Department of Education.

One state, Illinois, did not have tiered licensure, but it did prescribe supervised induction and mentoring for new principals and specific PD for license renewal. Three other states (Indiana, Massachusetts, and Missouri) required mentoring for the first years as a school leader. Two (Indiana and Missouri) required that states implement specific evaluation procedures to assess the work of new principals. These requirements both encouraged and supported the local districts' investments in a continuum of leadership development, post-preparation.

Foundation Funding to Support State Work

Each state in our sample received grants from The Wallace Foundation to develop state policies on leadership preparation and development. As shown in Table 6.4, five states used the funding to develop

state leadership standards, either for leaders or for preparation program accreditation. For example:

- In Kentucky, a task force was developed in 2004 by the legislature as a partnership between the Kentucky State Education Department, Education Professional Standards Board, and Council on Postsecondary Education. Task force members worked together to develop guidelines for statewide leadership preparation program redesign, building on the Jefferson County standards document on expectations for principal preparation (which outlined what principals need to know and be able to do).

- In Massachusetts, representatives from the Springfield and Boston districts were working with the state and a faculty consultant from UMass Amherst to rewrite the state leadership standards, drawing on the VAL-ED evaluation work and the ISLLC standards, as well as their own research.

Table 6.4: Overview of state efforts funded by The Wallace Foundation

Grant Information	Illinois	Indiana	Kentucky	Massachusetts	Missouri	Rhode Island
Date of first grant	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001	2001
Current status	Cohesive Leadership System (CLS)	Wallace leadership network	CLS	CLS	CLS	Wallace leadership network
Primary focus	Program accreditation standards	Professional standards	Program accreditation standards	Professional standards; allowing districts to prepare candidates and recommend for license	Professional standards; support for mentoring programs; pilot districts	Professional standards; pilot districts

- In Rhode Island, the funding helped jump-start the development of a state system. When the state received the grant, Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) did not have a leadership office (and still does not)—in fact, only in 2009 were state standards first approved. In addition to supporting the development and adoption of state standards, RIDE used the money to support pilot programs in districts and to develop a set of PD courses at Rhode Island College in partnership with the state principals' association.

Although all six states continued to receive support from The Wallace Foundation, the type of support varied.[76] As Table 6.4 shows, four states were funded to develop a Cohesive Leadership System (CLS)[77] in partnerships with districts that also received Wallace funding (i.e., the districts included in this study). Two states were still part of the Wallace leadership network and participate in conferences and other events to share information.

Complements or Complications?

The states' requirements, their use of the four policy levers, and the changes under way in each state seemed to contribute to the development of the eight districts' leadership preparation investments in various ways. In many cases, the direction of change in the emphasis on different policy levers appeared to complement district efforts and enhance the quality of

leadership preparation programs. For example, changes to state policies for accreditation and program approval in Massachusetts provided flexibility for multiple arrangements and allowed the districts to design their own leadership preparation programs leading to certification. In addition, most states were aligning competency requirements with national professional standards, providing more relevance and coherence to licensure and preparation program requirements, and reinforcing local district and university use of these standards. Several states created tiered licensure requirements to support career-staged professional learning, which reinforces the tiered programs that local districts are developing.

Kentucky provided an example of how state policy development was informed by the district's leadership preparation improvement work. Task force members worked together for several years to develop guidelines and exemplars for leadership preparation program redesign. Their work built on the concurrent standards development work being done by Jefferson County with its local universities and Jefferson County's model of district-university partnership for leadership preparation. Many elements subsequently adopted in the new state regulations reflect Jefferson County's work.

However, it appeared that state policies could also create complications in local efforts, either by under-specifying preparatory expectations or by over-regulating the process to establish and transition to new expectations. In some states, the lack of greater specificity in program requirements appeared to enable the

76. For more information, see www.wallacefoundation.org/GrantsPrograms/FocusAreasPrograms/EducationLeadership/Pages/states_districts.aspx.
77. A Cohesive Leadership System (CLS), based on lessons learned from Wallace-funded research and state-district work in strengthening education leadership, is a system-wide, coordinated approach to state-, district-, and school-level policies and practices. The aim is to significantly improve student learning by strengthening the standards, the training and performance of education leaders, and the conditions and incentives that affect their success.

development and growth of quick, cheap programs that may be yielding large numbers of under-prepared but certified leadership candidates (as reported by affiliated university officials in Illinois, Massachusetts, and Missouri). But transitioning programs to adhere to new, more stringent requirements could take several years, requiring universities to offer parallel programs as existing cohorts' programs are phased out and new programs are phased in. As a result, it will take several years for new policy reforms, such as those recently adopted in Kentucky, to become operationalized and affect the quality of leadership candidates prepared under these new guidelines.

Finally, we found at least one example of how more broadly focused higher education policies can hinder program development. The state of Massachusetts had specific limits on where and when public universities could deliver courses as part of their degree programs, hindering them from offering off-campus courses in non-conventional time frames, such as executive-style scheduling. Massachusetts state universities that affiliated with local districts for leadership preparation had to offer courses through their school of continuing education rather than their graduate school of education, hindering the capacity of the Educational Leadership departments to fully collaborate or benefit from collaborations with districts.

Implications

Looking across the four state policy levers—standards, program accreditation requirements, leadership licensure, and use of Foundation funding—we see a trend toward greater specificity in leadership standards and expectations, but variability in how to prepare leaders and determine their eligibility for licensure. The more rigorous state policies complemented the local district efforts by requiring more field experience (by defining internship hours and minimum years of school leader experience before professional licensure) and more leadership preparation and development, particularly with the addition of post-preparation requirements.

These complementary investments are likely an outgrowth of the direct investments by The Wallace Foundation in district and state reforms and the indirect work done at the national level on standards and leadership education reform.

Contrasting the district and state requirements for leadership preparation indicates that the local districts were adding more requirements for candidate eligibility and field experience and were building on state requirements for performance assessment and coursework. These developments were evolving concurrently and thus were somewhat loosely coupled as influences

on the local and state leadership preparation fields. However, it appears that local and state officials were using these concurrent developments to inform and shape one another's work, particularly to leverage their own regulatory changes.

Chapter 7

The Impact of District Investment in Leadership Preparation for Districts and Universities

Districts hoped that investing in leadership preparation would improve the quality of preparation programs available locally and, consequently, increase the number and the quality of candidates for leadership positions in their schools. Given this dual intention, we examined the scope and nature of the impact of districts' investments on the districts themselves and on the affiliated universities—directly by considering the number of candidates prepared and indirectly by looking at what the districts and affiliated universities gained educationally and organizationally. In addition, we explored the impact on other nonaffiliated universities in the districts' communities that also provided leadership preparation programs and the challenges for district-university affiliation and sustainability.

We reviewed the research on district-university partnerships (which is how the field has typically referred to district-university affiliations) for leadership preparation to identify the program impacts documented by other investigators. Educational researchers and scholars have argued that preparation approaches based on collaboration between districts and universities would more positively influence candidates' aspirations, retention in the program, and career advancement after graduating than would conventional university-based approaches (Young et al., 2002). Moreover, they suggest that there would be organizational benefits for the affiliated institutions as well: Universities could diversify their program offerings and learn collaboratively with practitioners about school leadership challenges, while districts could strengthen and deepen their leadership pipelines (Lovely, 1999; R. F. Martin, Chrispeels, & Desmidio-Caston, 1998; W. M. Martin, Ford, Murphy, & Muth, 1998).

A few studies of district-university partnership-based preparation programs have documented students' perceived benefits: They gain leadership knowledge and skills, receive a quality educational experience, and transition more easily into leadership positions (Peel et al., 2002; Peel et al., 1998; Wilmore, McNeil, & Townzen, 1999). Most of these program studies lack comparisons, however. One exception is a study that compared two collaborative-type of district-university affiliated programs with a conventional university-based program; it found the collaborative programs to have more innovative features and yield more positive career interest and advancement outcomes (Orr & Barber, 2007).

More limited research exists on post-preparation leadership development (Browne-Ferrigno, 2004; Goldring & Sims, 2005). Browne-Ferrigno (2004) found that participants in a cohort-based leadership development program, co-created by a high-needs rural school district and an affiliated research university, reported becoming more visionary, collaborative, and reflective as a result of their collaboration. The participants attributed these gains to working with mentor principals in different district schools and with cohort peers and instructors during training sessions. The evaluators credited these gains to the district-university partnership's shared vision, shared responsibility, committed leadership, committed work, and celebration of accomplishments.

In this case, however, districts' investments in leadership preparation were designed to yield more than a cadre of better-prepared leadership candidates— they were also aimed at changing the local field of leadership preparation, directly by having districts shift their roles and indirectly through the effects of this shift on the higher education institutions that also operate in this field. The concept of tight/loose coupling, which considers the closeness of the organizational and pro- grammatic relationship between program partners (as discussed in Chapter 5) and suggests that its degree impacts on the outcomes for each partner, provides a useful lens for identifying how an organiza- tion involved with leadership preparation is

likely to be affected. It can be posited that the universities that affiliated more tightly with districts are likely to reap the most benefits from this arrangement, although other, more loosely affiliated universities within the same field might also be posi- tively affected.

A more conventional analysis would focus on the production-function side of district investment—the number of graduates and leaders prepared. This analysis includes those outcomes as well, but also captures the organizational learning and system- changing gains for districts and universi- ties (both tightly and loosely coupled) from these investments. The results presented below are grouped according to the locus of influence—the district, the affiliated universities, and other universi- ties in the area—and address the following questions:

- To what extent did the involved organi- zations gain more and better-prepared graduates and leaders?

- What programmatic, organizational, and system-change benefits did they gain?

Impact on the Districts

Engaging in the improvement of leadership preparation yielded two kinds of benefits for districts. The primary benefits, as expected, were the preparation of more

new leaders and their better quality and effectiveness (in contrast with those who had more conventional preparation). The secondary benefits were programmatic and even system-changing.

Impact on the Number of New Leaders

A primary aim of the districts' investment in leadership preparation was to increase the number of well-qualified candidates available for leadership positions.[78] As shown in Table 7.1 on page 110, districts ranged widely in the number of candidates they prepared for school leader certification and hired as school leaders, and in the percentage of all program graduates or completers who became school leaders in the district. In total, between 2002 and 2008, the districts prepared 415 candidates through their district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs (that lead to certification only), ranging from 35 to 111 candidates per district program. Of those who completed their district-university affiliated preparation program between 2002 and 2008, 58 percent (ranging from 30–100 percent) had advanced into an initial leadership position, and some had already begun their first principalship by 2009.

Table 7.2 on page 111 shows the number of candidates from each leadership preparation program affiliated with the districts who were principals in 2009 and their percentage

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78. It is worth noting that the average rate of advancement, according to recent statewide studies, is 40–60 percent within six to seven years (Fuller & Orr, 2006; Gates et al., 2003; Lankford & Wyckoff, 2003; Ringel et al., 2004). In Texas, 50 percent of all program completers with certification had obtained a leadership position within two years of program completion (Fuller & Orr, 2006). This rate increased steadily from 44 percent in 1995 to 53 percent in 2004.

Table 7.1: Number and percentage of candidates certified who became school leaders by August 2009, by district

Districts	Number of Certified Principal Candidates Prepared Through the District-University Affiliated Leadership Preparation Program, 2002–08	Number Hired as a School Leader (or Just Principal)*	Number of Current School Principals**	Percentage of All Candidates Who Have Become School Leaders
Boston	49	37	29	78
Chicago	40	40	33	100
Fort Wayne***	--	--	--	--
Jefferson County	111	31	21	30
Providence	59	33	9	56
Springfield, Illinois	35	19	11	54
Springfield, Mass.	80	52	17	65
St. Louis	41	30	12	73
TOTAL	415	242	132	58

Note: While the districts prepared candidates through several leadership development programs, only the number of candidates prepared specifically for school leader certification is included here.

* As of August 2009.

** As reported by The Wallace Foundation, 2009.

*** Fort Wayne had only post-preparation programs, so the number of candidates prepared in their programs is not included.

of all the principals in each district. Between 6 and 38 percent of all principals in a district were prepared by one of the programs. In all, the district-university affiliated programs had 132 candidates (representing 32 percent of all certified candidates) in school principal positions in 2009.

The candidates' capacity to advance to a leadership position was dependent in part on the openings that were available. As noted in Chapter 2, throughout the grant period, the districts' needs for additional new leaders varied widely. Between 2007 and 2009, the number of principal positions rose slightly or stayed the same in four districts, and dropped in the other four. But turnover and other changes created more demand. For example, in 2007 Chicago needed 174 principals (for 25 percent of the district's elementary and secondary schools), so it was not surprising that all of its certified candidates advanced to a school leader position. In contrast, St. Louis experienced a drop in the number of leaders needed (due to a rapidly declining school population), but had an urgent need for candidates who could effectively lead and improve persistently low-performing schools.

The Qualifications and Effectiveness of New Leaders

A primary goal of the districts' investments in leadership preparation was the availability of new leaders who were better prepared to

Table 7.2: Number of district-university affiliated preparation program completers who were principals in 2009 and are a percentage of all principals, by district and program

Cities	Affiliated Universities	District-University Affiliated Programs	Number of Principals (2009)	Number of Program Completers Who Are Principals (2009)	Percentage of All Principals Who Are Program Completers
Boston	University of Massachusetts Boston	Boston Principal Fellowship Program	139	29	21
Chicago	University of Illinois at Chicago	Leadership Academy	590	33	6
Fort Wayne	–	–	53	--	--
Jefferson County	University of Louisville	IDEAS		12	8
	Bellarmine University	University Collaboration/ University Program Redesign		9	6
	Indiana University Southeast	University Collaboration/ University Program Redesign	154	NA	NA
	Spalding University	University Collaboration/ University Program Redesign		NA	NA
Providence	University of Rhode Island	Aspiring Principals Program	42	9	21
Springfield, Illinois	Illinois State University	ISU-District 186 leadership preparation program	35	11	31
Springfield, Mass.	University of Massachusetts Amherst	LEAD Program	45	17	38
St. Louis	University of Missouri–Columbia	The New Leaders Project	74	12	16

Source: The Wallace Foundation, unpublished data.

Note: Fort Wayne had post-leadership preparation programs only.

take on the challenging conditions of their schools and would more effectively guide school improvement efforts than more conventionally prepared candidates.

At the time of this study, it was too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs' graduates as principals, since few had completed the program, advanced to a principal position, and held that position for at least three years (the length of time needed to see differences in student performance results). Thus, we looked for other evidence that would suggest that the candidates were better prepared as school leaders than were more conventionally prepared candidates. To do this, we

sought feedback from supervisors (such as assistant superintendents and superintendents) by asking them to compare, as much as possible, the readiness and effectiveness of these school leaders with the capabilities of other new leaders who had been prepared elsewhere (if any such leaders existed).

Providing this feedback proved to be challenging for some districts, often because of the limited number of candidates who had been principals for at least three years, and because of district reorganizations and superintendent and central office staff turnover, which limited their current supervisors' knowledge of their principals' skills

and effectiveness. As a result, feedback on the principals who had been prepared through their district-university affiliated programs was available from only three districts. However, the supervisors from the three districts identified several ways that the district-university affiliated program graduates were better prepared than graduates of other programs; they focused on their skills and competencies, ease of transition, and the cumulative benefit of having a critical mass of school leaders in the district who had been similarly prepared.

Better-Prepared Leaders

In interviews, district officials described the skills and qualities of the district-prepared leadership candidates they had hired or supervised as school leaders. One district official explained that the candidates did not only have different leadership skills and qualities, but their "tool chest [was] fuller." Officials from the three districts who could report on their school leaders described these "tools" as personal efficacy, instructional leadership, and a capacity to work more effectively within the district (representing systems leadership).

More specifically, *personal efficacy* included the following:

● Being effective, confident, and self-assured

● Having better communication skills, which were particularly evident when the candidates interviewed for school leadership positions

● Having skills in leading committees, implementing projects, and talking to groups

Instructional leadership included the following:

● Having skills in using technology and student data for leadership work, and being able to disaggregate and interpret student data

● Being able to "provide leadership in the building for teachers to address the deficient areas or the areas where we're struggling or have problems," as one official put it

Having the *systems leadership knowledge and skills* to work more effectively within the district included the following:

● Having a greater understanding of district systems, procedures, and people and thus a better ability to network within the district

● Having a systems perspective

However, being better prepared in *many* areas did not necessarily mean that program graduates were well-prepared in *all areas*. A few principals and district leaders who supervised new school leaders noted that the graduates still needed more experience generally and further preparation and development in specific areas, such as management and operations.

Better Leader Transition and Early Job Success

Another dimension of better preparation was the capacity to transition well into a new school leader position and then stay, rather than burn out or quit. Again, we only had district officials' observations about the quality of the district-prepared candidates' transitions and early careers as school leaders, and they were positive in two districts and mixed in a third. Officials in one district described their program graduates as having transitioned more smoothly into an initial leadership position and, as principals, were less likely to burn out and turn over as quickly as other new principals. A corollary benefit was that fewer new principals were leaving the district than in the past. In another district, a principal affirmed that her assistant principals clearly were well-prepared—because other principals tried to steal them! This also suggests early successful job transition and effectiveness.

Officials in a third district did not find that their program graduates had smooth, successful transitions into new leadership positions, although they blamed the district's placement assignments for it rather than the candidates' preparation. As these officials explained, some districts could pace the career trajectory of their program graduates by promoting them first to assistant principal (AP) positions under the supervision of highly effective principals, but other districts, like theirs, could not. Because of

the leadership problems of their system, district officials could only place graduates in AP situations that lacked quality mentoring or, worse, put them directly into principal positions in very challenging schools. Frequently, these placements led to disastrous results, as most of these new school leaders were ineffective or left soon after being placed.

In talking with district officials, we learned that in some cases there was a mismatch in the number of experienced school leader candidates available and the number of challenging schools that needed good leaders. In some districts, the most pressing leadership openings were in low-performing schools. The districts needed to fill those positions with leaders who were experienced and would be capable of turning around the schools. Their available leadership pool, however, comprised primarily inexperienced program graduates; while these candidates were better prepared than conventionally prepared candidates, they were still not ready for such challenges. Interviewed district officials at sites where inexperienced candidates were hired to lead low-performing schools suggested that program graduates needed additional development and support by having more hands-on responsibility as APs before advancing to a first principal-ship—preferably beginning with a school that did not present extreme challenges.

Creation of a Community of Leadership Practice

Another benefit was gained when a substantial number of the current school leaders were similarly well-prepared. Only a few districts had yet achieved this status, but the effects appeared to be promising.

One official stressed that the district had begun to experience the cumulative benefits of having a number of better- and similarly prepared school leaders: District staff and building leaders could work more effectively as a team; with more breadth of leadership ability among school leaders, they collectively had greater capacity to effect school improvement.

Organizational Learning and System-Changing Benefits

In changing their role in the leadership preparation field and redefining the role of leadership development as instrumental to the K–12 organizational field, districts gained other benefits as well:

- More knowledge about what the district itself wanted from a new leader and what it wanted and could expect new leaders to know and be able to do

- Leadership preparation that extended into a continuum of leadership development that comprised selection, education, and support

- The use of leadership standards to frame other areas affecting school leaders, including selection, leadership development, and evaluation

- A better understanding of how to lead and effect school improvement

- Added programs and supports for school leaders

These benefits accrued differently across the eight districts and were discussed in part in earlier chapters on the districts' development and use of leadership standards (Chapter 3), the fit of preparation into

a continuum of leadership development (Chapters 4 and 5), and the steps being taken to achieve (or the need for) a more tightly coupled relationship between candidates' preparation and their selection and support as new school leaders (Chapter 5).

System-changing benefits were also noted in Chapter 5, including the creation of district offices that were responsible for the leadership development continuum and the addition of other programs and services that lengthened and deepened leader education before, during, and after becoming a new principal.

The long-term expectation was that better-prepared school leaders would positively affect school performance and student learning outcomes. However, for most of the programs in this study, it was too soon to expect these benefits. In addition, evaluating the relationship between leadership preparation, school improvement, and student achievement gains is a complex research undertaking that requires well-defined measures to capture both the nature of preparation and the school and student outcomes (Orr, 2009). Only a few studies have tried to look at the association between the program that prepared candidates and the effects on student achievement in the schools that they led as principals. One district's program (Chicago), however, had some unpublished evidence of its graduates' impact as school leaders. UIC's EdD in Urban Education Leadership reports that all candidates who finished the academic-year residency (part of the program's affiliation with Chicago Public Schools) in good standing became school leaders in Chicago's schools and most as principals. According to program

officials who based their analyses on district data, "UIC-led schools are outperforming comparable CPS schools in measures of student performance and school climate and culture." Many of them led high-poverty, high-minority-enrollment schools (including neighborhood schools, charter schools, and new startups).[79]

Conversely, as noted in Chapter 5, another district's research and evaluation unit attempted to look for similar associations between program completion and student achievement gains but found no relationship to exist. However, the evaluation research design may not have been sensitive enough to identify whether school leaders completed a district-university affiliated program that had been recently redesigned or one of the earlier versions.

Although other districts were beginning to compile outcome data as their graduates advanced into principal positions, many were doing so without the analytic resources to investigate the relationships between preparation and outcomes beyond descriptive comparisons.

Impact on Universities

Like the districts, the affiliated universities (as presented in Table 7.3) gained both production benefits, through the number of new certification or master's degree candidates who earned course credit through them, and organizational learning and system-changing benefits from their affiliation.

Table 7.3: University affiliations by district

District	Primary University Affiliate	Number of Candidates Prepared	Other District-University Affiliated Programs and Universities for Leadership Preparation
Boston	UMass Boston	49	Harvard University (through internship placements)
Chicago	UIC	40	New Leaders for New Schools, with National-Louis University; Teach for America, with Harvard University
Fort Wayne	None	Not applicable	None
Jefferson County	University of Louisville (later the other affiliated universities became primary affiliates too)	111*	Bellarmine University; Indiana University Southeast; Spalding University
Providence	University of Rhode Island	59	None
Springfield, Illinois	ISU	35	None
Springfield, Mass.	UMass Amherst	80	None
St. Louis	University of Missouri–Columbia	41	Maryville University; University of Missouri–St. Louis

* Some of these candidates were prepared through other affiliated institutions in recent years.

79. *Fact Sheet: EdD in Urban Education Leadership,* available at http://education.uic.edu/uel-edd/.

The Number of Leadership Candidates Prepared

Since the beginning of the initiative in 2002, district-university affiliated programs prepared 415 candidates for certification, as shown in Table 7.3. This number potentially represented additional tuition or other income for each affiliated university annually. Moreover, through the affiliation arrangement, the universities gained a degree of predictability for future enrollments, at least as could be anticipated by the length of the contracts or the affiliation arrangements they made.

However, the increased number of master's degree candidates did not translate to substantially increased income, particularly when compared with conventional program candidates. Many universities discounted their tuition for program participants or received district support for only a small portion of the program costs—greatly reducing their potential income, given the number of candidates enrolled.

Some universities estimated that there were some subsequent enrollment benefits. A number of candidates continued their education to complete a master's degree (for a small number of credits) beyond certification requirements (as in Springfield, Mass.) or to enroll in the universities' doctoral programs (as at the University of Louisville and the University of Missouri–Columbia). Some university officials also thought they would see future enrollment benefits as a result of the recognition they gained through their district-university affiliated status. By gaining "preferred provider" status with the district, a university potentially added to its reputation, and this new status reflected the important community and urban education dimensions of the university's mission.

Organizational Learning Benefits

Another anticipated benefit of district affiliation was the universities' ability to strengthen the quality of their own preparation programs. Six of the districts[80] had university affiliates that were in a position to "learn" from their work with the district. All of these university partners could cite one or more improvements they had made to their program features, and benefits they had gained from their experience of working with the districts, for example:

- Using district-related leadership standards to inform their program content and internship experiences

- Changing their candidate selection criteria to focus more on leadership aptitude and qualifications and district commitment and less on academic proficiency, and generally rethinking what it meant to be prepared for graduate study in leadership

- Adopting the use of a cohort structure for grouping candidates into a common set of courses and sequence with the intent of creating an influential learning support

- Adding a focus on urban educational issues to their courses

- Adding content on district operations and processes to their courses

- Incorporating more active, hands-on learning strategies—such as case studies, problem-based learning, and simulations using data—to plan for school improvement

When taken together, inclusion of these program features represents substantive change; in many cases, however, each university adopted only one or two of these features and strategies.

In interviews with university officials and faculty members, we explored why there was not greater diffusion of innovative or district-specific features at the affiliated universities. As they reported, in some cases, the universities were already using some of these innovative practices, such as a cohort structure, and active, hands-on learning strategies, such as case studies and problem-based learning. In other cases, the universities reported being hindered in adopting these and other innovations for several reasons: limited full-time faculty involvement in the program, limitations on the roles of the faculty who were involved, and turnover in faculty and departmental leadership during the program period.

System-Changing Benefits

Several affiliated universities were willing to make one or more programmatic, organizational, and financial change in order to affiliate with the districts. In fact, their initial willingness to be flexible was one reason why they were selected by the districts to work with them on their programs in the first place. All affiliated universities made one or more such changes, reflecting both adjustments for the particular district-university affiliated program and gains in their capacity as an organization to tailor programs to local conditions or form district partnerships. Taken together, the types of changes showed the extent to which existing institutional arrangements were modifiable for program development purposes.

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80. One district, Fort Wayne, did not participate in a leadership preparation program that led to certification, and one university, the University of Rhode Island, did not have other leadership preparation programs that led to certification.

Universities typically made one of three types of *programmatic changes* (if they made any at all):

- Accepting district assessments of candidates' work for credit assignment or program completion (such as the cornerstone/capstone projects in Boston, or the case study and portfolio ratings in Springfield, Mass.)

- Providing course credit for district-developed content or modules, such as those developed by SREB and the NYC Leadership Academy

- Adopting a flexible stance in course, internship, and program design and redesign to fit changing needs and conditions and changing directions in district reform

Typically, universities do not accept transfer credits toward a master's degree program or provide course credit for content developed by entities other than their own faculty, but in these programs several universities did. In addition, determining course content and assessing candidates' proficiency in order to be recommended for credits or degrees were primarily the universities' responsibility, but in several of these programs, universities shared this responsibility.

The *organizational changes* included program or institutional management adaptations to make delivering the district-university affiliated programs possible. For example:

- Offering the programs off-site

- Assigning faculty to work at the district site

- Learning to use faculty and other staff differently to support candidate learning that was built around intensive, year-long internships

- Tailoring the instructional hours and delivery (such as offering all the courses on the same evening each week or in one all-day session)

- Hiring district staff as adjunct faculty to teach core courses, particularly those that related to district operations and processes

These changes were not always simple, given their logistical challenges (such as managing off-site instruction) and procedural challenges (such as revamping courses to fit new times and delivery modes, and evaluating district staff for approval as adjunct faculty). In some cases, these logistical changes were complicated to accomplish. At least one institution, UMass Amherst, had to relocate program management to its continuing education division while maintaining program oversight and staffing within its educational leadership department, in order to comply with state higher education requirements for degree programs and course delivery.

One or more institutions made the following *financial adaptations:*

- Accepting credits from other institutions toward their own master's degree program

- Providing partial or full tuition waivers

For example, for the St. Louis program, the University of Missouri–Columbia waived all tuition for program participants and instead received a fee for program faculty participation, while UMass Amherst reduced its tuition for their courses that were included in the district's certification program.

There was some limited evidence that these system-changing benefits were being sustained or used elsewhere. In Springfield, Illinois, the university and district continued their partnership without Wallace funding, and the university instituted several partnerships with other

districts. In other districts, some affiliated universities (such as the four universities affiliated with Jefferson County and UMass Amherst, which was affiliated with Springfield, Mass.) were exploring partnerships with other districts or groups of districts, building on the working models of their existing district affiliations.

Impact on Non-Affiliated Institutions

In exploring the impact of the district-university affiliated programs on local universities, we included an investigation of the effects on non-affiliated universities that also had programs serving the region. In each community, we attempted to identify one or more universities that were not part of the district's Wallace-funded leadership preparation program. Through interviews with program faculty and university officials, we explored the following:

- The awareness of their local district's investments in leadership preparation

- What they learned from these investments and then applied to their own programs

- Other influences on their institutions that resulted in changes to the content and delivery of their preparation programs, which extended our understanding of the larger context for program change

Availability of Other Universities for Affiliation in Leadership Preparation

To begin this analysis, we tested the assumption that there were other universities in the district's city or region that could have affiliated with the district for leadership preparation. We discovered a few such universities in each district, as shown in Table 7.3. Moreover, some institutions in several states offered programs in multiple locations throughout their states, some of which were geographically accessible to the districts in our study. For example, Quincy University (located outside Springfield, Illinois) provided leadership preparation at a Catholic high school in Springfield. This unexpected potential access to locally available programs from institutions in other parts of the state complicated the issue of determining access to university-based leadership preparation programs within a given region.

Determining which institutions were not affiliated with the districts for leadership preparation was further complicated by the evolving nature of the status of being "affiliated." In some districts, other universities had been or were becoming affiliated with the districts for leadership preparation:

- Three local universities had just become part of the Jefferson County leadership preparation initiative (along with its original partner, the University of Louisville).

- In Boston, Harvard University and the Principals Regional Network (affiliated with Northeastern University) worked closely with Boston Public Schools to assign leadership interns and, in the case of the Greater Boston Principal Residency Network, to prepare candidates for a particular leadership niche: small schools.

- National-Louis University became affiliated with Chicago through its affiliated relationship with New Leaders for New Schools.

- Two universities in St. Louis were affiliated with the school district for leadership preparation through a district-specific scholarship program (for up to 36 credits).

- Fort Wayne was beginning to explore forming a partnership with Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne after having attended an SREB training module on district-university partnerships.

- Chicago had recently discontinued a formal relationship with a local university because too few graduates had met its performance expectations.

In addition, in interviews with officials of other local universities, we learned that districts had affiliation relationships with several universities for different types of teacher and leadership preparation and PD. Thus, while the district may not have been working with a local university on leadership preparation, the two might have been affiliated for other teacher education programs.

We concluded, therefore, that districts' relationships with local universities were fairly fluid and evolving, making comparisons between district-affiliated universities and other local universities less meaningful.

Organizational Learning Benefits

Applying the institutional field perspective (Powell, 1991), we had assumed that when one institution altered its role within the field (as the districts did to become more involved in leadership preparation) or changed the way it worked with some institutions in the field (such as through formal partnerships for program delivery), there was likely to be an effect on other institutions in the field, even if they were not directly involved.

Once we found a local university that was not affiliated for leadership preparation (or had recently ended or was just beginning an affiliation), we did not find evidence that the district-university affiliated program was creating competition or otherwise influencing change in the university's program. Our inquiry into affiliation was best illustrated by our lengthy discussion with faculty of a non-affiliated university about the district's initiatives and the university's own programs. We found that the university—while a partner with the district on teacher education—had little awareness of the district-based leadership preparation program and its relationship with a competing university. (The faculty explained that their university was experiencing significant program growth, having started up satellite programs in other parts of the state by offering flexible scheduling and locations, and staffing its program with adjunct faculty.) When we compared program course requirements, the district's and the non-affiliated university's programs looked fairly similar, perhaps because both were aligned with national standards for leadership preparation. The greatest difference between the two programs was the district's more stringent candidate selection criteria—its greater focus on district issues and improvement approaches, and inclusion of full-time internships.

System-Changing Benefits

Finally, we looked at how the districts' entrance into leadership preparation had other influences on leadership preparation programs, particularly on how various universities might work differently with the district or one another. Districts' actions included these: (1) soliciting input from multiple universities in developing standards, (2) influencing statewide standards and program registration requirements for all programs in the state, and (3) encouraging local universities to work together on improving leadership preparation locally.

As noted in Chapter 2, several districts began their initiatives by hosting meetings among the leadership preparation programs in their area. They used these meetings, in part, as forums to redefine their expectations that universities would hold themselves accountable for the quality of their graduates as school leaders in these districts. They also used the meetings to develop clarity on leadership standards and expectations. In some districts, such as Chicago and Jefferson County, meetings continued until the district developed a clear set of standards for its leadership development and management purposes.

As noted in Chapter 6, the districts and affiliated universities (as well as other universities) often were actively involved in statewide leadership preparation reform efforts, also made possible by The Wallace Foundation. Consequently, while non-affiliated local universities may not have felt the direct influence of the districts' leadership preparation initiatives, they experienced it indirectly through new state regulations and requirements for leadership licensure and program re-registration.

There was at least one example of how universities in a district changed the way they

worked together on improving leadership preparation. In Chicago, partly in response to the district's priorities, the deans of 22 local schools of education were working together to share preparation program data, develop a more comprehensive picture of the services they provided, and determine best strategies for meeting district needs. Requirements for membership in this group included joint data-sharing and respect for confidentiality. According to one interviewed dean, the group used the joint data collection to first learn about themselves to assess "what we're doing, and our impact, and how not to step all over each other, in terms of doing that work," and then to review their minority candidate recruitment and placement. Another aim was to determine "what we're contributing, and are able to contribute," such as the placement of their graduates in different types of high-need schools.

We concluded from this analysis that the normative (from other universities), cultural (from the university's own efforts to seek program expansion opportunities), and regulatory (from national standards and state policies) influences within the larger leadership preparation field appeared to have equal or greater influence on the nonaffiliated universities, as did the changes created by the districts' entrance into the leadership preparation field. *How* the district entered into the field—as a competitor or a collaborator—seemed to have little relationship to how non-affiliated universities responded. It was likely, as in the case of Chicago, that when the district acted as a demanding customer who set quality criteria, the district was more likely to influence both affiliated and non-affiliated universities' programs.

Challenges to Reaping Benefits from Districts' Investment

In reviewing the impact on and benefits to districts and universities of the districts' investments in leadership preparation, we identified two primary challenges to achieving and sustaining these benefits:

- Leadership and staff turnover in the districts and universities

- The need for post-grant funding to continue the programs

Staff and Leadership Turnover

During the six years since they were first funded, seven of the eight districts experienced superintendent turnover (and the eighth had just had its superintendent leave to become U.S. Secretary of Education), including two districts that had four or more superintendents during those years. In half the districts, the primary district official or staff member (the leadership program's bridge person) also changed positions, left the district, or retired during this period. The districts with less superintendent and bridge-person turnover appeared to have had more sustained program development and implementation, with fewer changes in design and delivery and less disruption in service. The two districts with extensive superintendent turnover suspended their program for at least a year during this period.

Universities also experienced turnover in leadership and key staff (their own bridge persons) during these six years—in

deans, department chairs, and faculty who were liaisons to or taught in the program. However, the effect of these changes seemed less critical, as the pattern of working with the district had already been established. In some cases, turnover in faculty and university leadership created new opportunities to reexamine the courses and candidate learning experiences. The one exception was St. Louis, where both the district and the university had significant leadership turnover, with the accumulated effect that the university lacked the faculty resources to offer the program under the contracted conditions.

Funding

Wallace support was significant to these district-university affiliated programs, both programmatically and organizationally, thus creating a challenge for districts and affiliated universities in sustaining them after the support ended. Programmatically, the most challenging cost—and the least sustainable without additional funds—was the full-time, paid internship. Nonetheless, some districts or affiliated universities were able to garner additional federal and foundation grant funds to support program operations and the internships. One district (Springfield, Illinois) converted the internship into a short-term, paid position for a limited number of district schools.

The other primary grant-supported program cost—tuition—could be shifted to the candidates. One district had begun to do this by providing only modest tuition support for district-selected candidates. Another district shifted all tuition costs to the candidates when the grant funding ended.

In addition, there were limits to how sustainable universities' contributions

to tuition support could be, as they needed enough candidates each year to cover their costs through the amount of reduced tuition they charged. To some degree, universities could offer these programs as "loss leaders," "philanthropic ventures," or "strategic investments," while anticipating payoff in future enrollment and public goodwill. They might also weigh the importance of this kind of investment as a contribution to their sense of mission, purpose, and relevance; as an opportunity for the infusion of new ideas and approaches; and as a chance to work on the cutting edge of important educational issues. However, especially in times of fiscal exigency, such contributions (in the form of waivers or reductions) might be hard to justify. It may have been easier for the universities in this study to sustain participation because they were public institutions, with strong community service missions.

Equally challenging to replace was the organizational support that the funding provided. With Wallace funds, the districts created leadership development offices that offered seminars, programs, and resources, such as mentoring and coaching for new and experienced principals. It was unclear how the districts would sustain these services, despite their important role in supporting a key strategy of the districts' reform initiatives, particularly in light of the current fiscal crisis and the staff reduction facing districts nationwide.

Summary

The districts and their affiliated universities' investments in leadership preparation yielded both direct benefits, in the number of candidates prepared, and indirect benefits, in terms of what the districts and universities gained educationally and organizationally, and the more broad system changes developed within the leadership preparation field. The *number* of new leaders increased, ranging from 35 to 80 new candidates in up to six years. The *quality* of leadership candidates increased as well: According to some school and district officials, these new leaders, in contrast with those who had been more conventionally prepared, were of better quality and were more effective, particularly in their instructional leadership ability, capacity to transition well into leadership roles, and understanding of district functions and processes. These abilities led to less turnover and to more collective, similarly focused leadership capacity, according to some interviewed officials.

Through their work in leadership preparation, the districts gained more clarity on their leadership expectations, a better understanding of the needs of and demands on new school leaders, and an increased understanding of the role of leadership education in systemic school improvement. Unfortunately, given their need for leaders for persistently low-performing schools, districts could not wait for new program graduates to become more seasoned and some had to place graduates in very challenging conditions before they were ready, thereby

straining the district's capacity to supervise and support them, and sometimes leading to poor results for the new leaders.

To varying degrees and somewhat modestly, district investment in leadership preparation improved the quality and effectiveness of local university-based programs. Universities greatly valued their preferred provider status with the districts. Although this affiliation offered only modest financial benefits (because of the discounts that universities sometimes offered or the decreased number of university credits earned through the program), it appeared to offer less tangible but highly desirable reputational benefits. Universities also gained educational benefits by adopting one or more program features and were beginning to gain organizational benefits by adapting their systems and processes for program delivery.

The impact on other institutions in the districts' communities was less clear, in part because their relationships with the districts were more fluid (they either had prior collaborations, were currently working together on leadership preparation or teacher education, or were planning future collaborations). The few program faculty who could talk about the district programs' influence on their other programs were not able to identify any specific ways that their programs had been affected. Instead, they said that their programs were more

strongly influenced by national and state accreditation requirements, as their course requirements reflected. (However, since the districts' work on leadership standards was contributing to the new state standards, the districts did indirectly influence the local programs.) These faculties also noted that another influence was their success in finding new program markets in the region and elsewhere. The growth of some nonaffiliated universities' programs—which were often designed to offer leadership preparation more quickly, cheaply, and flexibly—might create stressful competitive conditions for the district-affiliated universities, which sometimes struggled to maintain enrollments in their own more selective and educationally demanding programs.

Funding and district and university turnover remained the persistent challenges to the programs' continued improvement and sustainability. As shown in the few examples here, bridge leaders in both districts and universities could sometimes maintain program stability during some leadership turnover, but not always. As districts continued to change superintendents and, potentially, their district reform approaches, their commitment to leadership preparation as a reform strategy might weaken. In addition, the cornerstone of the district-university affiliated programs and leadership preparation continuum—the

full-time, paid internship—will be difficult to sustain without foundation funding, particularly in light of the current fiscal challenges. The lack of evidence that leaders who were prepared in district-university affiliated programs are more effective than conventionally prepared leaders in facilitating school improvement exacerbates this problem, making it difficult to sustain district commitment (and local funding) over time.

Chapter 8
Pulling It All Together, Drawing Implications

This chapter returns to the initial concerns that launched The Wallace Foundation's investment in districts to increase the quality of school leaders by improving leadership preparation. We review the findings from our investigation, which covered eight of the districts supported by Foundation funds and focused on the status of the districts' leadership preparation in one year, 2008, as well as the context and history of their efforts. Specifically, the study explored the relationships among the districts' educational challenges and leadership needs, their approaches to influencing leadership preparation locally (through their own actions or work with local universities), the programs they developed, and the impact of district investments in leadership preparation on both local universities and the districts' schools.

In beginning our evaluation research, we posited three research questions. They allowed us to explore three hypotheses about the relationship between district investment in leadership preparation and the impact on districts and universities:

- As districts increasingly begin to view themselves as *consumers* of local universities and credentialing agencies, they will be able to exert more influence over university-based leadership preparation programs. As key consumers of leadership preparation programs, school districts and their graduates can have considerable influence on determining the quality of university-based programs.

- Research-based and district-centered leadership preparation yields better-quality preparatory experiences and graduates who are more ready for transition into school leadership positions and more effective as new leaders than conventional preparation.

- Tightly coupled systems are more conducive to system-wide change than loosely coupled systems. Tighter affiliation and collaborative relationships between university leadership preparation programs and districts may lead to more coherent and better-quality program features and better-quality leaders and tighter relationships within districts and between districts and universities on processes of leadership preparation, candidate selection for leadership positions, and principal support.

During the investigation, we added a fourth question, which represents an exploratory hypothesis that *context*—the leadership needs of the local districts, the districts' approaches to school reform, the stability of leadership within the schools, and the larger state policy context—affects the districts' choices of consumer actions and the nature of the programs created.

We next analyze the districts' investments in leadership preparation, then provide a summary of the results of their efforts, and, finally, discuss the implications of our findings.

The Influence of District Consumer Actions on Leadership Preparation

The first hypothesis focuses on the types of consumer actions that districts can take and how the districts can influence the nature and quality of preparation available locally. Drawing on previous educational and organizational research as discussed in prior chapters, we posited that districts can take action directly by creating their own preparation programs or indirectly through influence on existing programs, or by combining both actions. By exercising different consumer actions, the districts reconfigured both their roles and those of local universities in the preparation of aspiring school leaders. Such actions also shifted the relationship between the fields of leadership preparation and K–12 education for the aspiring leaders to become more complementary and even interdependent.
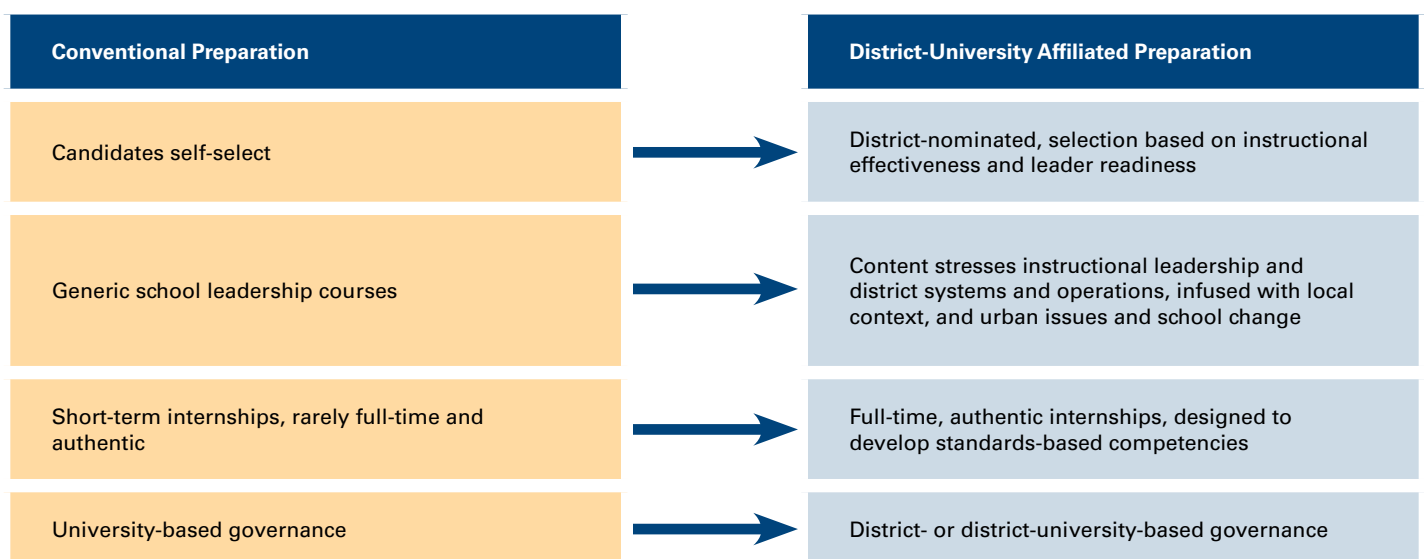
Here we investigate how each of these actions influenced the quality of leadership preparation locally. In drawing from organizational theory, we situated the districts' specific investments within the larger field of leadership preparation. By doing so, we could consider both the existing roles of districts and universities in leadership preparation and the ways that the districts' actions were able to change the quality of preparation and thus the qualifications of certified candidates to lead their schools.

The conventional approach to developing new leaders for districts' schools is driven by the aspirations of individual candidates who self-select to pursue leadership careers, the assumptions of universities about program content and delivery, and state requirements and national standards for leadership preparation and licensure. Aspiring leaders complete a certification program or earn a master's degree from a local university-based preparation program and become part of a candidate pool from which districts fill their leadership positions. The fields of leadership preparation and K–12 education are contiguous, overlapping primarily through candidates'

internship experiences. The aspiring leaders are the primary consumers of leadership preparation, and districts' influence is limited primarily to selecting among graduates of local preparation programs.

Figure 8.1 presents both the conventional approach to leadership development and the districts' efforts—using an integrated approach—to improve its preparation by taking a more active role in candidate selection and preparation. In the districts' Wallace-funded approaches, aspiring leaders were recruited from and prepared for the schools in the local districts. The districts played a more central role in influencing the preparation of candidates, aligning the program to its unique needs, and recruiting and placing candidates. The universities' role in the leadership preparation process was more interdependent; the universities' candidate-selection decisions, preparatory experiences, and assessments were more likely to respond to districts' leadership needs. Finally, through reconfiguring their role in leadership preparation and becoming more active consumers, the districts better integrated the fields of leadership preparation and K–12 education

Figure 8.1: Shift from conventional preparation to district-university affiliated preparation using research-based practices

Conventional Preparation	District-University Affiliated Preparation
Candidates self-select	District-nominated, selection based on instructional effectiveness and leader readiness
Generic school leadership courses	Content stresses instructional leadership and district systems and operations, infused with local context, and urban issues and school change
Short-term internships, rarely full-time and authentic	Full-time, authentic internships, designed to develop standards-based competencies
University-based governance	District- or district-university-based governance

for local school improvement. Through such reconfiguration, they could incorporate leadership preparation as a school improvement strategy and induce preparation programs to incorporate leadership for school improvement into their programs.

To what extent, then, did the districts' consumer actions accomplish their aims and shift their locally available leadership preparation from the conventional approach to the integrated approach?

With the grant resources, the eight districts could decide what roles they wanted to play, and to have their local universities play, in the existing or new leadership preparation programs. They chose to work with the universities as closely as they needed to, given their program intentions. The districts used three consumer actions to alter the quality and readiness of their school leader candidate pool and new hires:

- **Becoming a more discerning customer** by more clearly defining the leadership standards for and competencies expected of aspiring candidates and by using stringent selection processes to assess each candidate's qualifications and ensure that candidates were prepared to address the districts' leadership needs

- **Becoming a competitor** by creating their own leadership preparation programs aligned to district-defined leadership standards and designed to produce candidates' leadership competencies as defined by district needs and expectations

- **Becoming a collaborator** by working with local universities, through contracts and inducements, to change the universities' candidate selection and assessment processes, and program content and field

experiences, in order to improve the likelihood of producing candidates with district-defined competencies

Generally, we found that all three consumer action approaches were creating a shift toward a more integrated approach to leadership preparation in the eight districts. Increasingly, districts were beginning to view themselves as "consumers" of local universities (although they may not necessarily use that term) and to figure out how they could exert more influence over the quality of preparation available from local universities or other entities.

Several factors informed the nature of districts' consumer actions, and Wallace support was instrumental. The growth in district knowledge and understanding about leadership that is critical for low-performing schools and its preparation may be attributed to a variety of factors, such as the increased acceptance nationally and locally of ISLLC standards within the field, a growing body of published research on how leadership influences student learning from which to draw, and numerous opportunities to participate in Wallace-sponsored events on the topic of "district as consumer" over the past decade. Further, the acquisition of additional knowledge about the centrality of leadership, leadership preparation, and district consumer options appeared to be having an impact on a district's ability to exert its influence on leadership preparation as an informed consumer.

By becoming a competitor or a collaborator, districts had fairly direct influence over the design and delivery of leadership preparation. By becoming a more discerning customer, they took steps to change how one or more local universities prepared candidates by restricting access to district resources (for the universities) and to leadership. The combination of creating and using standards to select candidates

for leadership positions and identify the desired components of preparation programs and of collaborating with universities on program design and delivery had the greatest influence on the universities with district-university affiliated programs. It resulted in the most broad-based change in leadership preparation in the district's region. Creating and using standards for preferred program affiliation or state-required program redesign seemed to have the strongest influence on leadership preparation programs in both affiliated and non-affiliated universities.

Changes in Program Quality

Our second hypothesis addressed the quality of preparation as informed by research on best practices and district context.

The focus and nature of the Wallace support encouraged districts to be innovative and responsive to their own leadership needs. Thus we expected that their district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs would reflect new or substantively altered approaches that would increase the likelihood of producing better-qualified candidates. In addition, we expected that they would have some or all of the features that characterize high-quality programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009), including vigorous recruitment and selection; a well-defined and integrated theory of leadership for school improvement that integrates the program; a coherent curriculum and active-learning strategies; quality internships; knowledgeable faculty; social supports; and standards-based assessments for candidate and program evaluation.

The eight districts brought a fresh perspective to all aspects of leadership preparation—from recruitment and selection to content, field experiences, assessment, and follow-up support—using their districts' lens for school improvement priorities and the leadership that was required.

Alignment to quality features. Our findings show that seven of the eight districts had affiliated programs (either district- or university-based) that were aligned with many of the eight key features of an exemplary leadership preparation program (as discussed in Chapter 4):

- **Vigorous recruitment and selection** that sought expert teachers with the potential for principal leadership

- **A well-defined and well-integrated theory** of leadership for school improvement that framed and integrated the program; provided coherence; and linked program goals, content, instructional activities, and assessments to a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge

- **A coherent curriculum** that addressed effective instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management and that aligned with state and professional standards

- **Active-learning strategies** that integrated theory and practice and stimulated reflection (e.g., problem-based learning, action research, field-based projects, journal writing, portfolios featuring substantial use of feedback, ongoing assessment)

- **Quality internships** that provided intensive opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills

under the guidance of an expert practitioner-mentor

- **Knowledgeable faculty** that included practitioners with experience as school leaders

- **Social and professional support** that included grouping candidates as a cohort to take common courses and share other experiences and formalized mentoring and advising from expert principals

- The use of **standards-based assessments for candidate and program feedback and continuous improvement** that were tied to the program vision and objectives

All seven districts' programs reflected most of these core features, particularly as they related to candidate recruitment and selection, active-learning strategies, a quality internship, use of cohorts, faculty who were experienced practitioners, and standards to organize content and assessments.

Focus and alignment. The single most substantive area of innovation encompassed the way that several districts redefined the scope of leadership preparation. They created a multi-year sequence of increasingly selective and demanding preparatory experiences that led up to a full-time, full-year internship. The addition of several preparatory experiences, both preceding and following completion of a formal leadership preparation program, shows that formal preparation programs are necessary but may not be sufficient for preparing candidates for leadership positions in demanding school and district contexts.

In terms of other core features, district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs were most innovative in the following ways:

- Using an overriding program mission and objectives to organize program content and learning

- Developing recruitment and selection processes that focused on candidates' instructional and leadership accomplishments and potential

- Creating longer, more extensive, and authentic internship experiences

- Contextualizing the coursework and learning experiences in the district issues and processes

- Creating course or program-related assignments that replicated district leadership tasks, such as school improvement planning and action research on problems and improvements

Selection. To increase the number of highly qualified potential leaders, districts combined two strategies: investing in developing teachers in their own districts and ensuring that the candidate selection process placed emphasis on prior instructional effectiveness and leadership potential (determined via assessments, multiple interviews, and engagement with simulated work).

Scope, content, and approach. The districts and their affiliated universities redefined the scope and content of preparation by developing or revamping leadership competencies to frame leadership preparation and by stressing district leadership priorities, processes, and conditions in the coursework.

Programs also varied in their instructional approaches (using problem-based, case-based, or simulated experiences). Generally, their instructional approaches were based on a constructivist learning approach, in which candidates grappled with messy, complex problems and used district-based data, tools, and strategies to address them, both individually and in small groups.

Much of the course content development work concerned making it more relevant to district initiatives and priorities. Many innovative ideas for program content came from district leaders' own experiences or from Foundation-supported intermediaries: the SREB and the NYC Leadership Academy. We found a tension around how programs could best balance field-relevant theory and practical skill development in course content; sometimes, in an effort to offer more district context and applied learning opportunities, the courses had more limited focus on the foundational ideas and research on effective leadership that exists in the field.

Internships. Districts invested in intensive, lengthy, and authentic internships, ranging from a short-term, full-time experience within a certification program to a full-time, full-year experience within a program (or post-certification, for a smaller number of candidates). The quality and management of these programs varied, reflecting in part the differences in context, resources, and program maturity. Across these experiences, districts and their affiliated universities took steps to make internships more authentic to the school and district work, with a strong focus on the leadership tasks that future leaders were likely to encounter.

While districts and universities valued quality internship supervision and mentoring, provision of the program components was not always feasible. Inherent in the districts' need for better-prepared school leaders was an existing limit on the availability of high-quality leaders who could mentor candidates. In addition, candidates needed field experiences in the

challenging school settings, where quality leadership may have been least available or where there was little or no capacity to mentor candidates. Several programs were only beginning to work through plausible alternatives by using both district-based and on-site internship supervision, rotating candidates through multiple settings, and providing clear guidelines on the kinds of field-based activities that candidates are to complete. Further effort is needed, however, possibly by combining all three strategies.

Innovativeness. We concluded from these results that the districts' approaches met Lubienski's (2003) definition of *innovative,* as explained in Chapter 1. Their district-university affiliated leadership preparation programs represented new or substantively different approaches to leadership preparation, particularly in their emphasis on candidate selection; their grounding of program coursework in district context, issues, and operations; and their use of active-learning strategies, substantive field experiences, and candidate assessment. These innovative approaches also reflected the goal of positively altering the quality of the candidates produced as potential leaders for the districts. They were far more than just a diversification of local program options.

The approaches used by the district-university affiliated programs appear to have the potential to yield better-prepared candidates for their school leadership challenges. Each of the seven district-university affiliated programs (as well as Fort Wayne, with its wraparound developmental approach to leadership development) undertook valid approaches to effect better, more district-relevant leadership

preparation. Each developed several strategies that were a departure from conventional preparation and served as potential models for others to consider. The more that programs use these strategies and integrate them coherently around a core set of principles, the more likely it is that their graduates will be well-prepared to lead local schools, including those with challenging conditions.

Districts were in a better position than universities to develop innovative approaches to persistent problems in leadership preparation because of their newness. They were limited, however, in their lack of access to new ways of providing preparation and by some of the same regulatory elements that limited university-based programs. Few district-university affiliated programs broke away from the standard course delivery structures of discrete course offerings and requirements.

Finally, program development among the eight districts was a work in progress. Over time, the districts and their affiliating universities modified their content and design to increase candidates' opportunities to engage in authentic work and apply what they were learning. Program changes and modifications were guided by three aims: improving alignment to district reform approaches, fostering candidates' skill development, and balancing theory and practice.

The Influence of District-University Affiliation on Program Quality and Leader Quality and Effectiveness

Our third hypothesis focused on how the relationship between districts and universities (based on the degree of affiliation and collaboration) influenced program quality and leader quality and effectiveness. We explored their nature and influence first in terms of program quality and then with respect to leader quality outcomes.

Affiliation with one or more local universities. Creating and sustaining leadership preparation programs that aligned with local needs required districts to coordinate with one or more local universities around elements of preparation, and for each institution to coordinate between the program and other organizational units. (Figure 5.1 illustrates these relationships and indicates that the extent to which they were tightly or loosely coupled could influence program innovation, operations, and sustainability.)

Most districts had developed an affiliation with one or more universities for locally focused leadership preparation based on contracts or other agreements that outlined their shared work, roles, and responsibilities. Only one district-university affiliation reflected a co-constructed collaboration in which both entities shared in all program matters and responded to the accountability demands that each faced. The other district affiliations ranged from

fairly independent working relationships to contractually defined collaborations to emerging inter-dependent collaborations.

Much of the coordination occurred informally, facilitated by district and university bridge leaders. Looser, informal district-university relationships, it appeared, were better suited to address the variety of ongoing program issues and decision-making required for candidate recruitment and selection, program content, staffing, internship placement and support, and assessment. Also, given district and university leadership turnover, an informal relationship seemed to be more sustainable because it was more flexible and adaptable. However, such informality could also have its drawbacks, hindering systemic input or formal program review, monitoring, and feedback.

Affiliation and program innovation. What seemed to drive program innovation and quality in the locally affiliated programs was the extent to which districts and universities, either separately or together, grappled with how program content, instructional approaches, internships, and assessment could most effectively prepare candidates for the local district's needs and priorities. The districts that pursued a tighter interplay between clarifying leadership standards and competency expectations (generally by creating and using their own standards and expectations) and managing their own local leadership program seemed more likely to positively influence the extent to which their affiliated programs embodied the features of quality leadership preparation as well. The standards provided clarity on how preparation could respond to the districts' aims for leadership and school improvement.

We also found, however, that both formal and informal means to effect tighter coupling between district and universities, regardless of which consumer action was at play, contributed to how much affiliated programs embodied

the features of effective programs. The more frequently that district and university officials and staff met to discuss program design, delivery, and assessment questions, the more they could align program and district purposes and create coherence both within the program and between the program and additional district leadership effectiveness and school improvement strategies. Meetings could be facilitated formally, through contract reviews, regular meeting times, and co-location of university faculty and staff in district offices; or informally, through personal relationships and informal interactions.

Determining whether districts' consumer actions were influencing university-based leadership preparation generally was more difficult. We found that the districts' initiatives lacked an intentional university change strategy—that is, the districts' investments in leadership preparation were focused on improving the quality and effectiveness of leadership candidates for their schools rather than on changing university-based programs. Two district consumer action approaches—clarifying local leadership standards and conferring preferred provider status for designated institutions—had promise for changing both affiliated and non-affiliated local universities' programs. We concluded that district collaboration with local universities around preparation, coupled with clear and aligned district standards, had the greatest influence on sustainable university leadership program redesign.

Affiliation and leader outcomes. It is too soon to assess systematically the leadership effectiveness of graduates of district-university affiliated programs. First, too few graduates had been principals for at least three years, the time needed to assess program effects. Second, most districts lacked the means to track candidates' careers over time and compare the school improvement effects of leaders from district-university affiliated and other preparation

programs. Without this information, program effects can only be determined through supervisors' assessments of the quality of candidates' transition into leadership positions, retention of the candidates, and their effectiveness in improving local schools. The limited supervisor feedback gathered for this evaluation suggests that program investments are yielding more well-prepared cadres of leaders in districts who, in turn, are more able to work together on school improvement, but such information is limited to only a few sites. Thus, we could not analyze the relationship between district consumer actions and program quality.

Creating a district leadership continuum. What we could investigate, however, was the extent to which districts were creating a well-aligned continuum of leadership preparation and development and how doing so influenced leader quality. We learned that there are different ways to think about alignment between a district and a continuum of leadership preparation and development. For the purposes of our research, two forms of alignment were key:

- Alignment among the program components within and between leadership preparation and leadership development within a district

- Alignment of the program with a district's larger systemic reform initiative

Before considering whether a well-aligned continuum prepared better leaders and, if so, how, we had to ascertain the extent to which a continuum even existed in the eight districts and the nature of alignment among the program components and with each district's systemic reform initiative.

We found that through the Wallace support, districts were able to invest in leadership preparation and discover how to create a continuum of preparatory experiences and align them around a core set of leadership standards. Such discoveries, however, appeared to still be evolving among the eight districts into a well-articulated alignment and an explicit continuum of programs and strategies. For example, district investments in teacher leadership roles and responsibilities were not initially intended as part of a leadership preparation pathway, but emerged as such in some districts. A few districts were exploring ways to sustain a full-time internship as a separate preparatory step in addition to requiring that candidates complete a leadership preparation program. Some districts were only beginning to create a well-articulated and well-aligned continuum for leadership development for new and experienced leaders and to think about alignment between leadership preparation and leadership development programs and strategies as an integrated, developmental continuum. Thus, alignment among components was a work in progress, as each component is developed and integrated with other components, which are simultaneously being strengthened (and thus changed) over time.

The alignment of leadership preparation and development programs and strategies with the districts' systemic reform initiatives was less well articulated, and similarly a work in progress. The interplay between districts' leadership preparation investments and their school improvement initiatives revealed the complexity of preparing candidates for leadership positions and the need for more layered, cumulative preparation and skill development to ready new leaders. Districts were beginning to

address the preparation implications of their needs for leaders as related to their improvement initiatives by sharing the complexity of their needs with their affiliating local universities and exploring ways to strengthen preparation programs. Districts' integration of leadership preparation and development with their school improvement initiatives had the most impact on course content and internship experiences. Moreover, as expressed in our interviews with officials and faculty, universities were beginning to see leadership preparation and K–12 educational improvement as being interdependent processes and to share in the districts' aims to improve candidate selection and program content and to offer internship experiences that reflected both priorities.

Which district consumer action seemed to influence these alignments most? Districts that created their own programs had the greatest control over how to align their program features with district leadership and reform priorities. Districts that collaborated with local universities were able to engage them in adopting a more aligned approach to leadership preparation, while clarifying and encouraging alignment with the district's priorities and other initiatives and functions. Thus, district collaborations were more likely to reflect the integration of the leadership preparation and K–12 educational fields and a balance of both district and university engagement in fostering this integration in preparing candidates to lead local schools, as shown in Figure 8.1.

Finally, only preliminary evidence on the leadership effectiveness of graduates of district-university affiliated programs was available for a few districts, and there is no evidence on the benefits of candidate

participation in a full leadership preparation and development continuum. We found that leadership preparation was often only loosely coupled to candidate selection for leadership positions and the supervision of both new and experienced principals. The more decentralized candidate selection processes added distance between district-university affiliated preparation and the selection of candidates for leadership positions. Similarly, there were only limited means of tracking what combination of leadership preparation and development experiences the various candidates and new school leaders had, so the effectiveness of single programs or a combination of programs and experiences could not be determined. Consequently, there was little formal (or even informal) feedback in most districts on how well district-university affiliated program graduates fared in the leadership selection process and how well they performed as new school leaders. Unless the districts and universities develop monitoring and feedback mechanisms on the types of preparatory and development experiences leaders had and on their school improvement accomplishments, it will remain difficult to draw any substantive conclusions.

Influence on other university leadership programs. An extension of this hypothesis was that engaging in a district-university affiliated leadership preparation program would lead to relevant programmatic and organizational changes in the affiliated universities' leadership preparation programs and, more distantly, provide a competitive influence for other universities' programs in the region. We found that universities' affiliation led to mixed and somewhat modest changes. The affiliated universities' engagement in the district-university affiliated programs had both structural challenges and mission-related opportunities. The challenges were primarily related to whether their affiliation relationship could be part of their educational leadership department or had to be located in their continuing education department (to enable off-site courses, modified tuition, and use of district officials as instructors). The benefits were primarily content-related (gaining insight into district context and reform-focused preparation) and organizational (advantages of a cohort structure).

To some degree, all affiliated institutions already had responsive organizational systems and structures. All affiliated universities were public institutions; therefore, their missions were consistent with program outreach, and they were willing and able to be flexible, including expending effort to find ways to work around the existing institutional structures.

The extent to which the universities used their program affiliation experience to rethink their approach to school leadership preparation generally reflected individual, rather than institutional, interest and initiative, which may be due to the newness of these programs and the need for more evidence on the benefits of new approaches. District engagement of universities in leadership preparation was hindered to some degree by the resource contribution demands to sustain the affiliation and by leadership turnover.

The Influence of Context on District Consumer Actions and Program Approaches

As a fourth hypothesis, we considered the influence of context on district consumer actions and approaches. The eight districts faced two persistent challenges in addressing their school leadership needs: (1) a continuing demand for highly qualified school leaders that exceeded the number of qualified and available candidates in the area; and (2) a number of chronically low-performing schools, requiring leaders who were equipped with the disposition and capacity to dramatically improve them. In some cases, the challenges were related to the sheer size of the district; in others, they related to the districts' need for instructional improvement and better school achievement performance, as assessed by state and local accountability indicators.

All eight districts had implemented new reform initiatives to foster instructional change, used formative assessments, and offered PD to improve teaching. Over time, throughout their funding period, the districts' focus on leadership development as a formally designed reform strategy became more explicit but also more challenging, given superintendent turnover. Some districts intentionally used leadership candidate recruitment and selection as a lever for changing their own leadership practices.

The eight districts had several leadership preparations programs, often including a public university-based program, within their cities or nearby suburban communities. Some districts had prior working relationships with local universities.

How did this leadership and school improvement context influence the district consumer actions and program approaches?

Urgency. First, it appears that local context influences exerted pressure for change, but their urgency did not seem to be associated with any one consumer action or program approach. Rather, the degree to which district officials expressed a sense of urgency—based on local concerns— seemed to influence action. A greater sense of urgency sparked a closer working relationship with university faculty to tailor coursework and internship experiences to address the local conditions. In this way, as well, the districts integrated a district culture perspective into the leadership preparation programs.

Leadership and reform approach. The second aspect of local context that impacted on leadership preparation decisions was each district's reform approach and leadership stability. These factors were inter-related because reform approaches frequently changed with superintendent turnover (which all eight districts experienced during their Foundation funding period). While program officials—particularly the district and university bridge leaders—took steps to align the preparation programs with district reform approaches, they also worked to sustain the programs during changes in leadership. Only in cases in which there was simultaneous turnover in district and university leadership were program operations disrupted, and the bridge leaders took steps to ensure that the programs would restart.

The district reform approaches influenced programs both by situating support for leadership preparation within a larger reform framework and by providing substance for program content (such as data and processes for school improvement management and strategies for leaders to strengthen instruction). It appears that where leadership preparation and development were more clearly articulated as part of the districts' reform initiatives, districts were more likely to invoke the consumer action of becoming a discerning customer by clarifying leadership standards and expectations and making the leadership selection process more stringent and responsive to district needs.

Influence of state policy. The third local context was the influence of state policy and regulations for school leadership licensure and certification and leadership preparation program accreditation and registration. As noted in Chapter 6, the states governing the districts in this study had been in the process of changing their policies and regulations, in part through Wallace funding to states and the eight districts. In several instances, these policy changes were informed by the funded districts' efforts to improve the quality of local leadership preparation.

The states had four potential policy levers—standards, program accreditation requirements, leadership licensure, and use of Foundation funding—to influence the quality of leaders and their preparation. In the six states, during the grant period we found a trend in policy development toward greater specificity in leadership standards and expectations. States varied in their expectations of how to prepare leaders and determine their eligibility for licensure. The more rigorous state policies complemented the local district leadership preparation and development efforts by requiring more field experience (in defining internship hours and years of school leader

experience before professional licensure) and more leadership preparation and development, particularly with the addition of post-preparation requirements.

Both the states and the districts emphasized the use of leadership standards to frame preparation and assess candidates' readiness for certification and leadership positions, making the use of standards mutually reinforcing. A few states, as well, created a tiered licensure system for new leaders, emphasizing that new leaders needed additional development to be ready for professional licensure. Such tiers complemented the district strategy of adding levels to their leadership preparation and development continuum, particularly for new leaders.

Given the small sample and the changing state policy context, it was unclear how state policies influenced district consumer actions and program approaches beyond the relationships noted above, with the exception of enabling districts to recommend candidates for certification as school leaders. In two districts, the state created policies to enable the districts' consumer action of preparing leaders for certification themselves, while a third district had flexible-enough state policy requirements to enable it to do so as well. We found no examples of state policy that contradicted or hindered district action, and only one example of its hindrance to university involvement—based on state higher education policies that governed the timing and location of graduate courses for degree programs. We did find that district and state leaders who were working together on state policy reform welcomed the synergy of the interplay between district and state policy reform and the potential to leverage change through their collaboration.

Yield in Better-Prepared School Leaders and Other Benefits

The districts' and their affiliated universities' investments in leadership preparation yielded both direct benefits: the number of candidates prepared, and indirect benefits: what the districts and universities gained educationally and organizationally.

More, better-prepared leaders. First, the programs added to the *number* of new leader candidates available locally, ranging from 35 to 80 candidates among the districts during their grant period. Second, the *quality* of leadership candidates increased. According to some school and district officials, new leaders were of better quality and were better prepared than those who had been more conventionally prepared. In addition, those who had advanced to leadership positions were thought to be more effective than previous leaders, particularly in their instructional leadership ability, capacity to transition well into leadership roles, and understanding of district functions and processes. According to interviewed officials, these abilities led to less turnover and more collective, similarly focused leadership capacity among local leaders.

Unfortunately, given their need for leaders for persistently low-performing schools, some districts could not wait for new program graduates to become more seasoned. They had to place graduates in very challenging conditions before they were ready, straining the districts' capacity to supervise and support them and sometimes leading to poor results for those new leaders.

Acquisition of knowledge by districts about leadership preparation. Several leadership preparation benefits accrued for the districts themselves. Through their work, the districts gained more clarity about their own leadership expectations, a better understanding of the needs of and demands on new school leaders, and an increased understanding of the role of leadership education in systemic school improvement.

Acquisition of knowledge by universities about leadership preparation. To varying degrees, local university-based leadership preparation programs gained benefits from their affiliation with districts and their collaboration on improving program quality. Universities greatly valued their preferred provider status with the districts. While this type of affiliation offered only modest financial benefits (because of the discounts that universities sometimes offered or from more limited university credits earned through the program), it did offer less tangible but highly desirable reputational benefits. In addition, universities benefited by adopting one more program features and were beginning to learn from adapting their systems and processes for program delivery.

The impact on other institutions in the districts' communities was less clear. It had been anticipated that when districts became more active consumers, local universities would pay attention, even if they were not directly affiliated with the districts in the area of leadership preparation. However, this was not the case, at least in the way that had been anticipated,

in part because other universities generally had somewhat fluid relationships with the districts already (i.e., they had had prior collaborations, were currently working together on leadership preparation or teacher education, or were planning future collaborations).

The few program faculty who talked about the district programs' influence on their own programs identified few specific changes engendered by these programs. Instead, they said that their programs were more strongly influenced by national and state accreditation requirements, as their course requirements reflected competition from other university-based programs and opportunities to collaborate with other districts. (However, since some districts' work on leadership standards contributed to the new state standards, the districts did indirectly influence local programs' designs.) The growth of other universities' programs, which some universities had designed to be quicker, cheaper, and more adaptable, may have created stressful competitive conditions for the district-university affiliated universities, who sometimes struggled to maintain enrollments in their own more selective and educationally demanding programs.

Finally, maintaining funding and keeping district and university leadership stable remain persistent challenges to the programs' continued improvement and sustainability and to the benefits they can offer local districts.

Implications for Practice

Our analysis of the eight districts' experiences in developing leadership preparation programs that were integral to their systemic reforms and school improvement yields important implications for districts, universities, policymakers, and other funders. Many components do not require extra expense (with the exception of a full-time, paid internship) but do require time and dedicated personnel to enable sustained discussions, program development, and realignment of programs, strategies, and services.

First, to effectively invest in leadership preparation, districts need to **harness the resources of local universities to develop, staff, and support leadership preparation programs** that can meet state higher education standards and leader certification requirements. This undertaking requires districts and universities to work together to forge a new understanding of what school leaders need to know in order to effectively improve (and likely turn around) local schools, and to translate this understanding into preparation strategies. University faculty need to learn alongside district officials to acquire insights, drawing on both the research and what districts are learning from their schools.

Several districts described spending up to two years in discussions with working groups, which included one or more university representatives, around establishing their own leadership standards and

expectations. These standards then became the foundation for district-university affiliated programs and candidate assessment at different stages of preparation—and, for the most fully articulated standards: leader selection and evaluation. The discussions and the process of developing standards enabled both districts and participating universities to learn about effective leadership for local conditions and to develop a shared vision and set of expectations.

Second, districts and universities can productively **redesign leadership preparation as a multi-staged learning process,** as several districts in our study did. Such a system would reflect the broader, increasingly intensive stages of preparation that are needed to effectively prepare aspiring leaders, particularly for demanding conditions. A multi-stage system can enable districts to simultaneously prepare a somewhat larger pool of candidates for teacher-leader and school-leader work. Districts can then identify a more select group for more intensive leadership preparation, particularly for low-performing or otherwise challenging schools. Intensive, full-year internships that enable authentic work and independent responsibility can be offered to a few candidates and serve as a stepping stone to formal leadership positions, as was done in one district. Through a tiered system of leadership preparation, districts and universities can ensure that their expectations for competency attainment are met at each level of advancement.

Third, **districts and universities can work together to develop their knowledge,** drawing from their respective areas of expertise. This activity includes infusing the districts' specific challenges and priorities into the course content and other learning experiences, and incorporating information about district operations and processes into general knowledge and skill development on operations and management. Most districts were able to influence the content of their programs in these areas. However, it is equally important to identify the core frameworks, academic knowledge, and integration of theory and practice that, research shows, are essential to school leaders' preparation and development as effective instructional leaders, problem-solvers, and facilitators of change (Copland, 2000; Prestine & LeGrand, 1991).

Finally, **districts and universities must obtain feedback on the performance of graduates as a school leader.** Such feedback is essential for both to learn from their investments and improve program quality and effectiveness (Orr, 2006). Districts and their affiliated universities were only beginning to investigate formative and summative evaluation strategies, including exploring the career outcomes and school improvement accomplishments of their graduates. Monitoring of and feedback on graduates' performance are essential to turning district and university investment into improved preparation and a viable strategy in districts' systemic reform work and universities' redevelopment of their leadership preparation approaches.

Implications for Policy

This evaluation study yielded two critical policy implications, pertaining to expectations and resources.

We found evidence that **supportive district and state policies for leadership preparation complemented the districts' and universities' design efforts for their affiliated programs.** Some policies provided flexibility for districts to offer their own programs, and most reinforced expectations about leadership standards and a tiered system of leadership preparation and development. In many cases, such policies were foundational to the districts' and universities' work. However, as shown by recent developments in some states, such as Kentucky, states can go further in encouraging greater alignment between leadership preparation programs and local districts' needs and priorities.

The interplay of leadership preparation standards-setting and policymaking between districts and their states, made possible by Wallace funding, yielded reciprocal benefits for both state and district policies, both in the content of the policies developed and in their capacity to facilitate change in state and local university-based programs. Moreover, the extent to which state and district policies were complementary and reinforced similar expectations helped strengthen their effects and may enable greater program sustainability by reinforcing common standards and program expectations.

While much of the policy work required little direct cost, some of the strategies that policies encouraged—particularly the incorporation of full-time internships into leadership preparation—are expensive. As shown here, a paid, full-time internship was the single most innovative feature developed among these districts, but only one district has found a way to sustain the internship—on a very small scale—without external funding. Thus, **states and districts must explore the means to support internships as a critical component of leadership preparation.**

Research Framework and Methods

To ascertain the ways that each of the eight districts that it supported had invested in principal preparation, and the relationship between the districts and local universities around the design and delivery of leadership preparation programs, The Wallace Foundation contracted with Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), to conduct an evaluation. The study was designed to investigate the feasibility and efficacy of the new role of districts in leadership preparation as consumers of preparation program graduates and to assess the resulting impact on districts and leadership candidates. EDC engaged three principal investigators and a team of researchers to develop a case study for each district and conduct a cross-case analysis report on key findings.

Research Framework

Foundation staff compiled a series of questions to guide EDC's evaluation. These included an overarching query about the competitive influence of district investments in leadership preparation on the universities in their region and a series of questions about program design, delivery, and district and university organization. The principal investigators converted these questions into research objectives, a series of framing evaluation research questions, and three exploratory hypotheses. The research objectives were the following:

- Document the nature of Wallace-funded districts' leadership preparation programs and how their features responded better to districts' school leadership needs than they had before.

- Examine the experiences of Wallace-funded districts in using collaborative or competitive strategies—i.e., starting their own leader

preparation programs, using state-granted authority to certify leaders, partnering with local universities, or using their "market power"—to work with affiliated universities in developing quality leadership preparation.

- Determine the effectiveness and the limitations of Wallace-funded districts' efforts to improve universities' principal preparation programs, through collaborative or competitive efforts, particularly to strengthen the programs' curricula, pedagogy, internships, and recruitment and selection processes.

The research questions were these:

- To what extent do Wallace-funded leadership preparation programs reflect the *core quality features* of best practices as described in the literature?

- How do tightly coupled relationships between districts and universities affect the quality of preparation programs being developed and implemented?

- What are the structural and relational elements that increase a university's ability to adapt and respond to changing external conditions?

- How are districts using their influence as consumers of university preparation programs to drive needed changes in curricula, internships, selection, and recruitment?

These were the exploratory hypotheses:

- As districts increasingly begin to view themselves as "consumers" of local universities and credentialing agencies, they will be able to exert more influence over university-based preparation programs or create their own programs.

- Research-based and district-centered leadership preparation yields better-quality preparatory experiences and graduates who are more ready for transition into school leadership positions and more effective as new leaders than conventional preparation.

- Tightly coupled systems are more conducive to system-wide change than loosely coupled systems. Collaborative relationships between university leadership preparation programs and districts may lead to more coherence among program features and tighter relationships within districts and between districts and universities on processes of leadership preparation, candidate selection for leadership positions, and principal support.

To assess how districts might exert influence that would yield qualified candidates for leadership positions, we reviewed the available research from the education and organizational fields and identified two possible strategies that they could employ:

(1) developing their own preparatory programs and services; and (2) applying change forces that would alter the field more generally.

Neo-institutional theory (Powell, 1991; Scott, 2001), coupled with research on organizational choice and competition as applied to charter schools (Lubienski, 2003), provides a framework for investigating what district actions would increase the likelihood that universities would improve their leadership preparation programs and what institutional constraints are likely to inhibit change.[81] Briefly, neo-institutional and related organizational theories indicate that an organization's capacity for change within a broader organizational field requires clarity about the needs being addressed, modifiable programs, and information feedback mechanisms on the quality and effectiveness of new approaches in order to counteract the institutional policies, practices, and values that encourage conformity and stasis.

Coupling theory, drawn from organizational studies, helps to frame the nature of district capacity in terms of the tightness or looseness of relationships and actions within an organization (either district or university) and between them (Weick, 1976). *Inter-organizational relationship theory* underscores the influence of shared goals and objectives, processes for governance and action, and contributed resources on the effectiveness of partnerships and collaborations (Langman & McLaughlin, 1993). Such factors focus attention on the organizational qualities that can enhance or constrain the relationship between districts and universities in shared work, such as leadership preparation.

Taken together, the research questions and hypotheses were used to construct an inquiry model that guided the case

study research, shown in Figure A.1. The inquiry model enabled the research team to describe a series of roles, conditions, features, and outcomes. Using this information, the team then returned to the conceptual issues on district's consumer action, as outlined above, to further explore how and in what ways district actions yielded improved programs and candidates, while also investigating the nature of the relationship between districts and universities.

The inquiry model begins with a focus on context, taking into account the district and university contexts (items numbered 1 and 2 on Figure A.1) pertaining to leadership preparation, and recognizing that each would have a different influence on preparation program approaches among the eight districts. The third item is the nature of the relationship: whether the district directed its own leadership preparation or worked in collaboration with local universities. The fourth item consists of the dimensions of the relationship between districts and universities: the different roles played by each and the tightness or looseness of these relationships. The fifth item consists of the features of the leadership preparation program that was created or supported through Foundation support. The sixth item comprises the criteria for determining graduate readiness and sources of evidence of leadership quality as assessed by the programs. The seventh item covers perceptions of graduates' leadership quality and their performance in leadership positions.

Each category in the model was seen as having a direct effect on the next category and an indirect effect on subsequent categories. For example, the district and university contexts were thought to

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81. With respect to the further use of neo-institutional theory in the field of education, see Burch (2007), who researched the influences on different dimensions of district education reform; Levin (2004), who investigated the change forces enabling community college expansion into baccalaureate degree programs; and LeTendre, Gonzalez, & Nomi (2006), who studied the reciprocal influence between elite high schools and elite colleges.
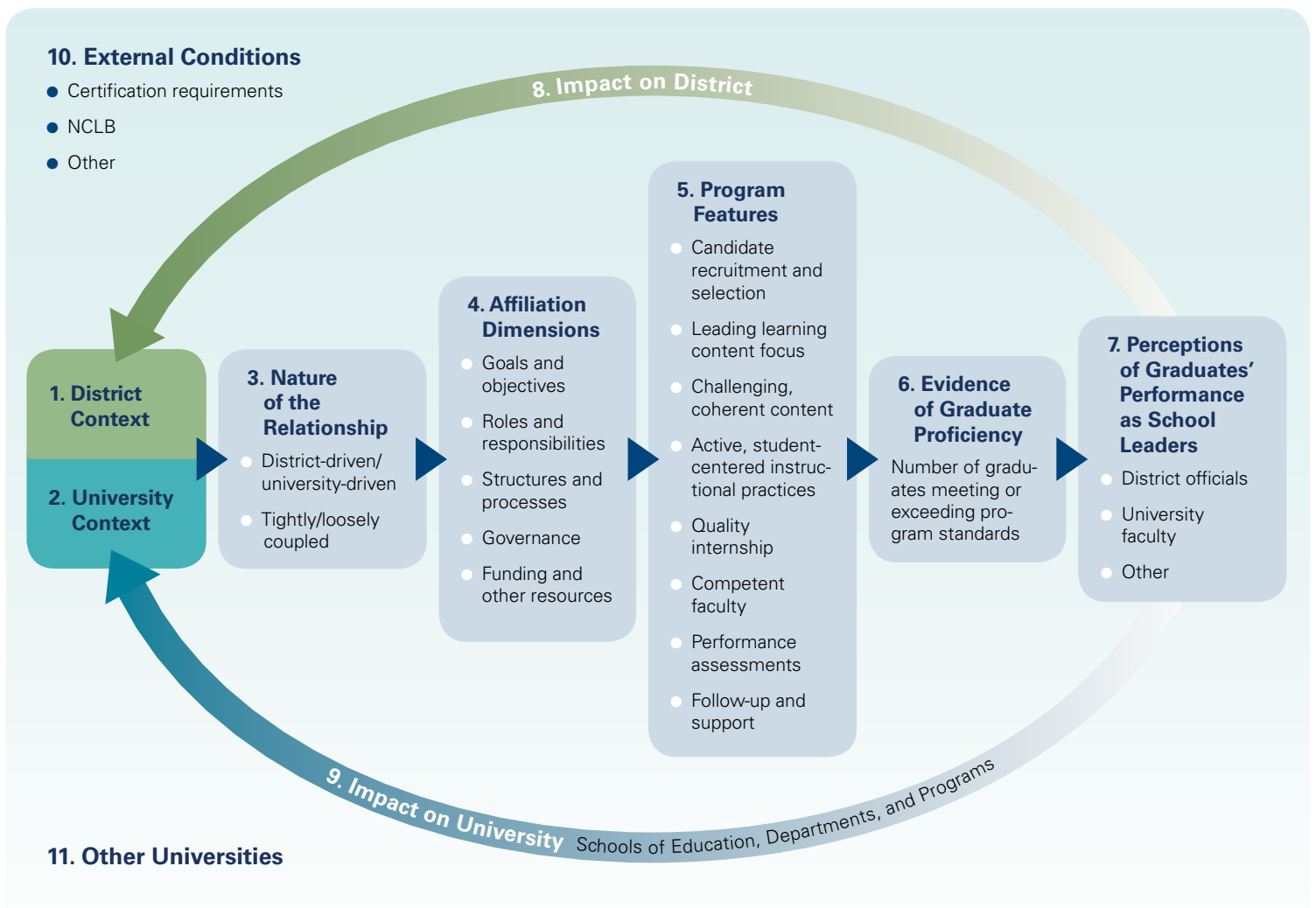
directly influence the type and nature of the relationship between districts and universities around leadership preparation.

Further, according to this model, the shared experiences of the districts and universities around leadership preparation and the quality and effectiveness of graduates were thought to have a recursive benefit for both institutions (items 8 and 9) and for their relationship. Finally, the existence of the broader educational policy context (item 10) and other local universities (item 11) were thought to have a general influence on the other categories.

Throughout the analysis, we drew on additional available research on leadership preparation, inter-organizational relationships, and the influence of competition and collaboration on organizational change, as noted above.

Figure A.1: Initial inquiry model for the evaluation of district-university relationships for improving leadership preparation

10. External Conditions
- Certification requirements
- NCLB
- Other

8. Impact on District

1. District Context

2. University Context

3. Nature of the Relationship
- District-driven/university-driven
- Tightly/loosely coupled

4. Affiliation Dimensions
- Goals and objectives
- Roles and responsibilities
- Structures and processes
- Governance
- Funding and other resources

5. Program Features
- Candidate recruitment and selection
- Leading learning content focus
- Challenging, coherent content
- Active, student-centered instructional practices
- Quality internship
- Competent faculty
- Performance assessments
- Follow-up and support

6. Evidence of Graduate Proficiency
Number of graduates meeting or exceeding program standards

7. Perceptions of Graduates' Performance as School Leaders
- District officials
- University faculty
- Other

9. Impact on University Schools of Education, Departments, and Programs

11. Other Universities

Methodology

The study's research design was based on nested case study research (Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 1994). This approach used both within-case and cross-case analysis and comparisons. The primary data collection methods were a series of in-depth interviews of district and university officials and staff, and program participants; a review of program and district documentation; and administration of an online program features survey.

Sampling

There were three levels of sampling decisions. The first was the selection of eight districts for the case study research. In discussions with Wallace staff, it was agreed that the research would include most of the initially funded districts, which were among those that received the most long-term investment in leadership preparation and thus showed the greatest likelihood of district effects.

The second sampling decision was the selection of two types of universities in each district: (1) universities that had a working relationship with the local districts for leadership preparation, and (2) at least one local university with a leadership preparation program but no relationship with the district. In practice, this sampling arrangement was modified because one district (Jefferson County) worked with all four major university programs in the region and another

(Fort Wayne) worked with none. In two districts, two non-affiliated universities were examined.

The third sampling decision pertained to the individuals to be interviewed in each site. We focused primarily on staff who worked directly with the leadership preparation programs (including program directors and faculty), those who made institutional decisions about investments in leadership preparation (including department chairs, deans, human resource directors, and superintendents), and those who might observe the benefits (such as area supervisors or assistant superintendents). (Appendix B provides a summary of the number and type of individuals interviewed.)

Informed Consent

Before initiating the evaluation research, the institutional review boards of EDC and the universities of the research team members reviewed and approved the research design; interview guides; and informed consent forms for interview, observation, and survey participation for issues pertaining to human subjects and attention to informed consent. In addition, each district and EDC reviewed and signed an MOU about the evaluation research. The MOU stipulated the research purposes, the data collection process, the possible burden on district staff, the plan for both case-specific and cross-case analysis, and the reporting expectations.

In conducting the research, we made clear to the districts, universities, and each interviewee that their participation was voluntary, that no individual would be personally identified, and that the research team would handle all information shared confidentially. Agreement to the taping of all interviews was voluntary as well. Interviewees signed an informed consent form giving permission for the interview, taping, and use of the information for the study's research purposes.

Data Collection

Using our conceptual design and research team input, we developed a common set of interview protocols to guide the field research. The interview guides were open-ended and designed to investigate each category of the study's conceptual design as it pertained to the role of each interviewee. All interviews were transcribed and coded using Atlas Ti, following a coding schema based on the interview protocols and the study's conceptual design. (See Appendix C, the district program directors interview guide.)

In addition, we modified the Educational Leadership Preparation Program Features Survey,[82] developed by the University Council for Educational Administration and by the American Educational Research Association's Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership Special Interest Group. The survey was fielded online using Survey Monkey. (Appendix D presents the survey.)

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82. This survey is available online to the leadership preparation field through SLPPS@utah.edu.

Data Analysis

We used a three-stage data analysis process for the evaluation research. In the first stage, each research team constructed individual district-focused case studies, using a common case study outline, designed around the conceptual framework and relationships being investigated. Within each case study, researchers explored the features of leadership programs, the differences between the affiliated and non-affiliated universities' programs, the nature of the inter-institutional relationships, and the effects of the district-supported program on the district and universities. We evaluated the validity of each case in two ways: (1) Each case was reviewed by the three principal investigators, who raised questions about evidence, interpretation, and internal consistency; and (2) each case was submitted to the lead project director in each district for review and feedback on errors in fact, missing information, updates, and differences in interpretation. (See Appendix E for the case study outline.)

The second stage of the data analysis process was a cross-case analysis, which the research team implemented in two steps. We hosted a two-day analysis meeting of the entire research team to talk through key findings in relationship to our core research questions pertaining to program features and quality, organization of the district-university affiliations, and the relationship between the two. In addition, the research team completed a series of cross-case

comparison analytic tables on key study topics focusing on important program features and district and university roles, which became the basis for the final report.

The third stage was drafting a final report, combining analyses of the eight district case studies, the cross-case analysis table findings, and a review of the research literature. The report was then reviewed by the research team, the advisory committee, the lead project directors in each district, and key Foundation staff for errors in fact, missing information, differences in interpretation, and questions for further investigation.

Preliminary research findings were discussed with Foundation staff and selected members of the research community at three stages: in the initial phases of data collection, at mid-course in the data analysis phase, and in the report revision phase.

Research Quality and Integrity

As noted above, we used multiple strategies to ensure research quality and integrity. They included using protocols of informed consent before interviews and survey participation, as noted above; attending to potential sources of conflict between the research sites and the research team; engaging an advisory committee to provide feedback on all phases of the research study; seeking input from the districts on our findings; and sharing findings with the Foundation throughout the study process.

Four potential sources for conflict of interest existed in conducting the evaluation research. One principal investigator also directed a technical assistance program for Wallace-funded districts, including the eight districts in this study; another principal investigator had conducted a first-year, formative evaluation for one of the districts; a third principal investigator had written a case study on one site for an earlier Foundation study on leadership preparation; and one research team member worked in the same state professional community that encompassed one of the districts and its four partner universities.

To minimize the conflict of interest, no principal investigator or research team member conducted case study research on a district or state where he or she had prior professional or research experience. In addition, no access was provided to previously collected EDC technical assistance reports on the eight districts, except as shared by the districts or the Foundation.

We convened a five-member advisory committee, comprising national policy analysts, former district superintendents, and university faculty, to provide feedback on the study design, protocols, preliminary findings, and final report. Committee members were asked how the study could be useful for their constituents and how to balance our inquiry into districts and universities with state policy strategies.

We shared our case studies and final report with lead officials in each district to obtain their feedback on our representation of their efforts, the analysis and conclusions of our findings, and the relevance of the implications. We similarly sought the input of Foundation staff on our preliminary research findings early in the research process, midway through the data analysis process (in a meeting with other Foundation-supported evaluation research teams, who provided input as well), and in a review of the draft report.

Together, feedback from individuals in the field and the Foundation staff was used to evaluate the validity of our research findings and to strengthen the quality and integrity of our conclusions and implications.

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