

SREB

Progress Being Made In Getting a Quality Leader in Every School

2004

Southern
Regional
Education
Board

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CHALLENGE TO LEAD SERIES

This report was developed by a team of SREB staff members, including Betty Fry, coordinator, University Leadership Development Network; Gene Bottoms, senior vice president; Kathy O'Neill, director, SREB Leadership Initiative; and Andrea Jacobson, research associate.

It is part of the *Challenge to Lead* education goals' series, directed by Joan Lord, director of educational policies. It is also part of a School Leadership Development Series supported by the Wallace Foundation. For further information, contact members of the leadership team at gene.bottoms@sreb.org, kathy.oneill@sreb.org or betty.fry@sreb.org. *Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead* is available on the SREB Web site at www.sreb.org. A full listing of goals, plus the indicators for the leadership goal, is printed on the inside back cover.

A Message from the President of SREB

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

Challenge to Lead

An effective principal is not all that is required for an effective school, but it is very difficult to have a good school without a good principal. You know it. Education and government leaders in your state know it. What will you and your state do about it? This year? Next year? What can you do to produce the effective principals you need?

Progress Being Made in Getting a Quality Leader in Every School is an SREB report that provides some of the answers. It is one of a series of reports on the progress of SREB states in meeting the 12 ambitious goals known as *Challenge to Lead*. These goals reflect the stated aim for SREB states to lead the nation in

educational progress. The intent is to help students make smooth transitions grade by grade from the time they enter school until they graduate from college; to close gaps in satisfactory performance between rich and poor students, between students of different races and ethnicities, between boys and girls and among students from urban, suburban and rural areas; and to create an education system of schools, colleges and universities working together and, in this case, developing school leaders who can increase student achievement.

This report contains analyses of state progress on six key indicators. You will find practices and actions to ensure that more schools will have a quality principal who can influence student achievement.

So, how are we doing? The report indicates very little progress on some indicators and promising progress on others.

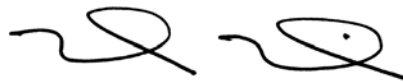
The mixed report is a sign that change will not be easy. However, the actions that **state policy-makers, universities and districts** need to take to produce quality principals are very clear. State policy-makers should:

- make the local school district a full partner with the university in the selection, support and preparation of the most promising future school leaders;
- develop a state policy that defines the conditions that a leadership preparation program must meet if it is to continue preparing school leaders;
- move to a two-step system that bases **initial** licensure of principals on demonstrated mastery of essential competencies in a school setting and **professional** licensure on performance and positive impact on school and classroom practices and student achievement;
- open up the system that licenses principals to provide an initial license to promising candidates who have gained necessary leadership competencies through training and work experiences; and

- create or redesign leadership academies to prepare district and school leadership teams that can support continuous school improvement, especially in low-performing and struggling schools. Enlarge the scope of the academies' work to include building the capacity of school systems to create working conditions that support continuous school improvement.

It is possible to have a good principal in every school and still have poor schools. As states and districts act on these important issues, they must work to change other parts of the educational system. Unfortunately, the working conditions in some schools and districts undermine efforts at school improvement. While steps are being taken to select, prepare and license effective principals, other policy-makers and education leaders must create the working conditions that enable effective school leaders to lead school improvement.

All of these actions are possible. They are happening now in a few states. This report and the staff that prepared it may be able to help you take these steps in your state.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a final flourish.

Mark Musick
President

Progress Being Made in Getting a Quality Leader in Every School

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

Challenge to Lead

This *Challenge to Lead* goal asserts that school principals are critically important to their students' success. The goal is that **every school** — regardless of its student population, location or surrounding economic circumstances — will have a leader who can work with faculty to increase student learning. Districts and schools have relied on state preparation and certification systems to prepare principals to lead schools. New state standards and accountability systems are causing policy-makers and local school district leaders to question whether this approach is working.

School principals can improve student achievement. Decades of research have revealed links between what principals do and how students perform. Principals who are knowledgeable about and actively involved in their schools' instructional programs contribute substantially to student achievement. **Research by Ken Leithwood, University of Toronto, concludes that the principal's leadership accounts for about 20 percent of the school's impact on student achievement.**

Has your state created a system ensuring that every school principal improves student achievement? If not, how can you create such a system?

You can examine your state's system for identifying, preparing, licensing and supporting principals by asking four questions.

- Have we adopted policies and implemented strategies to ensure that individuals with the potential and commitment to be school leaders are identified and prepared to be principals?
- Are we implementing leadership programs designed primarily to prepare school principals to lead curriculum and instruction and to increase student achievement?
- Does my state's licensure system ensure that only individuals with the knowledge and skills required to improve school and classroom practices are eligible to serve as principals?
- Have we created a leadership academy or other strategy to help struggling and low-performing schools and to build district capacity to create the working conditions that support effective school leadership?

This report will help you formulate ideas and actions that can lead you to answer "yes" to these questions. For each question, you will be able to 1) determine if the system needs to be redesigned, 2) understand what should be done to build a better system, 3) see if your state has made progress, 4) learn about promising practices used by other states and 5) identify challenges your state may face in redesigning its system.

A Checklist for Achieving Substantial Progress

You will know that your state is making substantial progress when:

- ❑ well-established recruiting and selection processes provide adequate numbers of well-qualified school leaders with diverse backgrounds to fill vacancies;
- ❑ all principal preparation programs contain redesigned courses, assignments and performance measures and can show, through external validation, that they meet standards;
- ❑ all preparation programs include school-based experiences that are well-planned and integrated with other parts of the program and provide opportunities for future principals to lead school improvement efforts;
- ❑ the licensure system for principals provides for two types of licenses: an initial license for those who have demonstrated specified competencies and a professional license for those who can provide evidence that they improved school and classroom practices;
- ❑ the initial license is available to candidates with a master's degree, demonstrated leadership skills in the school or community and proven performance; and
- ❑ academies or similar professional development strategies are designed to train and assist leadership teams from struggling and low-performing schools and to build the capacity of school systems to create the working conditions necessary for effective leadership to improve student achievement.

How well are SREB states doing in getting a quality leader in every school?

Since 2002 SREB has tracked the progress the 16 states in the region are making toward achieving the *Challenge to Lead* goal by collecting data on six indicators. (See Table 1 for the levels of

progress achieved by each SREB state in 2002 and 2004. See Appendix A for the SREB Scoring Guide for Measuring State Progress and the SREB Rating Process.)

Table 1

Progress in Leadership Preparation

Indicators:		Alabama	Arkansas	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana	Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina	Oklahoma	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas	Virginia	West Virginia
Identify future school leaders	2002	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○
	2004	○	○	●	⊕	○	⊕	⊕	⊕	●	●	○	●	⊕	⊕	●	○
Redesign leadership programs around school curriculum and instruction	2002	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	2004	●	●	⊕	●	●	⊕	●	⊕	●	●	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	●
Incorporate school-based experiences in leading school improvement into preparation programs	2002	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
	2004	●	●	●	○	●	⊕	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Base professional licensure on improved school and classroom practices	2002	○	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	2004	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	●	⊕	○	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	○	●
Create alternative pathways to initial licensure for principals	2002	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	●
	2004	●	●	●	●	○	⊕	●	●	○	⊕	○	○	●	○	⊕	●
Provide academies to support school leadership teams in low-performing schools	2002	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	○	○	●	●
	2004	⊕	●	⊕	⊕	●	●	⊕	⊕	●	⊕	●	●	⊕	○	●	⊕

○ No progress ⊕ Little progress ● Some progress ⊕ Promising progress ● Substantial progress

Data compiled by SREB, April 2004.

A Summary of Progress for the 16 SREB States Since 2002

- Almost half of the states made headway in getting districts and universities to work jointly to identify and prepare individuals who showed the most potential for school leadership.
- Almost half of the states made progress since 2002 in getting all leadership programs to use state-adopted guidelines to redesign their curricula and to emphasize the principal's roles in improving school and classroom practices and raising student achievement.
- Only two states made strides since 2002 in having a well-planned and integrated series of on-the-job, in-the-school learning experiences as part of the program to prepare new principals.
- Twelve states made progress since 2002 in creating a two-step system to license principals.
- Four states made advances since 2002 in opening alternative pathways for initial principal certification to teachers and others who show potential but have not completed a university program in educational leadership.
- More than half of the states made progress in using leadership academies to support low-performing districts and schools in learning how to implement a continuous improvement process and raise student achievement.

Are states adopting policies and implementing strategies to ensure that individuals with the potential and commitment to lead are being prepared to be principals?

Getting individuals who have the potential to become principals to make the commitment to prepare for school leadership is the key first step in having effective leaders in every school. States and districts do not try to identify people who have great promise. Instead they rely on a “volunteer pool” of candidates.

Every year principal preparation programs in SREB states enroll many individuals who lack the leadership potential and the interest to become principals. Graduates from these programs exceed principal vacancies by several hundred annually in a state. Why do students study for jobs they don't really want and for which many are not qualified? For many, a master's degree in educational leadership is the easiest route upward on the school pay scale. Meanwhile, district leaders often search

in vain for graduates who can document that they are committed and prepared to lead others in improving teaching and learning and raising student achievement.

Another reason for an inadequate pool of high-performing principal candidates is that school districts and universities do not work together to select candidates. In the past, districts have had few ways to identify promising candidates. One way has been to hire potential leaders as assistant principals. However, high-performing teachers — a potential source of new principals — generally do not pursue traditional paths to becoming principals. Why not? In part it is because they don't see a traditional path — generally serving as an assistant principal — as strongly connected to what they value most in schools: curriculum, instruction

and student achievement. The assistant principal position seldom is designed as a training ground for instructional leaders.

On the other hand, a shared selection process gives school districts a key role in working with universities to identify and prepare new leaders. Under such a system, the admissions process to a graduate program would include a joint analysis of the applicant's professional accomplishments and

leadership potential. When districts participate in selecting those to prepare as school leaders, they tend to provide more support to the aspiring principals. District leaders help candidates succeed in the preparation program, involve more people in providing high-quality training experiences within schools (including experiences in leading school improvement) and more often select and train mentor principals who can organize and guide participants' school-based experiences.

A Partnership Between the University of North Texas and the Dallas Independent School District in Selecting and Preparing Future School Principals

Joe Neely, Dallas Independent School District Specialist in University Relations, reported that when the district and the University of North Texas worked together to set standards and select aspiring principals, 80 percent of those chosen were considered at the end of training to be excellent principal candidates. In contrast, the “volunteer pool” and the traditional training program usually yielded about 20 percent excellent candidates.

State Actions That Result in Qualified and Committed Future School Leaders

States and school districts need a system that produces a diverse pool of well-qualified leaders in adequate numbers to fill vacancies. Without such leaders, there can be no continuous school improvement focus in every school. The process for identifying and preparing future principals must not be limited to the current “volunteer” plan. It must be designed to recruit high-performing candidates who demonstrate the ability to lead others, solve problems and raise student achievement. At the same time, the process must include those individuals who take the initiative to prepare and who meet the same criteria.

States can set policies that require districts and universities to work together to develop high-performing school leaders. These plans will not be easy to implement and probably will require a transition period from current to new practices. The transition will be more successful if key constituents — perhaps in focus groups — have opportunities to discuss the plans and policies as they are being developed. These constituents can help develop model criteria and screening processes to identify and recruit potential principals and can pilot-test these strategies in several districts with different characteristics. They also can assist in evaluating how universities and districts are doing in building partnerships and putting the “shared selection process” into operation.

How are SREB states doing in identifying future leaders?

Overall, SREB states have made little progress in identifying and preparing individuals with the potential and commitment to become principals.

- By mid 2004 seven states — Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Tennessee and Texas — had made progress since 2002.

- Nine states had not made sufficient progress to move to a higher level in 2004.
- Five states have shown *some progress*, including four that were at the *some progress* level in 2002.
- Two states showed *promising progress* after being at the *some progress* level in 2002.
- No state had made *substantial progress*. (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Progress in Identifying Future Leaders

Indicator:		Alabama	Arkansas	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana	Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina	Oklahoma	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas	Virginia	West Virginia
Identify future school leaders	2002	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○
	2004	○	○	●	⊕	○	⊕	⊕	⊕	●	●	○	●	⊕	⊕	●	○

○ No progress ⊕ Little progress ● Some progress ⊕ Promising progress ● Substantial progress

States have yet to perceive deliberate selection and preparation of the most promising school leader candidates as a key component of their plans for improving schools and raising student achievement.

Although progress was weak overall and uneven among the states, the seven states showing progress had taken steps that reflect a variety of actions. Some states have required preparation programs to submit plans for working with school districts to recruit, select and screen outstanding individuals. Others have formed state design teams to develop guidelines for planning school principal identification and selection systems. Other states have developed proposed initiatives for new leader

internship programs featuring selection criteria. One state has targeted highly skilled educators who have worked in low-performing schools and has given them administrative endorsements on their state licenses without requiring additional training. The endorsements allow them to serve as principals.

The “volunteer” system in each state produces many more certified principal candidates than are needed to fill positions, but school districts still have difficulty hiring principals prepared to do the job. States evidently do not yet view the system as “broken.” In fact universities and school districts continue to evaluate their programs by using

criteria that have little to do with whether they produce graduates who can change school and classroom practices and raise student achievement. Instead they evaluate their programs based on high enrollments and large numbers of graduates; national accreditation; high passing rates on state-required examinations; high percentages of graduates who get jobs, whether in leadership or non-leadership roles; and school district-administered annual performance evaluations of graduates that focus more often on management responsibilities than on improving school and classroom practices.

Other issues, often unspoken, make it difficult to change the system. A deliberate selection process may become personal, because it means saying “no” to those who lack the potential to become effective principals. Friends, colleagues and school board members find it hard to say, “You do not have what it takes to be a school leader,” to

members of the community, many of whom have served well in other roles. University department heads, for reasons of self-interest, may be unable to say “no” to tuition-paying students who have little potential. Course enrollment and tuition revenue directly impact the number of faculty the university can hire, the courses assigned to faculty and the departmental budget.

Another issue is the lack of well-developed tools for screening and evaluating candidates and the scarcity of resources to create such tools. Traditional admission criteria — such as scores on the Graduate Record Examination, undergraduate grade point averages and references from supervisors — are much less costly and labor intensive than developing and administering a process that includes multiple interviews, simulations, on-the-job observations and portfolio reviews.

Some Promising Practices

While no SREB state has enacted comprehensive policies or programs to ensure a diverse, high-quality pool of principal candidates, some current state initiatives include one or more elements of a sound recruitment, selection and support system.

- The Delaware Policy and Planning Institute has proposed a New Leader Internship Program that calls for new admission criteria, a practice-based curriculum and funding to

release prospective interns from teaching duties for a year. Each district will have the opportunity to have an intern in the program.

- Louisiana’s new *Guidelines for Redesign of Post-Baccalaureate Education Programs* requires universities to work with school districts to recruit, screen and select individuals for state-approved educational leadership programs.

Are states implementing leadership preparation programs designed first and foremost to prepare school principals to lead curriculum and instruction and to increase student achievement?

There is a strong consensus on two points about school leadership.

- Good principals are essential to good schools.
- Good principals make a positive impact on what and how teachers teach and how much students learn.

Many potential principals are not prepared to change school and classroom practices that impact student achievement. This is especially true in schools needing the most improvement. States must select pools of aspiring principals and find ways to *refocus* university programs on essential leadership practices linked to improved teaching and student achievement. *Refocusing* means much more than adopting new program standards concerned with improving curriculum and instruction, increasing the length of internships, developing a new description of the principal's job to include responsibility for "instructional leadership" or requiring a new licensure test aligned with standards. States have tried all of these options.

Research has identified leadership practices that make a difference, and states should take aggressive steps to align university programs to these practices. Leadership departments in universities will need to make fundamental changes in what they teach, how they teach and how their faculty members work with teachers and principals in K-12 schools. They must place a higher priority on curriculum- and instruction-related content, assignments based on real-school instructional problems, assessments that measure whether leaders have mastered the essential practices and well-designed school-based experiences that extend the learning process beyond university walls.

State Actions That Result in Leadership Preparation Programs Designed to Prepare Principals to Lead Curriculum and Instruction and Focus on Increased Student Achievement

States should ensure that their preparation programs undertake a comprehensive redesign effort. The purpose of redesign is to prepare school principals to have a positive impact on school and classroom practices and, ultimately, on student achievement. States can begin the initiative in many ways. Some states may want to get the legislature to adopt a state goal for school leadership. The legislature can delegate to appropriate organizations or agencies the responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating an initiative that drives a full-scale redesign of all preparation programs.

The State Goal

States may want to adopt the SREB leadership goal, modify the goal to meet their specific needs or develop an entirely new goal. The goal should reflect ideal school leadership that results from a successful redesign initiative. The goal can help the state focus on all parts of the system and ensure that subsequent actions of state agencies, institutions or school districts are designed to prepare school leaders who can improve student achievement.

The state policy for implementing a program redesign initiative might authorize a three-year commission.

- The commission could formulate future policy recommendations, guide planning, coordinate agency efforts and provide oversight for the leadership redesign initiative.
- Commission members, selected through the leadership of the governor and influential legislators, could include representatives from each key state education agency, the business community, large and small school districts, the legislature, universities and state associations of school administrators.
- The commission would conduct hearings, collect information and formulate a plan during the first year. It would support the appropriate agencies in implementing the plan in the second and third years.

The success of a leadership redesign initiative hinges on the quality of the plan and the depth of its implementation. The plan must provide for development and adoption of **essential building blocks**.

- **A set of standards** identifying the essential performances related to improving school and classroom practices and student achievement that principals are expected to demonstrate and use routinely in leading schools.
- **A set of conditions and criteria for redesign** that will drive positive changes in all state-approved educational leadership programs. (See Appendix B for SREB Conditions for Leadership Program Redesign.)
- **A research-based curriculum framework** that incorporates practices of effective principals and proven school improvement strategies and aligns with state standards. (See Appendix C for the SREB Research-based Curriculum Framework.)

- **A support system for universities and district partners** that 1) has strong support from high-level administrators in each institution; 2) orients university administrators and faculty, district superintendents and staff to the state's conditions of redesign and the research-based curriculum framework; 3) provides opportunities for design teams from across the state to discuss issues together, share new information and benchmark accomplishments; 4) establishes a timeline for key activities, products and outcomes; 5) provides on-site consultation and assistance from an outside entity; 6) provides additional resources of time, new faculty, funding, materials and access to outside expertise; 7) provides study teams — comprising faculty, school practitioners and state agency staff — to develop viable solutions to high-priority redesign issues; and 8) provides access to curriculum materials that reduce the burden of course redesign on faculty.

- **An external curriculum audit process** to determine whether program content, assignments, assessments and school-based experiences have changed to meet redesign conditions and the state curriculum framework. Because the extent of program redesign is dramatically more than what leadership programs have undergone in the past, states need to provide for an external program review that goes beyond the requirements of national accreditation. Although the accreditation process has value, it rarely sparks fundamental change that emphasizes instructional leadership. This kind of redesign calls for a specialized review. States will be wise to “inspect for what is expected.” Although university faculty and administrators may view an external audit as unnecessary, they are more apt to put serious effort into the redesign process if they are held to specific criteria, receive feedback on how they are doing and are expected to revise their plan according to feedback from the audit.

When the **essential building blocks** are developed and agreed upon, they should become a part of the state's process for approving principal preparation programs.

How are SREB states doing in redesigning school leader preparation?

All SREB states had made some progress by 2002 in adopting standards to upgrade leadership preparation programs. Seven SREB states made enough progress between 2002 and 2004 to move to the promising progress level. These states — Delaware, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia — implemented initiatives that should cause leadership preparation programs to focus on practices that make a difference in student achievement.

The nine states showing no movement from the *some progress* level reported no actions that would likely result in significant changes in leadership preparation programs.

All SREB states see a need to improve the quality of leadership preparation. This finding is based on the fact that all states adopted standards for leadership program redesign by 2002. However, more than half have not made this a priority. States working to redesign their leadership programs have found that it requires much more than adopting new standards. **States report that it takes resources, leadership, technical support and comprehensive program evaluation with consequences — the kind that can result in a program losing state approval to operate.** (See Table 3.)

Table 3

Progress in Redesigning School Leader Preparation

Indicator:		Alabama	Arkansas	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana	Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina	Oklahoma	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas	Virginia	West Virginia
Redesign leadership programs around school curriculum and instruction	2002	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	2004	○	○	⊕	○	○	⊕	○	⊕	○	○	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	○

○ No progress ⊕ Little progress ○ Some progress ⊕ Promising progress ● Substantial progress

Current Status of Leadership Program Redesign in the Universities

SREB staff interviewed educational leadership department heads from 22 universities about changes in their departments on four benchmarks of redesign. These four benchmarks are 1) extent to which courses incorporate new content, practical assignments and assessments, all focusing on the leader's role in school improvement; 2) emphasis on the principal's role in curriculum, instruction and student achievement; 3) the degree of joint effort between universities and local school districts in selecting and preparing school principals; and 4) the scope of restructuring to include a series of well-planned in-school experiences that provide future principals with opportunities to observe, participate in and lead school improvement.

The interviews revealed that about a third of the university programs had made promising progress on each of the four benchmarks of redesign. The following conditions were cited as reasons for making progress:

- having someone in the department to lead change;
- being a member of a redesign network;
- receiving encouragement and support from university administrators;
- hiring new faculty with school-based or research-based expertise in curriculum, instruction and school improvement;
- involving school district personnel with specialized skills and knowledge for redesign; and
- restructuring the system to recognize and reward faculty for their work.

The lack of progress was blamed most often on:

- lack of institutional will to redesign leadership programs, generally because these programs are not a university priority or because the university complacently depends on national accreditation as a marker of effectiveness;
- lack of adequate resources, such as enough faculty and expertise to undertake the redesign work, support for professional development and released time for aspiring principals to attend class, do in-depth assignments and projects in schools and serve internships in diverse settings;
- ability to get almost all graduates licensed by the state using the existing program; and
- lack of strong direction and urgency for change from the state.

How are SREB states doing in providing practice-based preparation?

Only two SREB states — Louisiana and Virginia — provided experiences in leading school improvement as a part of leadership training and made changes substantial enough to improve their 2002 ratings. Most SREB states made no changes to

raise their 2002 rating of *some progress* to a higher level in 2004. This lack of progress indicates that even though states have developed standards and regulations to incorporate school-based experiences into leadership preparation programs, they have not begun statewide implementation.

One state — Louisiana — achieved the rating of *promising progress*, while two states — Arkansas and Texas — had made *substantial progress*. Twelve states — Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky,

Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia — reached the level of *some progress*. One state — Florida — remained at the *no progress* level in 2004. (See Table 4.)

Table 4

Progress in Providing School-based Preparation

Indicator:		Alabama	Arkansas	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana	Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina	Oklahoma	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas	Virginia	West Virginia
Incorporate school-based experiences in leading school improvement into preparation programs	2002	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
	2004	○	●	○	○	○	⊕	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○

○ No progress ⊕ Little progress ○ Some progress ⊕ Promising progress ● Substantial progress

Current Status of School-based Training Experiences for Aspiring Principals

An SREB survey in 2003 revealed that school-based experiences for aspiring principals were inadequate. Most in-school experiences allowed aspiring principals to observe or participate rather than lead a school improvement effort. In many programs, the structure of the internship was ill-defined. On-site supervision was minimal. The program lacked written instructions to tell participants why they were being asked to engage in certain activities and a systematic process for evaluating whether participants were acquiring essential leadership competencies.

Some Promising Practices

A few states made progress in redesigning leadership preparation programs around curriculum and instruction and connecting university studies with school-based learning.

- Two states — Delaware and Louisiana — used an outside agency to assist with redesign and to begin statewide implementation.
- Virginia is developing a curriculum design that will be aligned to state administrator performance standards and evaluation criteria. The state is reviewing procedures for program approval to incorporate uniform standards for assessing program effectiveness. Proposed state regulations will call for preparation programs to require a structured in-school internship with specified learning experiences. The school district and the university will jointly supervise the internships.
- Louisiana's guidelines for redesigning programs are based substantially on SREB's research-based curriculum framework and conditions for redesign. Louisiana is requiring all preparation programs to submit redesign plans for each university program. National consultants and a state panel will review the plans to ensure that they meet the guidelines. Each redesign plan must identify performance activities that candidates will complete in school-based settings. These activities will begin early and continue for the duration of the program, will be planned and implemented in collaboration with school districts, will be supervised by trained mentors and will provide evidence of candidates' good performance. Louisiana is supporting the redesign work by providing training on leadership curriculum materials for teams of faculty and district partners from all institutions in the University of Louisiana System.

Are states developing licensure systems ensuring that only individuals with the knowledge and skills required to improve school and classroom practices are eligible to serve as principals?

Districts and schools need to have confidence in their state licensure systems to ensure that only individuals with the knowledge and skills to improve school and classroom practices are issued licenses to practice as school principals. Current state licensure systems rely on completion of state-approved programs as the indicator that graduates are qualified to practice. However, state-approved, accredited preparation programs can produce many graduates who do not

intend to be principals and are not prepared to perform successfully. Preparation programs are not required to develop valid ways to measure their participants' performance on essential competencies for improving schools prior to graduation. This means that when an approved preparation program indicates that an individual has met licensure requirements, it does so without reliable evidence of the candidate's ability to perform important functions of the job.

Even the best preparation programs cannot supply all of the knowledge, skills and experiences needed by aspiring principals. University programs — offering limited in-school experiences — cannot provide a valid measure of someone’s ability to lead school improvement. Inevitably, the first years on the job will require these individuals to navigate the steep learning curve that comes with being a new leader.

The serious faults in traditional licensing systems would be diminished if the systems provided a structured transition from preparation and initial licensure to professional licensure and involved the school district in the process. This pathway would include on-the-job internships during which the principals would be expected to demonstrate their competency and undergo evaluation.

State Actions That Allow Only Individuals with the Knowledge and Skills to Improve School and Classroom Practices to Become Licensed as Principals

States can develop a two-step system that bases professional licensure on performance that results in higher student achievement. In such a system, an **initial license** would be awarded after successful completion of a preparation program. Aspiring principals would complete coursework, participate in extensive in-school experiences and pass a state-adopted examination to assess mastery of the state’s leadership standards. The in-school experiences would include opportunities to observe, participate in and lead improvement efforts focused on school, curriculum and instructional practices. The initial license would qualify individuals to work as principals, assistant principals or lead teachers.

The **professional license** would be awarded after a principal performed effectively on the job, as evidenced by positive changes in school and classroom practices and student achievement.

States can require individuals holding an initial license and serving in a leadership position to qualify for the professional license within a specified time by demonstrating that they have made a positive impact on schools and students. This approach would require states to create a process for awarding the professional license. Candidates would have to present evidence that they had improved school and classroom practices and student achievement. A panel of trained evaluators would assess the evidence and make a recommendation before the state would grant the professional license.

Shifting the system of professional licensure from one that depends on completing a graduate program and passing a state examination to one that depends on demonstrating competencies and presenting evidence of performance will require additional resources, at least during the developmental stage.

States can craft an **alternative pathway to initial licensure** by tapping the pool of teachers and others with master’s degrees who have records of proven performance and have demonstrated the ability to lead their peers in accomplishing goals. A well-designed alternative pathway to initial licensure would carefully recruit and screen promising candidates. It would provide beginning principals or assistant principals with support, such as mentoring and professional development. And it would require principals holding an initial license to demonstrate the ability to improve schools and student achievement prior to receiving a professional license. Alternative pathways to initial licensure would allow accomplished leaders to bypass portions of traditional preparation programs and to prove themselves on the job.

How are the SREB states doing in developing new licensure systems?

Twelve SREB states made progress between 2002 and 2004 in moving to a performance-based professional licensure system. More states showed progress on this indicator than on any other leadership indicator tracked by SREB. Although no state has fully implemented a performance-based licensure system that requires evidence of improved school and classroom practices, eight states have adopted two-step systems — Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Tennessee and West Virginia. Two states — Alabama and Virginia — have pending proposals or policy recommendations for a two-step system.

States with single-step systems continue to require specified types of professional development in renewing the initial license, and several states require new leaders to complete an induction program during the first years of practice. The two-step systems adopted by eight SREB states require principals to meet one or more requirements to move from an initial to a professional or advanced license.

The requirements are:

- participation in an induction program or internship with a variety of specified components;
- demonstration of key competencies;
- assessment of specific performances;
- satisfactory annual performance evaluations;
- demonstration of mastery of the state's leadership curriculum on a specified examination;
- completion of advanced coursework;
- completion of professional development that focuses on principals' needs, school improvement or understanding state standards; and
- recommendations of a district school superintendent and a university administrator.

To reach the *substantial progress* level on performance-based professional licensure, states must adopt new policies and make new investments. Linking the professional license to demonstrated leadership performance requires states to develop new systems. (See Table 5.)

Table 5

Progress in Professional Licensure Based on Performance

Indicator:		Alabama	Arkansas	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana	Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina	Oklahoma	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas	Virginia	West Virginia
Base professional licensure on improved school and classroom practices	2002	○	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●
	2004	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	●	⊕	○	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	○	●

○ No progress ⊕ Little progress ● Some progress ⊕ Promising progress ● Substantial progress

How are SREB states doing in creating alternative pathways to initial licensure?

Four states — Delaware, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Virginia — made enough progress on **alternative pathways to initial licensure** between 2002 and 2004 to move to a higher level of progress. Twelve states showed no progress on this indicator of improved school leadership.

In 2004, four states remained at the *no progress* level — Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. One state — Virginia — was at the *little progress* level. Nine states were rated at the *some progress* level — Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Texas and West Virginia. Two states — Louisiana and Oklahoma — were rated at the *promising progress* level. No state had reached the *substantial progress* level.

Eight SREB states have adopted policies or provisions for alternative pathways to initial licensure for principals, but none of these states requires candidates to provide a record of proven performance to qualify for a license. Eight states still have no provisions for alternative pathways to the initial license — Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia.

Florida potentially has the most lenient provisions for alternative pathways to initial licensure. It gives local school boards the authority to set alternative qualifications for aspiring principals. (See Table 6.)

Table 6

Progress in Creating Alternative Pathways to Initial Licensure for Principals

Indicator:		Alabama	Arkansas	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana	Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina	Oklahoma	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas	Virginia	West Virginia
Create alternative pathways to initial licensure for principals	2002	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	●
	2004	●	●	●	●	○	⊕	●	●	○	⊕	○	○	●	○	⊕	●

○ No progress ⊕ Little progress ● Some progress ⊕ Promising progress ● Substantial progress

Some Promising Practices

While no state has made substantial progress in basing professional licensure on improved school and classroom practices, several states have taken steps in the right direction.

- Delaware has adopted a two-step system that requires a principal holding a three-year initial license to complete an induction program. The program requires performance assessments and annual performance evaluations to show that on-the-job performance meets state-adopted leadership standards and state requirements for progress in raising student achievement.
- Tennessee has established the Administrator Evaluation/Performance Contract Task Force to study transition from an initial license to a professional license. The task force is considering how to link performance evaluations, student achievement and licensure.

While no state has an alternative licensure system that fully meets this indicator, several states have promising practices.

- Louisiana's **alternative pathway to initial licensure** allows individuals who have earned a master's degree and hold or are eligible for a teaching certificate to receive the Level I license after completing a program that includes a review of the candidate's competencies.
- Oklahoma's new **alternative pathway** provides initial licensure to a candidate who holds a master's degree in a field other than educational leadership. The candidate must demonstrate understanding of school administration and associated competencies gained through work experience, an approved program or relevant state-approved workshops and seminars.

Are states creating leadership academies with a mission to improve low-performing schools?

While seeking ways to develop school and district leaders who will focus on school improvement and student achievement, SREB states also struggle to find leaders for low-performing schools. Most states have a growing number of low-performing schools as a result of state school accountability systems or the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Moreover, states have had varying degrees of success in intervening to rescue these schools. Sending "turn around" specialists into low-performing schools may work in the short term, but providing a long-term strategy is what these schools need. The plan must include local leadership capable of sustaining and continuing the improvement.

States have made some efforts to address the need for strong leaders in low-performing schools, but the institutes and academies that they have created have suffered from a litany of problems, such as:

- focusing on individuals who volunteer to participate rather than targeting leaders of struggling and low-performing schools needing the most help;
- training only principals in leading school improvement rather than preparing district and school leadership teams composed of the principal, lead teachers, aspiring principals and district staff members who support the school's improvement efforts;

- providing a “one-shot” training agenda rather than a training design with a comprehensive curriculum and guidelines for applying new knowledge and skills to address real school needs; and
- changing parts of the educational system rather than providing training and assistance to help low-performing districts change the whole system and create working conditions that support principals in making continuous school improvement.

State Actions That Can Create Leadership Academies with a Mission to Improve Low-performing Schools

States can establish state, regional or local academies to develop the capacity of low-performing districts as well as school-site **leadership teams** to lead and support continuous school improvement. In designing state-sponsored academies, the state should pay particular attention to several guiding principles.

- Give first priority to serving low-performing districts and schools.
- Work with **school teams** composed of the principal, teacher leaders, aspiring principals and a district office representative.
- Provide a coherent curriculum to help school and district teams acquire research-based knowledge and skills, such as assessing needs, planning and using new strategies, and monitoring and evaluating results.
- Implement an approach to training that requires school and district teams to use new knowledge to solve problems at their schools and to document the results.
- Train state and district school improvement “coaches” to work with school teams to solve challenging instructional problems in their schools.
- Focus on building capacity to change district systems in ways that will improve working conditions and support continuous school improvement.

(See Appendix D for SREB Conditions for Leadership Academy Redesign.)

How are SREB states doing in establishing leadership academies that serve low-performing schools?

All SREB states in 2002 had made progress in using leadership academies to support low-performing districts and schools. Nine states — Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas and West Virginia — had advanced sufficiently between 2002 and 2004 to move to a higher level of progress. In 2004, no state remained at the **no progress** level;

three states were at the **little progress** level — Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas. Eight states reached the level of **some progress** — Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. Five states attained the **promising progress** level — Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Maryland and West Virginia. (See Table 7.)

Table 7

Progress in Leadership Academies Serving Low-performing Schools

		Alabama	Arkansas	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Kentucky	Louisiana	Maryland	Mississippi	North Carolina	Oklahoma	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas	Virginia	West Virginia
Indicator: Provide academies to support school leadership teams in low-performing schools	2002	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	2004	⊕	○	⊕	⊕	○	○	○	⊕	○	⊕	○	○	⊕	○	○	⊕

○ No progress ⊕ Little progress ○ Some progress ⊕ Promising progress ● Substantial progress

Some Promising Practices

While no SREB state has developed a leadership academy that meets all of the recommended redesign conditions, some SREB states use leadership academies as a viable tool for improving schools.

- Georgia established the Office of School Improvement and created regional teams to train and support leaders of low-performing schools and districts. The state used four SREB Leadership Training Modules to prepare a statewide network of trainers that planned to begin intensive training of school teams in summer 2004. (The modules are Using Data to Lead Change; Prioritizing, Mapping and Monitoring the Curriculum; Leading Assessment and Instruction; and Meeting the Standards by Looking at Teacher Assignments and Student Work. See Appendix E for a description of SREB’s 14 Leadership Training Modules.)
- Maryland expanded its Principal’s Academy to include principals from low-performing schools and began using SREB Leadership Training

Modules to prepare department of education staff and technical assistance specialists as trainers for teams from low-performing schools.

- In Texas, the Region XIII Education Service Center created a regional leadership academy based on SREB’s Research-based Curriculum Framework, Conditions for Leadership Academy Redesign and Leadership Training Modules. Texas planned to begin working with teams from low-performing schools in summer 2004.
- West Virginia’s Center for Professional Development has joined with the state department of education and regional educational service agencies to use the SREB Leadership Training Modules in working with leaders from low-performing high schools over a three-year period. The West Virginia Department of Education provides trained “coaches” to support participating schools as they use new knowledge, skills and strategies.

Challenges to Making Progress in Getting a Quality Leader in Every School

States, universities and districts will face major challenges as they take the actions necessary to put good leaders in every school. There are four main challenges.

1. Getting more well-qualified future school leaders who are committed to being principals who improve student achievement:

- Making local school districts proactive in identifying and preparing future school principals — especially ones willing to fill vacancies in struggling and low-performing schools — who can work with teachers to change school and classroom practices and raise student achievement.
- Making the local school district a full partner with the university in the selection, support and preparation of future school leaders.
- Shifting the purpose of the university leadership program from preparing large numbers of master's degree holders to selecting and preparing the most promising candidates.

2. Implementing leadership programs to prepare school principals to lead curriculum and instruction and to increase student achievement:

- Developing a state policy that delineates the conditions, criteria and curriculum framework for the program.
- Providing resources to create high-quality, practice-based leadership preparation programs. Money will be needed to fund an increased faculty work load; to support travel; to compensate mentor principals and “coaches”; and to provide financial assistance and release from classroom duties for selected participants.
- Making leadership preparation redesign a priority among state educational leaders, university presidents and deans.
- Finding ways to support university faculty in redesigning programs and developing new

courses in collaboration with progressive local school leaders and taking steps to accelerate the university internal approval process.

3. Licensing principals based on their performance:

- Moving to and improving upon two-step licensure systems. The **initial** license is based on specific knowledge and skills and certain types of school-based experiences. The **professional** license requires evidence of improved school and classroom practices and positive impact on student achievement.
- Opening up **alternative pathways to the initial license** to promising candidates who have gained leadership competencies through training and work experience rather than a university leadership preparation program.
- Preparing panels of trained evaluators to review the evidence and to make recommendations about granting professional licenses.

4. Creating leadership academies for improving low-performing schools:

- Transforming leadership academies from general training programs for administrators to focused efforts to build the capacity of district and school leaders to support continuous school improvement, especially in low-performing and struggling schools.
- Replacing the single-focus workshop with a coherent leadership curriculum and a training design that includes applying new knowledge and skills.
- Providing adequate staffing and resources for expert coaching, technical assistance and follow-up support for continuous school improvement.
- Providing training and assistance to help districts create working conditions conducive to principals providing leadership for continuous school improvement.

Appendix A

SREB Scoring Guide for Measuring State Progress and SREB Rating Process

Indicators	○ Little or no progress	○ Some progress	● Substantial progress
Identify future school leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No state action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legislation or policy has been passed. ■ Protocols and guidelines are developed. ■ Implementation and monitoring procedures may be stated in rules but are not operational. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well-established tapping and screening processes provide diverse pools of well-qualified leaders in adequate numbers to fill vacancies.
Redesign leadership programs around school curriculum and instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No state action; higher education makes decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State standards emphasizing curriculum, instruction and student achievement are adopted, but most programs have no performance measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All programs have redesigned courses and assignments and performance measures to meet standards. External validation is required.
Incorporate school-based experiences in leading school improvement into preparation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No state action; completing university coursework is the basic requirement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State-approved program standards require some type of school-based internship, usually unstructured and at the end of coursework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All programs have a well-planned, integrated and sequential series of clinical experiences in schools.
Base professional licensure on improved school and classroom practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No state action; licensure based on leadership degree and/or passing score on adopted examination; renewal based on prescribed hours of professional development; emergency certification by district request and prescribed hours of coursework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Policies passed for two-tier licensure system; initial license based on leadership degree and/or passing score on examination; professional license based on satisfactory district evaluation and prescribed professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two-tier licensure system provides for initial license based upon demonstration of specified competencies and professional license based on evidence of improved school and classroom practices.
Create alternative pathways to initial licensure for principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No state action; graduate degree through a university required; university is only gate keeper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legislation or policy provides for entry through examination or competency documentation for licensure but also requires candidates to work toward a degree in leadership or complete a specified set of certification courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initial licensure is open to candidates with a master's degree, demonstrated leadership skills in school or community, and a proven record of performance. Candidates may choose academy, university or state-approved training that is customized to their needs.
Provide academies to support school leadership teams in low-performing schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No state action establishing academies to serve low-performing schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Policies establish academies and other initiatives with a mission to serve low-performing schools, but current programs lack structure, continue to focus on individual principals rather than school teams, and provide little follow-through to support long-term comprehensive school improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Academies are structured to carry out the mission of serving low-performing schools, focus training on school leadership teams and provide long-term follow-through that supports comprehensive school improvement.

SREB Rating Process

States were first rated in 2002. When they were re-evaluated in 2004, no state had “moved backward” in ratings. Many states, however, that had taken initial steps by 2002 had made no further progress in 2004. Their 2002 and 2004 ratings are the same. The rating system is explained below.

No progress — States received a rating of no progress in 2004 if they reported that there was no state action that moved the state toward achieving the indicator.

Little progress — States received a rating of little progress if they reported actions that moved the state toward achieving the indicator in one or more of the following ways:

- committees or task forces have been formed and are studying issues, convening focus groups or developing recommendations;
- policies or guidelines that satisfy the conditions specified in the scoring guide are under development or pending adoption/approval;
- pilots of initiatives that will potentially move the state toward achieving the indicator are being planned to inform state policy; or
- proposals for funding an initiative incorporate key components related to the indicator.

Some Progress — States received a rating of some progress if they reported actions that fully meet the conditions described in the scoring guide for this level.

Promising Progress — States received a rating of promising progress if they reported that policies, programs or initiatives that meet the conditions described in the scoring guide are in the initial stages of implementation.

Substantial Progress — States received a rating of substantial progress if they reported that policies, programs or initiatives that fully meet the conditions described in the scoring guide are implemented statewide.

Appendix B

SREB Conditions for Leadership Program Redesign

- Create an advisory board composed of faculty, business leaders, exemplary principals, state education department representatives and other school leaders with diverse backgrounds representing a wide range of schools and school systems who meet regularly to assist in designing the program.
- Plan learning experiences in which leadership candidates apply research-based knowledge to:
 - solve field-based problems;
 - concentrate on learning about core functions of the school, including instruction and student learning; and
 - engage in internship experiences that are well planned, integrated throughout the preparation program, and allow aspiring leaders to receive mentoring from and practice skills with master leaders.
- Create a preparation program that can be customized for individuals on the basis of their experience in providing leadership while serving in other positions.
- Provide faculty, practicing educators and others with broad, research-based knowledge, and redesign university leadership preparation to provide emphasis on school-based learning.
- Contribute staff time and expertise to design, develop and field test leadership training modules that address problems leaders must solve in schools, and develop a team structure among leadership faculty to facilitate their working together to teach modules that are at least partly school based.
- Support faculty with time to conduct school-based research and to participate in an ongoing evaluation process to determine if program adjustments are preparing leaders who demonstrate the ability to increase student learning and produce high-achieving schools.
- Realign the faculty advancement and reward system to include acceptance of school-based work as part of tenure and promotion requirements.
- Support school districts in identifying potential leaders with demonstrated leadership ability, knowledge of curriculum and instruction and a proven record of high performance.
- Adjust budgets to allocate additional time, resources and staffing to coordinate, develop and implement a new curriculum for school leader preparation.
- Solicit waivers from state agencies as needed to address certification issues.

Appendix C

The SREB Research-based Curriculum Framework

SREB has defined 13 critical success factors that were identified through research on the practices of exemplary principals whose leadership has had a positive impact on student achievement in their schools. The critical success factors and the process for their identification are reported in the 2001 SREB publication *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action*. The critical success factors form the base for a curriculum framework that academies, districts and universities can use to develop their leadership training around curriculum, instruction and student achievement.

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

Appendix D

SREB Conditions for Leadership Academy Redesign

- Enroll teams from school sites identified as low-performing. Teams should be composed of current school leaders, future leaders, teacher leaders and at least one district office representative.
- Work with SREB to design and develop curriculum modules that engage and prepare current and emerging leadership teams in applying research-based knowledge and processes to real problems that are creating barriers to comprehensive school improvement in their schools.
- Support school districts in identifying potential leaders with demonstrated leadership ability, knowledge of curriculum and instruction and a proven record of high performance.
- Recruit instructors to serve as teachers and coaches who have knowledge about what it takes to transform low-performing schools and who can help schools apply research-based knowledge to improve school and classroom practices.
- Work with universities or state agencies to offer academy-based leadership programs that count toward professional leadership certification and/or renewal.
- Conduct school-based research to determine if the academy program is producing leaders who are improving student achievement.
- Work with networks of school-site leadership development teams in ways that allow them to learn from one another.
- Create an advisory board that meets frequently and includes state educational leaders involved in comprehensive school improvement, business leaders, and successful school and system leaders who have made significant gains in student achievement.

SREB Leadership Training Modules

Using Data to Lead Change. (Four days: 3+1)
The bottom line: schools that successfully improve student achievement do so by regularly using data to guide decisions about instruction, student support and professional development.

Prioritizing, Mapping and Monitoring the Curriculum. (Four days: 2+1+1) What do we want students to learn? Which learning is most important? How do we know if the curriculum is being taught? In a high stakes world, this module helps schools keep the curriculum on target.

Leading Assessment and Instruction. (Five days: 2+1+2) Participants learn to link curriculum, assessment, and instruction; effectively use assessment for learning strategies to improve learning; to recognize good instruction; and to use effective research-based instructional strategies, tools and processes to observe/study assessment and instruction.

Meeting the Standards: Looking at Teacher Assignments and Student Work. (Three days)
Schools may adopt standards that ask students to learn at high levels, but do classroom assignments match the standards? Participants learn how to analyze student work in a rigorous way.

Creating a High Performance Learning Culture. (Four days: 3+1) Schools can't improve when the culture doesn't support this effort. Why does culture matter? What roles do leaders play in creating a culture of high expectations? What tools and strategies are available to help leaders foster a culture that supports student achievement?

Providing Focused and Sustained Professional Development. (Four days: 2+2) Examine the characteristics of professional development in high and low-performing schools and learn how to structure successful learning for the staff. How can schools create a professional learning community?

Creating a Personalized Learning Environment. (Three days: 2+1) When standards are raised, students need "safety nets." Learn how to effectively combine extra help programs, transition strategies, advisement, and parent involvement to make schools "customer friendly" for learners.

Organizing the Learning Environment. (Three days: 2+1) How can schools more effectively use time and resources for teaching, planning and professional learning? This module adds lots of practical tools and processes for creating a learning community.

Building and Leading Effective Teams. (Three days: 2+1) Schools that improve quickly and are able to sustain improvement use teams to lead improvement efforts. Learn how to foster true collaboration and maximize team effectiveness.

Communicating Effectively in a High-performing School. (Three days: 2+1) Often the best intentions are sidetracked by poor communication. Learn how to communicate effectively, decide who needs to know and why, and involve people at the right times. See the impact communication has on schools and quality instruction.

Understanding Self and Others — Individual and Organizational Value Systems. (Three days: 2+1) One aspect of maintaining a healthy school culture is understanding value systems. Who are we and who are the people we partner with in creating a school organization supporting high achievement for all students?

Advanced Data, Systems Thinking and Problem Solving in Schools. (Three days: 2+1) Builds on the first data module and takes participants further in understanding schools as systems whose parts are interrelated and deeply affect one another. Participants learn how to use a problem-solving process to tackle tough issues in schools.

Literacy Leadership. (Three days: 2+1) Does everyone in your school community appreciate the value of literacy? Does the entire faculty work together to improve reading, writing, listening, speaking, and observing skills so all children can become independent learners? How can you get the school moving in the right direction? Learn to be a literacy leader.

Numeracy Leadership. (Three days: 2+1) Mathematics textbooks keep getting thicker, but are students learning more? A strong numeracy program means the curriculum is well-articulated from K-12, students gain deep knowledge of important skills, teachers use effective instructional techniques, and mathematics are valued. Learn to be a numeracy leader.

Challenge to Lead Goals for Education

1. All children are ready for the first grade.
2. Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
3. Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
4. All young adults have a high school diploma — or, if not, pass the GED tests.
5. All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for post-secondary education and a career.
6. Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
7. The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.
8. Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
9. *Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal.*
 - *All principals have the knowledge and skills to improve curriculum, instruction and student achievement. People are identified early for the “pipeline” into school leadership positions and are provided support.*
 - *All college, university and alternative programs prepare principals who have the knowledge and skills to improve curriculum, instruction and student achievement. States periodically examine the performance measures and standards used to assess principals and programs.*
 - *Licensure practices increase the number of school leaders with the knowledge and skills to improve curriculum, instruction and student achievement. Continued licensure as a school principal is based on leading a school team in improving student achievement.*
 - *Professional-development programs increase the knowledge and skills of school leaders to improve curriculum, instruction and student achievement.*
 - *All schools are assigned quality principals, with attention first to low-performing schools.*
10. Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
11. The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
12. The state places a high priority on an education *system* of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.

The Southern Regional Education Board has established these Goals for Education. They are built on the groundbreaking education goals SREB adopted in 1988 and on a decade-long effort to promote actions and measure progress. The new goals raise further the sights of the 16 SREB states and challenge them to lead the nation.

