UNIVERSITIES IN THE LEAD

Redesigning Leadership Preparation for Student Achievement

SREB

CONFERENCE REPORT

Preparing School Leaders: It's Time to Face the Facts

by John Norton

It's July in Louisville, and it's mighty hot outside the Kentucky International Convention Center, where educators who specialize in school leadership development are gathered for a meeting of the SREB Leadership Redesign Networks.

CORE MESSAGE

Schools must have principals who can begin raising student achievement their first day on the job. The SREB Leadership Initiative supports a network of universities as they redesign leadership programs to emphasize problem-based learning and field experiences.

Although it's cooler in the convention center's session rooms, you feel a different kind of heat as you listen to the urgent voices of presenters and participants. The words of every speaker make clear the pressing need to recreate university leadership programs with a single, laser-sharp focus: *Breed principals who know how to lead schools to the highest levels of student achievement.*

Michelle Young, executive director of the University Council on Education Administration, frames the issue in no-nonsense language. It's time to face the fact, she says, that "there are children being failed by our schools in part because of the poor preparation of school leaders."

The consequences of this failure are stark, says SREB Senior Vice President Gene Bottoms — even in schools that have shown improvement. "An improved middle school or high school is one poor principal away from being a low-performing school again," he cautions the audience of university and state leadership academy educators.

"Right now, we have a hit-or-miss system of leader selection and preparation. You may be lucky enough to get a good one, but where will your next one come from?"

The job of today's principal leader is simple to describe, Christopher Mazzeo tells the gathered leaders. "It's to drive the instructional improvement agenda within a school." The problem, says the senior education policy analyst for the National Governors Association, "is that many educational leadership programs around the country don't prepare school leaders for this very specific task — and don't know how to prepare them."

Mazzeo, who helped build a cutting-edge leadership program at New York City's Baruch College before joining NGA, poses this provocative question: *What are governors and other policymakers going to do when leadership programs fail to meet this preparation goal?*

CONTENTS

Betty Fry, who leads the university-redesign arm of SREB's multi-year leadership reform effort, reports to the group that "We don't see a lot of change yet in how universities are working with school districts and schools to help them improve the achievement of students through leadership.

"We know that if we can have a dramatic impact on raising the quality of school leadership, we will see a dramatic improvement in student achievement across the board."

"We don't see a lot of change in what the leaders are able to do who are going out and taking positions in schools, even though they are going into schools where accountability has changed almost everything," says Fry,

"The other shoe has dropped in the high-stakes game," warns Mike Hickey, director of the Center for Leadership in Education at Towson University. "It's not just high stakes for students anymore. High stakes now means high stakes for education leadership professionals."

"There's a change in the wind," agrees Kathy O'Neill, director of the SREB Leadership Initiative. "Legislators, policymakers and governors are demanding it. Those of you who don't really think you're up to the challenge are probably going to have great difficulty over the next few years. The developments that are taking place now are going to cause all of us to rethink how we do the things we're doing."

Gayle Ecton of Western Kentucky Unversity prompts many nods of agreement when he says during a brain-storming session: "So many of us here have part of the solution, bits and pieces here and there. The challenge is getting all of the pieces together at every institution."

SREB's David Hill is a bit more direct. "We all agree we've got to improve our leadership programs, but we've got to get beyond talking about it and actually make something happen."

MAKING SOMETHING HAPPEN

The 11 universities and six state academies in the SREB Leadership Networks were gathered in Louisville for a Year One review (a "gut check," said one plain-spoken professor) of their progress in meeting a set of conditions that SREB believes are essential in the reform and redesign of leadership programs. (See page 25)

"One way that educational leadership programs are going to change the negative impression about the quality of their work is by doing the work better," NGA's Chris Mazzeo told the group during his presentation.

is built upon objectives described by the national LEADERS Count initiative, supported by Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds.

The SREB strategy requires strong collaboration with local school districts and expert practitioners, says Betty Fry. The goal "is to prepare school leaders who understand school and classroom practices that raise student achievement and who know how to work with faculty to implement continuous school improvement."

The 11 institutions in the University Leadership Development Network, which Fry leads, are undertaking comprehensive redesign of courses, delivery strategies and assessments in their programs for preparing aspiring leaders.

The new programs designed by University Network members "will reflect a significant departure from the traditional academic or classroom-based model," she explains. "Through their redesign, the universities will create a clinical model that includes challenging

"There are children being failed by our schools in part because of the poor preparation of school leaders."

By joining the SREB Networks, each university and state academy program has accepted this challenge "to do the work better" and to set the pace for reform in other leadership programs across the region and nation.

The network's redesign process follows an SREB framework, which itself

problem-solving assignments related to student achievement, extensive field experiences integrated throughout the program and mentored by expert school leaders, and performance assessments requiring demonstration in authentic contexts."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This newsletter was developed by freelance education writer John Norton, in collaboration with the SREB leadership team, based on his coverage of a July meeting of the SREB Leadership Redesign Networks held in Louisville, Kentucky, and on follow-up interviews.

University Redesign of Educational Leadership Programs
First-Year Progress (July 2002)

Indicators	Level 1 Progress "Still in Drydock"	Level 2 Progress "Leaving the Harbor"	Level 3 Progress "Journey Underway"
Design team	Design team was formed, but primary responsibility for managing the redesign process is assigned to one faculty member; there is not a comprehensive written plan of work and there is no evidence that organizational structures necessary for redesign work and regular monitoring of progress are established and functioning.	Design team is organized and has given some thought to how to use the SREB conditions as a guide to redesign, but progress is not closely monitored. A plan of work has been drafted, but it lacks specificity and there is no evidence that it is being followed, though some work groups are established and functioning at assigned tasks.	Design team, department head and dean of education exhibit firm understanding of SREB conditions and use them as a guide to monitor progress. A well-developed plan of work is being followed, all team members are engaged in its execution, and other necessary organizational structures are established.
Status	5 institutions	4 institutions	2 institutions
Administrative support	University administrators have some awareness of the redesign initiative, but the education dean and leadership department chair are not actively engaged, additional resources are not allocated, and faculty have not been given release time for this work.	University administrators are aware of the redesign initiative and the education dean and department chair have some direct engagement in the work. Some additional resources are pledged, release time is planned to begin at a designated date, and new staff positions are approved. Resources from district partners are not yet committed.	University and partner district administrators are directly engaged in redesign work on a regular basis and have made additional resources available to hire new staff, provide release time for faculty and participants, pay tuition, provide remuneration for expert mentors and fund other support needed for effective delivery.
Status	3 institutions	6 institutions	2 institutions
Advisory council	An advisory council is formed but met for the first time only recently and has not yet provided substantive input on redesign. Membership is not broadly representative of cross-university units, business and community leaders, practitioners, and others.	A broadly representative advisory council is formed and there is evidence of some involvement in redesign decisions, but meetings are not regular.	A broadly representative advisory council meets regularly and there is evidence of its involvement in redesign decisions about program structure, curriculum and delivery.
Status	1 institution	2 institutions	8 institutions
Collaboration with school districts	Overtures to potential district partners have not been made or have been via informal conversations; meetings are not scheduled yet, and no agreements are in place.	Overtures to potential district partners for program development, delivery and evaluation have been made and several meetings have occurred, but agreements are not finalized.	Agreements with one or more districts for collaborative program development, delivery and evaluation have been finalized through a series of meetings and are in writing.
Status	3 institutions	5 institutions	3 institutions
Tapping future leaders	The design team has not addressed tapping.	A tapping process has been discussed with the partner district(s), but criteria and procedures are not in place and university admission criteria have not changed.	A tapping process is being developed collaboratively by the university and partner district(s), including criteria for selecting teachers with a content master's degree, a passion for student achievement, and demonstrated leadership; consistent procedures and tools for screening and selection are being developed or selected.
Status	7 institutions	2 institutions	2 institutions
Problem-based learning and integrated field experiences	Features of a new program design have not been clearly identified and agreed upon by a critical mass of leadership faculty and there is no evidence of solid plans for problem-based learning and integrated field experiences that emphasize curriculum, instruction and student achievement. Criteria for selecting expert mentors and school sites for providing a sequential set of field experiences have not been identified.	A proposed new program structure that incorporates problem-based learning and integrated field experiences focused on curriculum, instruction and student achievement has been discussed, but a written draft has not been prepared and shared with the advisory committee, the leadership faculty, other internal program review committees, and the partner district(s). Expert mentors and school sites for field experiences are tentatively identified, but selection criteria are not in writing and meetings with constituents have not been conducted.	A new program structure that incorporates problem-based learning and integrated field experiences focused on curriculum, instruction and student achievement has been drafted and shared with the advisory committee, the leadership faculty, university review committees and district partners. Expert mentors and school sites have been selected according to collaboratively developed criteria, and initial meetings have been held to solicit input from these constituents on a meaningful, sequential set of practical experiences related to the standards.
Status	5 institutions	4 institutions	2 institutions
Curriculum mapping process	Curriculum development has entailed only a review of existing program documents or creation of a matrix displaying alignment with adopted standards.	Use of a well-structured curriculum mapping process is not evident, but the team has identified gaps or weaknesses in how adopted standards are currently addressed and assigned task force(s) to revise syllabi to increase coverage in these areas.	A curriculum mapping process that starts with standards and includes rubrics for assessing the breadth and depth of treatment given various topics is being used to develop a cohesive program of study that emphasizes the principal's role and practices as instructional leader.
Status	4 institutions	6 institutions	1 institution
Assignments and assessments aligned with standards	No groups are organized to work on new teaching strategies and materials, student assignments, or performance assessments to support a new program design.	Faculty groups are assigned responsibility for revising course syllabi to fit the new design, but there is no evidence of plans for collaborative work on new teaching strategies and materials, student assignments, or performance assessments.	Faculty groups including practitioners are working on new teaching strategies and materials, student assignments, and performance assessments. Faculty have been reassigned to assure expert coverage of all topics.
Status	5 institutions	4 institutions	2 institutions

Senior Vice President Gene Bottoms, who directs SREB's high school and middle grades reform initiatives as well as its leadership agenda, says individuals who participate in network programs "will be persons who have been 'tapped' as future leaders by their districts."

"These will be educators who have demonstrated deep knowledge of curriculum and instruction and have a track record of improving student achievement," Bottoms says. "They will have proven their capacity for leadership by their performance in other positions. These model programs will not waste time and resources on individuals who 'self-select' for administrative training, even though they have little potential to be successful school leaders."

Last June, Southern Regional Education Board members adopted *Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead,* a set of 12 goals to drive and lead educational changes in the region. Goal 9 reads: "Every school has leadership that

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results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal. *"*

"Setting regional goals and engaging with states in ways that promote the achievement of these goals has been an effective strategy for promoting educational progress in the South," Bottoms explains. "SREB has used the goals process since 1961 to challenge the region to set high expectations for itself, and that process has been a significant force in repositioning the South as a national leader in education improvement.

"The SREB Leadership Intitiative is our first major thrust toward accomplishing the new leadership goal," he says. "We know that if we can have a dramatic impact on raising the quality of school leadership, we will see a dramatic improvement in student achievement across the board."

SOME PROGRESS, BUT NOT ENOUGH

During the Louisville sessions, Betty Fry shared progress indicators with network university redesign teams. Fry presented the indicators as a "rubric" or assessment tool that teams could use to assess their own progress after eight months of network participation.

The rubric is based on SREB site visits and shows three levels of progress on eight critical indicators. The rubric's descriptions of various stages of progress are drawn from the actual experiences of network teams.

The indicators include: establishing the design team, garnering university administrative support, creating an advisory council, forming collaborative partnerships with school districts, developing new processes to tap candidates for leadership preparation, drafting a new program structure that emphasizes problem-based learning and field-based training, building a new standards-based curriculum that emphasizes instructional leadership, and reshaping university teaching around outcomes and performance assessments.

"We can't expect the world to turn over in a single year," Fry told the university participants. "It hasn't happened in other places, and it won't happen in our network either."

However, she said, the rubric should serve as "a tool for conversation" and a wake-up call for university teams who have not moved beyond the first two levels on the progress chart.

"Look at yourself against what others are doing," she urged. "It's a realistic rubric, based on a reasonable expectation of what might be accomplished during the first year of this work. Level 3 of the rubric indicates a real accomplishment by one or more sites. But even if you find that you've reached Level 3 on some of the indicators, that doesn't mean that you've arrived."

Based upon Fry's own calculations, very few network programs have attained "Level 3 Progress" during their first year.

Most programs have succeeded in forming and involving an advisory council in the redesign work, she says. But in most other critical areas, only two or three of the 11 network members have reached important first-year goals. (See the table on page 3 for a complete description of the rubric and progress ratings.)

Why are university redesign teams, for the most part, off to a slow start? The stories in this newsletter describe some of the barriers they face and also point to exemplars and other evidence that these barriers can — and must — be overcome.

One significant barrier to rapid reform, says Gene Bottoms, is the traditional culture of the university.

"The work of program redesign requires university faculty to learn new ways of interacting with each other, with other faculty within the education unit, with other campus units and with schools," he says.

'Uneasy Collaborators' Must Learn To Redesign Leadership Preparation Together

Universities and school districts are "uneasy collaborators," says Patrick Forsyth. They are institutions "that are quite different in how they operate and how they think." The history of school-university relationships is marked by fits and starts, failed initiatives, and the residue of distrust. As universities work to redesign their school leadership programs, they must also work to overcome this history and find common ground upon which to collaborate.

CORE MESSAGE

If university leadership programs expect to prosper in education's high-stakes environment, they have to convince skeptical school systems that they can produce graduates who can lead schools to greater levels of achievement. Oklahoma State is rebuilding lost trust through district partnerships that are redesigning principal preparation around problems of practice.

Forsyth, the Williams Professor of Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University, leads the university's program redesign team. The team, allied with a broadly based advisory council, has framed a new leadership program they believe will successfully integrate technical knowledge with practical knowledge and field-based learning. "We're now transforming that design into new curriculum," Forsyth told SREB Network members during a July workshop session in Louisville.

OSU joined the SREB Network, Forsyth said, "because it seemed that we could transform what we were doing into an SREB project, and our partici-pation in the initiative would provide a mechanism to keep us moving."

OSU was spurred into action several years ago when leaders in the Tulsa and Oklahoma City school systems decided to create their own leadership preparation programs. "Our school leaders were disillusioned by what the universities in the state were doing," Forsyth said. "They did not have the belief that when someone walked out of OSU and had a license from the state, they could come in and lead a school. In fact, they were convinced these factors provided no evidence these people could lead schools."

OSU's dean of education organized a statewide group made up of business, political and university members to examine Oklahoma's educational leadership crisis and the university's need to reform its own program. When Forsyth returned to OSU after leading a successful national effort to establish standards for school administrators, he joined in the soul-searching.

"We knew we had to produce the kind of person who districts would be confident could walk into the principal's office and do the job on the first day," Forsyth says. But, "as we examined our coursework, we found that we were really not organizing our curriculum around problems of practice.

"We knew we had to produce the kind of person who districts would be confident could walk into the principal's office and do the job on the first day."

"We realized that we would have to rewrite the curriculum. And we had to do it collaboratively with the districts, or we would not end up with what they wanted. We also had to convince school leaders this wasn't just a ploy to keep our graduate students."

REALIZATIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

As they explored the flaws in their program and in their relationships with school systems, Forsyth and his colleagues came to several other realizations. They needed to:

Change the delivery approach. "We could sit in Stillwater in the middle of nowhere and ask everybody to drive there, but the truth is this is not the way to do professional preparation and continuing professional development of education people these days. They work long, hard hours. We had to bring the program to them."

Integrate technical knowledge and field experience. "Much technical knowledge can be delivered and learned in classrooms and over the Web. But practice knowledge requires being at someone's elbow, watching someone practice who's been doing this a long time, learning how to critique what you see, talking with other people about it, and making comparisons and contrasts."

Become service-oriented. "Our university, like most, is a very bureaucratic institution. It makes graduate students stand in line in a bookstore. It makes them stand in line in the registrar's office. It just doesn't treat people like adults. This is not the way to run professional education in a university. It's not the way to create good relationships between people in professional studies and people who are working in the schools."

To form a successful partnership, Forsyth told his workshop audience, the university and the school districts need to:

Collaboratively implement a discriminating recruitment/selection system. "In the beginning, notions like collaborative recruitment and selection seem like problems. Universities aren't too keen on giving over the decision about who will be their students. But it has turned out not to be as difficult as we imagined. I think both the university and the district want people who are sharp, energetic and committed to children. They also want to give them skills that are relevant to the complex tasks of leading schools today, with a heavy emphasis on improving performance."

Facilitate a system of flexible work time for candidates and place value on mentoring and co-teaching by district

experts. "The kind of model we are developing requires a lot of contribution and participation by district personnel. How will that happen? It will only happen if the powers-that-be

"Both the university and the district want people who are sharp, energetic, and committed to children. They also want to give them skills that are relevant to the complex tasks of leading schools today, with a heavy emphasis on improving performance."

believe this is important and can give leave to the people who are going to serve as mentors and experts. It's going to require placing value on this work."

Collaboratively devise a substantive internship system. "For the last 50 years, preparation programs have been recognizing the importance of internships. But it's difficult in a university to sustain a good internship program. They'd start them, and then there would be cuts, and there wouldn't be enough money. These things are expensive, both in terms of time and dollars. And there's little incentive within the reward structure of the university for these internship programs to be sustained." A successful system, Forsyth said, will need to be co-managed by the university and the district, with both parties contributing significant time and resources and both making a commitment to keep the intern program a high priority.

IMPROVING THE ODDS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

Forsyth admits that the complex, disparate cultures of universities and school systems increase the odds against productive, long-term partnerships. "How can we enhance the probability of successful collaboration?" he asked.

Both institutions need to know and agree on what they want. "It's not easy to state what you want. There's a lot of context and a lot of detail. Representatives from the two groups have to be able to articulate their wants and needs precisely. Not antagonistically, but just so each group has a clear understanding of what we're talking about."

THE GOAL: LEADERSHIP FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SREB Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead (June 2002)

Goal 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.

There needs to be direct involvement in the project by those who have the authority, motivation and personality to make needed changes. "Getting the right people involved who have the influence, who like each other and want to work together, is critical to the success of this kind of work. If you're on a team where that's a problem, it will be very difficult to move forward."

The program design should make clear what's in it for all the collaborators. What are the musts for the candidates, the districts and the university? "Everybody has to have a legitimate self-interest that's critical to their mission," Forsyth said. "For example, you need to create a design where the candidate will know that if she or he contributes finances, time and energy, that it's very likely there will be a job at the end of the preparation process.

"What's in it for the district? The district should get people trained in the job the way they want them trained. They will be able to raise their level of confidence in newly prepared leaders because they're going to be involved in shaping the knowledge base and the skill set for these people.

THE ST. ELSEWHERE SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING

At the Louisville redesign conference, Oklahoma State Professor Patrick Forsyth shared this prime-time internship idea:

"Ideally, our approach for delivering practice knowledge, at least in the first year, should parallel medical rounds. Recall the TV show *St. Elsewhere,* where the master physician would move around the hospital with the interns. At each stop an intern would say, 'This is my patient Mr. Soandso, here's the chart, this is what I observed, this is what I think is going on, here's what is normally the treatment under these conditions, and this is what I'm thinking of doing.' Then the other interns would discuss the presenter's analysis and solutions. The master physician would enrich the discussion, add to it, challenge the students and offer additional resources. That kind of interplay is very rich.

"An education metaphor for 'rounds' might be to bring 10 education administration interns together in one location once a week for a couple of hours, along with some experts. Each one would trace for the group a problem they're working on in the school where they're interning. So you'd have all these people exposed to 10 problems simultaneously and having really complex, sophisticated discussions about what's going on with respect to those teaching and learning problems.

"You enhance the notion of working collaboratively. You enhance the understanding of the importance of having lots of different minds working on a problem, and how that usually helps solve it in a better way.

"Having this kind of experience would be unprecedented in terms of the opportunities we've offered participants in our programs up to now."

"When you have graduate students involved in authentic work, you're helping them gain skills and knowledge that will help them raise performance in their own schools."

"What's in it for the university? The university gets a steady stream of students coming to them in a predictable way. It eliminates some of the inefficiencies of unpredictablity. And the other thing is, it gets university people into schools, and sometimes it's been hard to get them there."

In difficult budgetary times, it's important to minimize the necessity for new resources. "Tucking a lot of the tasks of new principal preparation around things that already exist should allow us to not require as many new resources. All of the state-mandated accountability requirements, the data analysis, the development of school improvement plans – those kinds of tasks can become grist for the mill. Imagine a principal who has three gung-ho interns who want to design a school improvement plan that is relevant and meaningful to that school and not just a bureaucratic exercise. That's part of their learning experience, and it gets that principal's work done. The principal has an interest in guiding and supporting the interns' work."

Forsyth stressed that problem-based learning and field experiences are not evidence, in and of themselves, of a high-quality leadership preparation program. "The learning situations need to be around projects that are important to the school," he said. "You don't want to create a 'pullout' program. When you have interns and graduate students involved in authentic work, then you're not wasting their time, and you're helping them gain skills and knowledge that will help them raise performance in their own schools one day."

No More Self-selection: Tapping Only the Most Promising Leadership Candidates

"**W**e've always had tapping, but we've often tapped in the wrong way," says David Hill, a former high school principal who now serves on the staff of the SREB Leadership Initiative.

Tapping, in this case, is the process of selecting individuals for principal preparation. One of SREB's conditions for university leadership program redesign is to "support school districts in identifying potential leaders with demonstrated leadership ability, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and a proven record of high performance."

During a presentation about tapping issues at the SREB conference in Louisville, Hill described the selection criteria for high school principals in the metropolitan district where he once worked. "Fourteen of the 15 principals were former football coaches," he said. "That's pretty much how the old tapping model played out. The selection process had little or nothing to do with a candidate's ability to raise academic performance in a school. In some places, that's still the case."

a proven record of raising achievement among diverse groups of students." This collaborative process should be developing "consistent procedures and tools for screening and selection."

In the estimation of the SREB staff, only two institutions in the network have made satisfactory progress in addressing the tapping issue. Two others have begun discussing it, and seven redesign teams have not yet engaged the issue in a substantive way.

THE PROBLEM WITH SELF-SELECTION

Who *are* institutions preparing to become school administrators?

"Presently," says SREB Senior Vice President Gene Bottoms, "we have a self-selection system in which, for a host of reasons, some folks decide they want to get a leadership license and a master's degree in school administration. Often, they are motivated to do this because they can receive master's-level teacher pay and still keep their options open."

The tapping process for principal preparation should include criteria for selecting teachers with a content master's degree, demonstrated leadership and a proven record of raising achievement among diverse groups of students.

After one year of university program redesign, SREB expects that "a tapping process is being developed collaboratively by the university and partner district(s) that includes criteria for selecting teachers with a content master's degree, demonstrated leadership and

But research in Missouri found that only half the licensed administrators in the study ever held administrative positions. Among those who did enter administration, one-third left within the first two years. Similar patterns would likely be found in most other

CORE MESSAGE

Most individuals who enter school leadership preparation programs today select themselves. Universities and districts must work together to identify and select only the people who are most likely to meet the demands of the job.

states where self-selection has become the *de facto* state policy, says Bottoms.

"The opposite of self-selection is to tap persons within the school system who are high-performers, who have demonstrated that they can take ordinary students and make them extraordinary learners and who can work with their colleagues in ways that produce desired change," he says.

Bottoms relates the story of an urban superintendent who reported that among 48 assistant principals in the district's high schools, there were only two that he would select as principals. "That just doesn't make sense," says Bottoms. "We have no business putting people in assistant principal positions who are not principal material. We've got to get better at choosing assistant principals who will seize the opportunity to learn and grow and prepare themselves for the top job."

An SREB study found that most states in the region have no statewide program aimed at moving beyond a self-selection process. Although universities have a role in selection through their graduate admissions process, Bottoms says, "that process is based on the Graduate Record Exam, undergraduate GPA and a check that doesn't bounce. The focus is on who will be a successful graduate student rather than on who will be a successful future leader."

An effective tapping system, Bottoms believes, should shift the process of selection from a university-based strategy to a collaborative strategy where the university and the school system take a joint, in-depth look at each candidate's record of accomplishments and demonstrated leadership skills.

District involvement in the tapping process is critical for another reason, says Judith Adkison, who leads the program redesign team at the University of North Texas. Districts will only hire individuals they believe are "up and comers." (See page 11, "A Big Texas Partnership Sets Higher Standards for Future Principals," to learn more about UNT's tapping partnership with the Dallas school system.)

By involving districts in deciding who will be trained as leaders, Adkison says, universities help assure that their graduates will be given opportunities to lead schools.

With the promise of employment "you create a tighter linkage" between the university preparation program and the workplace, adds Oklahoma State design team leader Patrick Forsyth. "Anyone who knows motivation theory will understand why that will be important, both in terms of the performance of the candidates in the program and their commitment to the future, and also to the district's success in developing new leaders.

"You need to create a design where the candidate will know that if she or he contributes money, time and energy, that it's very likely there will be a job at the end of the process," says Forsyth.

A RIGOROUS SELECTION SYSTEM

A rigorous system that chooses only the best candidates for principal preparation will encourage more talented educators to seek out leadership programs, National Governors Association

HOW CAN WE IDENTIFY PROMISING FUTURE LEADERS?

How can universities and school systems work together to "tap" or select the right individuals for leadership preparation? Here are some ideas gathered from brainstorming sessions at the SREB Leadership Initiative summer conference.

WHERE SHOULD WE LOOK?

Look for teachers who:

- Can demonstrate success in raising achievement for all students
- Have shown leadership in coaching other teachers to raise student achievement
- Are recommended by high-performing principals
- Have implemented innovative learning strategies in their classrooms
- Challenge all students through rigorous, standards-based teaching
- Integrate technology into daily teaching
- Have good communications, human relations and organizational skills
- Have the ability to motivate
- Are National Board certified
- Have won awards and recognition
- Have earned a master's degree in a content area
- Are active in professional organizations
- Provide professional development for other teachers
- Have worked collaboratively on teaching/learning issues
- Have written successful grant proposals focused on student achievement
- Work successfully on teaching teams
- Can analyze research and apply it to practice
- Use student data and work samples to make instructional decisions
- Have shown leadership in the larger community
- Can articulate and implement a vision
- Are committed to continuous improvement

HOW SHOULD WE SCREEN POTENTIAL CANDIDATES?

- Joint screening by university and school system leaders
- Nomination by principals, peers and parents
- Assessment tools like Myers-Briggs, leadership style inventories, 360-degree competency-based instruments
- Self-assessment
- Portfolios documenting teaching and leadership skills
- Screening protocols based on the SREB leadership success factors
- Direct interviews and conversations with peers
- Observations and videos of classroom and peer teaching
- Simulations and role plays
- Biographical sketches
- Demonstration of effective oral and written communications skills
- Candidate analysis of case studies
- Willingness to work in high-need schools
- Mini-courses that expose potential candidates to the challenges of leadership
- "Gateway" internships to gauge leadership potential

Analyst Chris Mazzeo told the Louisville audience. "A lot of the best potential leaders are not going into leadership programs today.

"One perverse aspect of university programs is that often the folks who seek out administrative training are the folks who are least likely to be effective instructional leaders," Mazzeo said. "Quite often we see that folks who are not successful teachers go into education leadership programs figuring 'I might as well do this.'"

Right now, Bottoms says, the principal pool is saturated with **certified,** but not **qualified,** candidates. "Recently, one large urban district in our network was looking for a high school principal. They rejected 35 certified candidates judged to be unqualified for the job."

Successful business organizations and the military do a good job of tapping those who show potential, Bottoms adds. "For some reason, we have not used this model in education systemically."

As universities and districts begin to work together to identify and select only the people who are most likely to meet the demands of the job, he says, they will need new resources to support their collaboration.

"The opposite of self-selection is to tap persons who are high-performers, who have demonstrated that they can take ordinary students and make them extraordinary learners and who can work with their colleagues in ways that produce desired change."

"We need assessment tools that help measure leadership potential, like the 360-degree instruments used in industry. We also need resources to attract promising candidates into preparation programs, including release time, tuition stipends and opportunities to shadow highly effective principals in real-world situations."

Christopher Mazzeo warned network members that the federal No Child Left Behind legislation now being implemented "is going to raise the stakes around the basic skill levels for school leaders.

"We really need to find folks who have the potential to lead in this new environment," he said. "And we need to put them in excellent programs that teach candidates the knowledge and skills they need to drive the instructional improvement agenda within the school."

FIND A FEW GOOD LEADERS

Tapping high performers for leadership training is a difficult concept for universities and districts to wrap their minds around and figure out how to manage. Districts are wary of the legal, ethical and climate issues that might evolve from selectively supporting a pool of candidates. Preliminary analysis of the input received during site visits has led SREB staff to recommend that districts and their training partners consider these guidelines:

■ Collaboratively develop a set of criteria that conveys a clear description of the characteristics of applicants who will be selected for the pool.

■ Determine the components of the selection process: 1) application procedures and timelines; 2) screening and evaluation procedures, including interview protocols, 360-degree evaluations, performance portfolios or other documentation formats, inbasket exercises, writing samples, scoring rubrics, etc.; and 3) the district's and participant's obligations to each other.

■ Prepare and disseminate information about selection criteria, application process, evaluation components, district/participant obligations, and required forms to all teachers and professional staff in the district, as well as any other groups of professionals who are to be considered for the pool.

■ Conduct informational meetings with school faculties and other groups of potential applicants.

■ Select and prepare a screening and evaluation committee that includes school leaders, district staff and university staff.

■ Conduct screening and evaluation under consistent conditions for all candidates.

■ Follow agreed-upon procedures for analyzing data from multiple measures in a reliable way.

■ Publish information about the selection of the leadership pool in the district newsletter and keep all employees informed.

As network members gain more experience with the tapping process and the knowledge base expands, we will be able to refine these guidelines and test them in a broader set of contexts.

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(Excerpted from *Learning to Navigate the Leadership Preparation Redesign Process: SREB's First Lessons from the Field* by Betty Fry and Kathy O'Neill.)

A Big Texas Partnership Sets
Higher Standards for Future Principals

Most leadership preparation programs admit all applicants who meet university and program admissions requirements, says Judith Adkison, associate dean of education at the University of North Texas. While UNT continues to provide this traditional admissions route to regular students, UNT's partnership program with the Dallas Independent School District sets a higher standard.

The UNT-DISD "tapping" program is a collaborative effort to identify and prepare small teams of teachers from selected schools who meet the university's graduate admission requirements and have high potential to become outstanding school leaders. The program seeks future leaders who will "assure that instruction is tightly linked to a comprehensive school improvement framework and to the standards and goals of the Texas state accountability system."

In a joint agreement, the university and the district described the seven qualities of the leaders the program expects to produce:

- create and manage a system of support that enables all students to meet high standards and motivates faculty to have high expectations for all students;

CORE MESSAGE

A powerful partnership between the University of North Texas and the Dallas school system is breaking new ground in the selection and field-based training of leadership program participants. Part of the secret: DISD's full-time specialist in university relations cuts through red tape and provides direct access to key district leaders.

- set priorities for change that can be measured and managed realistically;
- create a personal, caring school environment that helps students meet higher standards;
- apply research knowledge to improve school practices; and

The program seeks future leaders who will
"assure that instruction is tightly linked to a comprehensive
school improvement framework and to the standards
and goals of the Texas state accountability system."

They will be leaders who:
- support rigorous academic standards and instructional methods that motivate and engage students;
- make meaningful connections between the abstract aspects of the curriculum and real-world learning experiences;

- use technology for management and instructional purposes.

Candidates for the two-year program were selected in the summer of 2002. The DISD cohort has school-based teams of two to four people who will work together on site-based projects to improve their schools. Principals serve as mentors and facilitators.

Because the collaborative program was designed to select participants the district would support and sponsor for advancement, DISD administrators had primary responsibility for identifying and screening initial candidates.

"Anybody who meets our admission criteria can get into the education administration program," Adkison says. "But the people who get appointed in districts really have been identified within the district as up and comers. Typically they're tapped by the principal. And if your principal doesn't accept you, you're in deep trouble."

PARTICIPANT SELECTION WAS A THREE-STEP PROCESS

In the first step, the district selected 10 principals. All area superintendents were asked to nominate principals they considered to be effective administrators committed to school improvement and good mentors for future leaders.

The selected principals then nominated teachers in their schools whose instruction assures that all students achieve at high levels, who are committed to working with others to improve the school and who demonstrate leadership potential. Principals were asked to nominate individuals "who they would want as assistant principals in their schools," Adkison says.

The principals nominated 38 teachers. Nominees attended an orientation session to learn more about the program and have any questions answered. Five interview teams consisting of two principals and a UNT faculty member interviewed the candidates. Each interview followed a set of questions (see page 12) that reflect the SREB critical success factors for school leaders.

The interview teams ranked the candidates, and the UNT planning team made the final cut to 27, taking the top applicants recommended by each interview team. "In some schools," says Adkison, "we had more excellent candidates than the program could accommodate." When that happened, the principal was asked to select from among the highest scoring nominees.

In effect, the UNT-DISD program has 10 student "cohorts." All 27 students will attend large-group sessions in classroom and field-based settings. In addition, each school cohort will work on school-based projects under the mentorship of their principal, with additional support from UNT faculty.

"The projects are built around the conditions and needs of each individual school," Adkison says. "They will also be designed around course objectives. There are knowledges and skills that the students have to demonstrate, and these are activities that will allow them to show their level of mastery."

The Dallas school system will pay half the tuition for the 27 graduate students and will also provide stipends and mentor training for the participating principals. "In two years," says Adkison, "our students will be ready to be certified into administrative positions."

What makes this partnership so powerful?

When Judith Adkison tallies the contributions Dallas school leaders have made to the candidate-tapping and program-redesign effort, "I don't know that we could ask any more."

The district has placed top administrators on UNT's advisory council, selected and paid stipends to mentor principals, and agreed to help identify school-based field projects for graduate students. The district has also written a grant that could bring in additional resources for the effort, and if that isn't funded, Adkison says, "they're going to go to some of their private sources to see if they can get funding for some enrichment activities."

Dallas Superintendent Mike Moses has also given the UNT design team "a lot of face time and personal support," she says, "and that's really meaningful when you consider the schedule of a superintendent in a district the size of Dallas. Pretty much anything we've asked for, they've done."

The superintendent also made a key appointment early in his tenure that has

DISD-UNT School Leadership Program
Interview questions

Question	High* 4-5 points	Medium* 2-3 points	Low* 0-1 points
1. Why do you want to become an assistant principal or principal? What qualities do you have that would make you an effective school leader?			
2. Tell us about evidence of professional development in your own teaching.			
3. Describe how you use technology for communication and learning in your classroom.			
4. Describe a situation in which you took a risk to improve the quality of teaching in your classroom.			
5. Describe your vision for your own classroom and explain the evidence you use to assess how well you are achieving it.			
6. How do you collaborate with your peers in your school and what have been the results of your collaboration?			
7. What barriers must be overcome for all students to achieve at high levels? Give an example of how you overcame one of these barriers.			
8. In what ways do you have information about the achievement of students in your classroom, and how do you know it?			
9. How will you adjust your personal schedule to accommodate the demands of completing an intensive two-year graduate and certification program?			
10. General presentation (dress, voice, demeanor)			
Total			
Comments on candidate's potential:			

Candidate Interview Questions (University of North Texas-Dallas Independent School Partnership) – Nominees for the UNT-DISD Leadership Development Program were interviewed by teams made up of two DISD principals and a UNT faculty member. All nominees were asked the same questions, following this protocol, which reflects the SREB critical success factors for school leaders.

been "incredibly useful for us." Moses, who previously headed the Texas Education Agency, appointed Joseph Neely, an experienced superintendent in the Dallas area, as his special assistant for university relations.

Because the collaborative program was designed to select participants the district would support and sponsor for advancement, DISD administrators had primary responsibility for identifying and screening initial candidates.

"As you can imagine, there are lots of universities in the Dallas area, and all of us are doing all kinds of things with Dallas teachers and administrators and other staff," Adkison explains.

"Basically, Joe's job is to set up conversations between the universities and the district. He meets regularly with all the deans and tries to communicate the district's needs and more systematically handle all the things universities are doing with the school system."

Neely's full-time focus on district-university programs and his ability to arrange direct access to Moses "has made working with the system so, so easy compared to other efforts in the past," she says.

Before the change in district leadership, "you frequently could never get anything going because every time you would go down to the district offices to meet, there would be a whole different cast of characters.

"Now you have one individual who is your go-to person," says Adkison. "He will let folks know when the superintendent thinks something is important.

"I think that's a finding from our experience that's really worth sharing."

FACE THE FACTS *continued from page 4*

"Finding time to work on program redesign is difficult in a workplace where a high degree of autonomy about work schedules and priorities is the norm, where the recognition and reward system focuses most heavily on scholarship, and where the time and effort of faculty is valued in terms of the number of credit-producing hours generated."

Program design, says Bottoms, is most often considered a voluntary service rather than a regular part of the job and is often "dumped" onto the shoulders of one or two individuals who are given little or no release time to get the job done. "Given these circumstances, it is no wonder that the most-practiced form of program redesign is simply casting old course outlines under new titles."

One technique that seems to help university programs get past some of the work culture barriers and press forward on their redesign is hiring some "new blood" with fresh energy and enthusiasm for preparing school principals, Bottoms says.

Faculty hired from the ranks of experienced practitioners often "bring deep knowledge of effective school practices."

"When hired from the ranks of experienced practitioners, these new members bring deep knowledge of effective school practices and how to lead school change," he explains.

"They often bring the political savvy needed by the design team to negotiate partnerships with local districts and make the right connections with state policymakers and regulatory agencies. They have current knowledge of the working conditions and the market for leaders and often know where to find and how to use relationships effectively to access outside resources."

The most important trait of these faculty members fresh from the field, Bottoms concludes, is this: "They are accustomed to working in a climate that demands quick decisions and actions and are more comfortable with ambiguity and risk-taking."

Note: *A separate report on the work of the six-member SREB Leadership Academy Network will be published later this fall.*

A New Breed of Principal

"Yvonne Chan's leadership is the *definition* of out-of-the-box," SREB's David Hill declared as he struggled to be heard over a standing ovation for the innovative Los Angeles principal. "If we're not teaching to her kind of leadership style, we're not going to build the leaders we need."

Educators gathered at the Kentucky International Convention Center for a meeting of the SREB Leadership Redesign Networks could only nod in affirmation. They had just listened intently for more than an hour as Chan described the decade-long evolution of Vaughn Elementary School from a crisis-ridden underperformer scoring at the bottom of California's ranking system, into the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, a public charter school near the top in the state's rankings.

As Chan made clear during her powerful presentation, the school's academic upsurge is only part of its remarkable story. Under Chan's proactive leadership, Vaughn has been the catalyst for genuine community empowerment in the impoverished section of Los Angeles known as Pacoima. When Vaughn became one of California's first charter schools in 1993, Chan and her leadership team took over their own budgeting and finances, slashed administrative costs, managed their own hiring and contracted out for services. Through careful cost-cutting, they were able to save over a million dollars.

Chan's strategic management not only produced surpluses, it attracted extra funding from philanthropic groups. "Folks ship us money now," Chan told the SREB audience. The additional funds allowed the school to reduce class sizes, extend the school year from 167 to 200 days, and raise the daily attendance rate to 99 percent through rigorous follow-up and parental involvement. Chan also mainstreamed all special education students into regular classes.

CORE MESSAGE

California principal Yvonne Chan's dynamic style has moved a crisis-ridden school near the top of the state's rankings and redefined "out of the box" leadership.

The Vaughn Center began to purchase nearby buildings, some of which were former "crack houses" that supported the neighborhood's drug trade. With the help of a neighborhood contractor, parent volunteers and high school apprentices fulfilling their school-to-work requirement, the buildings were renovated — expanding the 1,200-student school into three closely knit campuses with 56 new classrooms.

"If we're not teaching to Yvonne Chan's kind of leadership style, we're not going to build the leaders we need."

Vaughn's venture into real estate, made possible by its status as an "independent" charter school, has produced what one national organization describes as "an amazing revitalization of the area around the school." Vaughn now supports a health center, literacy programs for adults in the neighborhood, a "career ladder" for parents and community members within the school's large business organization, and much more.

Chan, who won the prestigious McGraw Education Prize in 1996, has also gained national attention for her aggressive experiments in performance-based pay for teachers. Vaughn awards bonuses for both individual and schoolwide performance, but the emphasis is on individual teacher growth. The school has developed a sophisticated set of evaluation rubrics based on the work of Charlotte Danielson, the author of *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching.* "The extensive matrix," *Education Week* reported in a story about Chan's leadership, "presents a vision of what effective teaching looks like, and it describes the difference between unsatisfactory, basic, proficient and exemplary ability for each skill."

One of the few things that hasn't changed at Vaughn during its remarkable 10-year odyssey is the percentage of its students eligible for free lunch — 100 percent, then and now. "It's not a matter of holding good cards these days," Chan told the audience of leadership teams from 11 universities and six state academies. "It's a matter of playing the bad cards you're dealt."

FOCUS ON VISION AND MISSION

My role is to lead my staff to develop and consistently implement an internal accountability system that … defines the roles and responsibilities of teachers, students, parents and families, administrators, and support staff. Everyone focuses on our schoolwide vision and mission, assertively solves problems, communicates needs, collects data, charts progress, makes continuous improvement, creates new dreams, and backs them up with actions. At the end of each day, the principal helps his or her school team celebrate the success.

(Yvonne Chan, testimony before a California commission on teaching quality, February 2001)

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

As she closed her presentation, Yvonne Chan shuffled through her overheads and displayed the ideogram for the Chinese word *wei-ji* or "crisis." The symbol is familiar to many leadership experts who've used it in presentations of their own. But its message seemed somehow fresh again in the hands of this diminutive, Chinese-born woman whose energy charged the entire meeting room.

THE CHINESE SYMBOL FOR CRISIS

危机

| DANGER | OPPORTUNITY |

"In China," Chan said, "the word for *crisis* is written with two symbols — the first stands for *danger;* the second set stands for *opportunity.* The symbol *danger* might also be interpreted as *risk.*

"That's my message to anyone who wants to be a successful leader," Chan said with a canny smile. "No risk? Sorry, no opportunity!"

As the applause began, Director Kathy O'Neill's description of the SREB Leadership Initiative came to mind: "Our purpose is to create a whole pool of Yvonne Chans." A high standard, indeed.

Standards Are More than a Paper-and-Pencil Game

If an outside observer browsed the "higher" standards adopted with some fanfare by many university leadership programs, he or she might conclude that traditional, ineffective practices — like seat-bound coursework, unrelated units of instruction and inattention to proven student achievement strategies — were out the window, replaced by a comprehensive, cohesive curriculum that assures mastery of key leadership skills in a real-world environment.

CORE MESSAGE

Many university leadership programs are going through the motions of adopting new content standards without doing the hard work necessary to redesign their curriculum. Program standards could help universities and policymakers look beyond what is being taught to who is teaching it and how it is being taught.

In most cases, our observer would be drawing the wrong conclusion.

While standards can serve as guideposts, they are not the real engine that drives change in what and how aspiring leaders are taught. In many educational leadership departments, program "redesign" has translated into little more than a pencil-and-paper game that requires players to match course titles and content with the the adopted higher standards.

"In many cases, university leadership programs adopt higher standards but don't really change much," SREB staff member Betty Fry told participants at SREB's July conference in Louisville. "They comb through their existing program and 'check off' bits and pieces of curriculum they can somehow fit under the umbrella of a particular standard."

This incoherent strategy, Fry said, has resulted in little or no change in the way learning activities are designed or in the kinds of tasks given to the students in their leadership programs. What's more, the standards are not tied to performance assessments that could help judge whether students have mastered critical content and whether the program's instructional approaches are effective. "What the participants get is still largely dependent upon the preferences of the professor or the presenter," Fry concluded.

Fry, who directs the university program redesign aspect of the SREB Leadership Initiative, provided hard data to make her point. In her review of first-year progress among the 11 universities in the SREB initiative, she found only one institution that met SREB's expectations in the area of standards-driven curriculum redesign.

It is still rare, Fry said, to find a program redesign process where faculty start with the standards and move forward to rethink course content, expand delivery strategies, brainstorm new ways to assess participants' performance and establish outcomes-based measures of overall program effectiveness.

■ identifies and prioritizes those standards that are most important to changing the core functions of schools and therefore require the deepest treatment;
■ examines current course content and teaching strategies to identify major gaps or weaknesses in how these high-priority standards are currently treated;
■ organizes faculty in teams to create new learning activities and performance assessments to measure achievement of the standards; and
■ reassigns faculty to form teaching teams with complementary expertise to assure broad and deep treatment of all critical content.

This university team uses a retreat format where faculty come together as a collaborative work group to build an integrated standards-based curriculum. The group relies on a focused task, a structured process and expert facilitators to accomplish their work.

This strategic approach is a departure from the typical "parts-to-whole" process, where individuals or small committees review and align particular areas of the existing curriculum with the new standards. More often than not, this

> *"In many cases, university leadership programs...*
> *comb through their existing program and 'check off'*
> *bits and pieces of curriculum they can somehow fit*
> *under the umbrella of a particular standard."*

She said one university in the Initiative is moving in a promising direction through a process that:
■ engages the entire faculty in gaining a deep understanding of what the standards call for leaders to know and be able to do;

work is done in isolation, and the final product (achieved through what sometimes amounts to passive acceptance or adversarial negotiation) is a patchwork curriculum that is not likely to be implemented — or effective.

MEASURING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

During another presentation at the SREB network conference, reform leader Michelle Young drew a distinction between the content standards many universities are adopting and program standards, which look "beyond what's being taught to who's teaching it and how it's being taught."

"If we really want to produce successful school leaders, we need to know not just what effective practice looks like but what an effective preparation program looks like."

Young directs the University Council on Education Administration, a consortium of 67 major research universities. UCEA has organized a national commission, made up of representatives from most major education organizations in the U.S., which has among its tasks defining the characteristics of preparation programs that support effective leadership.

"If we really want to produce successful school leaders, we need to know not just what effective practice looks like but what an effective preparation program looks like," Young said. "We need consistency in programs, and program standards can help."

Program standards make sense for universities, Young noted, because they can help justify new investments in leadership programs. "If you know what quality looks like, you can argue for resources to support that quality."

Young offered one example of a possible program standard: Instructors in the program have contemporary experience as principals. "Things change pretty fast in our schools," she said, and to be effective university programs must constantly draw on the intimate knowledge of real-world school leaders. While many university programs currently use active principals as adjunct faculty, she noted, they rarely involve those principals in critical program decisions about curriculum or policy. "They need to be involved in every phase."

Young said that despite the pressure to reform education administration programs "from within and outside the profession," actual change "has been relatively slow compared to demand."

She highlighted several barriers to change, including resistance from university faculty. Until the recent emergence of Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's content standards, "the field was not particularly attentive to what was expected from its educational leaders." Young said many university faculty members remain satisfied with the status quo, citing a national study that found them "somewhat complacent about (adopting) educational leadership standards."

Yet, she said, "There are children being failed by our schools in part because of the poor preparation of school leaders. As we face this fact, maybe we won't be so self-satisfied."

Young offered another reason for the slow pace of reform — the lack of demand for rigor among students in leadership programs. Candidates are more likely to select a program based on price, convenience, and a modest course load. "If you want people to come to your program because it is rigorous," she observed, "you're competing with programs down the road that are faster and cheaper and easier."

The ultimate solution, Young suggested, will be state licensure and accreditation systems that are based on standards of practice and create incentives for future principal leaders to seek out rigorous preparation programs so they can meet those standards.

"We need to prepare leaders who can support all children in all kinds of schools. We need to make sure our graduates believe this is possible and start holding themselves personally responsible for doing the job they were hired to do."

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF PREPARATION PROGRAMS

"Reforms in school leadership preparation so far don't reveal how well graduates will perform once they're in the field. We have yet to develop a method to determine whether the graduates of educational leadership programs will be successful.

"Until we have a process for determining whether preparation programs have the impacts that we hope they do, it's unlikely that we'll have adequate information to engage in corrective program development. That's a serious problem.

"If educational leadership faculty don't know that what they're doing is having a positive impact on their students, and we're asking the faculty to do more, and often with less, you're going to probably find a lot of folks with burn-out, and they won't be able to sustain the necessary work. So we really need to jump on this impacts issue."

— **Michelle Young, University Council on Education Administration**

Standards-driven Curriculum & Assessment:
Florida State Turns Its Leadership Program Around

In the past few years, the educational leadership program at Florida State University has undergone a 360-degree change. Literally.

The FSU graduate program has completely revamped its curriculum, moving from disconnected, professor-driven courses to a cohesive, standards-driven program of study that emphasizes the principal's role and practices as an instructional leader.

Redesigning an educational leadership curriculum from the ground up is a rare feat in itself. But what's most unusual and remarkable about the FSU effort is its "360" competency-based assessment instrument, built upon the standards and indicators of mastery developed by the program's faculty during their curriculum revamping process.

"We found that a lot of what we had decided was important through our standards-setting, we weren't teaching."

"The information we gather from this assessment is pretty important to us, particularly for a student coming into the educational leadership program," says Mike Biance, an FSU associate professor and one of the leaders in the program redesign initiative. "The 360 instrument helps us determine where their strengths and weaknesses are and tailor our program accordingly."

Biance described the transformation of FSU's leadership program during a general session at the SREB Leadership Redesign Networks meeting last July in Louisville. The work began five years

CORE MESSAGE

Florida State University's redesigned leadership program relies on a real-world, standards-based curriculum and a front-end assessment of each candidate's strengths and weaknesses. A cornerstone course helps faculty and students connect everything that is taught and learned.

ago, when changes in Florida's political leadership created a new environment that welcomed education innovation.

"Prior to the change in the state's leadership," Biance said, "one group had driven educational leadership programs for about 20 years from the perspective that the universities did the knowledge and the school districts did the skills. When that began to break down, our faculty saw an opportunity for change, and we decided to go for it."

Some serious discussion among the Florida State faculty triggered an extensive literature review around leadership development, cutting-edge leadership practices and emerging leadership standards. After many months of faculty debate, said Biance, "we distilled the standards down to the point where we said, 'This is what we want to do.'"

The faculty took the agreed-upon eight standards and 199 competency indicators "across all of our coursework," Biance explained, "and we asked ourselves whether we were really teaching all we said was important. It was amazing what we found.

"Each professor had to go through those indicators and state whether they taught them in their courses, primarily or secondarily, and what materials they used. We found that a lot of what we had decided was important through our standards-setting, we weren't teaching."

The faculty then began the long and difficult process of building the standards and indicators into the entire FSU graduate program, from the master's degree up. "What we found," Biance said, "is that there was more willingness among our faculty to change once the criteria had been set by them and the goals were clear."

Once faculty members felt their courses were aligned, Biance and his colleagues cross-referenced their competency criteria with Florida's certification exam and the national ISLLC standards. "We wanted to be sure that what we had finally decided upon on our own really did match," said Biance. "And it matched."

A COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT TOOL

With their own house in order, the faculty was well-positioned to develop a tool that could measure proficiency levels against the competency standards established for the FSU program. The resulting 45-minute, Web-based assessment can be used with new graduate students, working principals, or participants in leadership academies and other professional development programs for school leaders.

Over time, the instrument evolved from a self-assessment tool into a true 360-degree evaluation, Biance said, "which means the principals or graduate students assess themselves, their supervisors assess them, and if it's a principal, a random sample of teachers assess them. If it's a teacher in a graduate program, then we use a random sample of their peers."

FSU "started out using this primarily with ed leadership grad students. This is a key piece to their electronic portfolio," Biance said. "They have to

construct an electronic portfolio during the course of their studies and successfully defend it for their degree. If they don't, they don't graduate."

All students are required to take a course in Decision-oriented Educational Leadership. "It's pretty overwhelming for them," Biance said.

tant side benefit — one that leaders with resistant faculty members should note.

"It has forced our professors to really make the connections across every course we teach," Biance said. "And it's been amazing to us over the last two or three years to see our program continuity rachet up higher and higher."

Biance and his colleagues came to realize that by allowing the capstone course to serve instead as a cornerstone, they could use its real-world focus and problem-based learning approach to drive all the subsequent instruction in the graduate program.

The instrument is first administered when graduate students enter the program, then periodically during their course of study. Major professors can look at a student's profile going into the program, identify specific areas of weakness and track their progress over time.

Students are made aware that during their final portfolio review, areas of weakness identified by the assessment will be scrutinized carefully. Students defend their portfolios before the entire faculty, Biance said, and "artifacts of competency" contained in the portfolios are key elements in judging a student's success. The final portfolio entry — "Connections" — requires students to describe the relationships between and among their courses and work.

"That part of the portfolio," Biance said, "is more of an indicator of the job we're doing than the job the students are doing." The feedback from this portfolio item "has helped our faculty become so much more knowledgeable of what's going on in all our courses. It has affected the content and the sequencing of our courses."

FROM CAPSTONE TO CORNERSTONE

One "sequencing change" in the FSU curriculum has had a profound impact on the leadership program and the faculty who teach it.

Students begin by identifying a school. "They have to collect every single piece of data on that school. Surveys, test scores, budget, you name it." Students review all the information and identify patterns they see. They then select one pattern or issue as their area of focus, do action research, devise strategies that would be included in a school improvement plan to address the issue, and develop an assessment to determine the effects of their proposed solutions.

"For the longest time we taught the DOER course at the end of the program," Biance said. "Now we've moved it to the very beginning of the curriculum."

Biance and his colleagues came to realize that by allowing the capstone DOER course to serve instead as a cornerstone, they could use its real-world focus and problem-based learning approach to drive all the subsequent instruction in the graduate program.

"The next class they take is designing curriculum," he said. "Now they take all the data from the DOER course and use that to do the design work in their curriculum class. Then they take the finance class and figure the budget for their selected school, based on their own curriculum designs and so forth, all the way through our program."

Front-loading the curriculum with the DOER course has had an impor-

Educational Leadership Faculties Need a New Reward System — and Some New Blood

When Chris Mazzeo tells the nation's governors about the need to reform promotion and tenure policies in university education programs, he's considered a highly credible source who's "been there and done that."

Before joining the National Governor's Association as a senior policy analyst, Mazzeo helped push Baruch College's education administration program out into the New York City schools, where graduate students could work on real problems with results-oriented principals.

"At Baruch, I had to sacrifice in order to do what I knew needed to be done," he said during a general session at SREB's leadership conference in Louisville. "I knew I wasn't going to be rewarded other than to hear 'that's nice' or even more likely, 'that's service.'"

Mazzeo was referring to the three traditional pillars of higher education: teaching, research and scholarship, and university and community service. Nowhere in that mix, he said, was any provision for programs like educational leadership that needed to build a bridge from theory into practice to be effective.

work (in the schools), but on the other hand you're expected to do all the other work any faculty member does who is not actively engaged with practitioners."

CORE MESSAGE

Out-of-sync promotion and reward systems often frustrate efforts to transform educational leadership departments into practice-oriented programs that are valued by school leaders. Deans and faculty members need to balance theory and practice in their reward systems and recruit practitioners as teachers and advisors.

The result, Mazzeo says, is a serious "disconnect" that makes it extremely difficult for most university preparation programs to shift their focus to the real work of school leaders.

"You want a faculty member to do something (in the field), but the incentives run the other way," he said. "Which means that you only get the people who care enough about the work to do double-duty — or the

Education Administration, said educational leadership programs have "a much wider gap between theory and practice than in other professions. Much of what's taught in the college classroom isn't valued by practitioners in the field."

Young identified the culprit as "promotion and tenure systems that model the social sciences." Such systems, she said, "don't work well with field-based programs."

Oklahoma State professor Patrick Forsyth, author of a history on reform efforts in education administration, said field-based initiatives have been around "for the last 50 years," but they usually fail to thrive because "there's little incentive within the structure of the university for these programs to be sustained."

CHANGING THE REWARD SYSTEM

One of SREB's conditions for university program redesign is to "realign the faculty advancement and reward system to include acceptance of school-based work as part of tenure and promotion requirements."

Universities will have to take this step, says SREB Senior Vice President Gene Bottoms, "if they want to implement a practice-based program. University leaders are going to have to make school-based work a part of the faculty's teaching load and not an add-on responsibility that gets short-changed in the traditional environment of academe."

Bottoms believes universities "are missing the boat" when they fail to seize the opportunity to carry out scholarly work in educational leadership "on the ground" in schools.

"Faculty need encouragement, incentives and assistance to begin to recognize and take advantage of both the rich teaching experiences and the research opportunities that are inherent in the school setting."

"If it didn't lead to publication in refereed journals, nothing you did was really going to matter. It wasn't going to count in the university's promotion and tenure reward system," he said. "You weren't discouraged from doing the

people who don't have lives outside of their jobs." Those people, he laughed, "have really bad ideas."

Several other speakers echoed Mazzeo's remarks. Michelle Young, director of the University Council on

"Faculty need encouragement, incentives and assistance to begin to recognize and take advantage of both the rich teaching experiences and the research opportunities that are inherent in the school setting," he says.

Sometimes, Bottoms adds, "it's perception and not reality that school-based research isn't valued in the university." He recalls a comment by the provost of a major West Coast unversity. "He said that doing research around how your program prepares educational leaders who can impact student achievement is just as meaningful as any other research that can lead to tenure and promotion."

Bottoms doesn't argue with the need to include both theory and practice in principal preparation programs. But he points to "a pervasive perception among faculty that there is no value placed on scholarly work done in schools." The solution to the problem, he says, lies in the hands of education deans and faculty members.

"Much of what's taught in the college classroom isn't valued by practitioners in the field."

SREB's own research confirms that university leadership departments have the opportunity to develop criteria and processes for recommending faculty for promotion and tenure. While it's true that departmental recommendations must go up "the chain of command" through college and institutional committees, and then on to the university provost, Bottoms believes the real roadblock to promotion and tenure reform in many leadership programs is that "some faculty are content to live the academic way of life away from the public schools and all their problems.

"Every provost we have spoken with tells us the same thing," Bottoms says. "Changing the reward system for faculty is something that needs to be dealt with at the department level. Provosts will support what the faculty brings forward, so long as scholarly work continues to be recognized as an important aspect of the university's mission."

Bottoms says most education leadership faculties "include people who want to see their programs more practice-based." These faculty members "need to exercise some of the leadership they're teaching and become more proactive."

A CALL FOR NEW BLOOD

Bottoms also believes that leadership departments "need some new blood with fresh energy and enthusiasm" to prepare principals for new roles.

"These new faculty members should be selected because they are able to bring deep knowledge of effective school practices and how to make changes in schools," he says.

Several participants at the Louisville conference were highly visible examples of Bottoms' call for "new blood."

Mike Biance, who has been a leader in the redesign of Florida State University's leadership program, joined the faculty after a career as a teacher and education administrator. "I'm basically a practitioner," Biance told the audience during his presentation on Florida State's competency-based leadership assessment tool. In introducing Biance, FSU Associate Dean Carolyn Herrington credited the former K-12 administrator with helping the university refocus its program on the real work of school leaders.

Dennis Loftus is director of the Delaware Academy for School Leadership and also teaches a practicuum in leadership at the University of Delaware.

A veteran school superintendent who joined the university faculty after retirement, Loftus says he "was surprised the University hired me because I'd been very critical of higher education."

The practicum is offered at the end of the master's program and requires students to work 120 hours in a school system under the direction of a mentor. The students develop a portfolio documenting their entire experience, which is scrutinized by Loftus and other leadership faculty members.

"The portfolio also serves as an opportunity for faculty members to be able to start learning about some of the kinds of activities that are taking place out in the school districts," he says. "As they review these portfolios, faculty who have not worked recently in the schools gain insights into the process and procedure that one has to follow when you're a practitioner trying to implement change."

In addition to hiring full-time faculty with a successful track record as school leaders, some institutions are also creating or considering joint appointments between the university and a school district, with an emphasis on filling the positions with principals who have turned schools around. In this model, the principal would have regular duties as a faculty member and as a district administrator in a mentoring or field-training role.

Gene Bottoms finds this and similar developments encouraging, but notes they are still the exception, not the rule.

"Employing new faculty from the ranks of current school leaders, contracting with practitioners to teach on a part-time basis or team with regular faculty, and hiring recently retired school leaders who still have a passion for improving schools as full-time or adjunct faculty can do much to help meld theory with practice," says Bottoms. "We need a lot more of it."

A Great Question: How Do We Measure the Impact of Principal Preparation Programs?

The "Great Ideas" segment of SREB's leadership redesign conference might ought to have been titled "Great Questions." After several hours of small-group brainstorming, the number one comment university participants had to share was this:

How do we evaluate our impact on our leadership graduates as they perform in the field?

Core Message

Universities have not figured out how to measure the impact of their preparation programs on a principal's ability to produce higher levels of achievement in a school. This is a critical next step in program redesign.

No one, it seemed, had any great ideas.

Kathy O'Neill, director of the leadership initiative, was not surprised. "One of the most difficult issues in redesigning leadership programs is finding a credible way to link the preparation of principals to their performance in the field, and specifically, to their impact on student achievement," she said.

"Right now," O'Neill said, "most universities are content to do satisfaction surveys that ask questions along the lines of 'how are our principals doing?' The answer is usually 'Okay.' It's not very revealing."

At a session the next day, Michelle Young, executive director of the University Council on Education Administration, said the inability of universities to measure outcomes is a significant barrier to leadership program reform.

"Until we have a process for determining whether preparation programs have the impacts that we hope they do, it's unlikely that we'll have adequate information to engage in corrective program development," Young warned.

She added that university leaders and policymakers cannot expect educational leadership faculty to redesign their curriculum and instruction "if they don't know that what they're doing is having a positive impact on their students.

"We really need to jump on this impact issue," she said.

The missing links

Among all the SREB conditions for university program redesign, measuring the impact of principal training on student achivement "is perhaps the most difficult one to figure out," said Russell Mays of East Tennessee State University, during one of the conference's "table talk" sessions.

competency-based leadership assessment, which draws feedback from the principal, a supervisor and teachers in the school.

But everyone at the table agreed that the real challenge will be to establish a direct correlation between on-the-job assessments of principals and the preparation they received during their university programs.

"This is simply something we cannot control with lab precision," Zuelke said. "The best we can do is try to correlate inputs with outcomes and look for a relationship — but not necessarily a causal relationship."

Mike Hickey, director of the Center for Leadership in Education at Maryland's Towson University, questioned whether the effort to build the links between leadership standards, program quality, on-the-job performance and student achievement is worth the investment. "It's hard to get at cause

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"One of the most difficult issues in redesigning leadership programs is finding a credible way to link the preparation of principals to their performance in the field, and specifically, to their impact on student achievement."

Several of the participants gathered around the table described tools that are in place or under development to assess a principal's performance on the job. Dennis Zuelke of Jacksonville State University pointed to Alabama's recently implemented principal personnel evaluation, which is tied to leadership standards. Several others expressed interest in Florida State University's

and effect," he said. "We may have to take a little bit less precise measure and make some assumptions."

Zeroing in on competencies

If universities have any hope of measuring the impact of their programs on the eventual performance of principals, they will first have to agree on what

they will teach and how they will know whether their graduate students have mastered the content and skills by the time they leave the program.

> *"It is important that we not prepare leaders on one set of standards and then evaluate their on-the-job performance on another."*

"This is the hardest part for us," says Judith Adkison, associate dean of education at the University of North Texas. "We know we need to be much more specific and show how we measure and how we document that our students have actually met a standard and that they have competency in a particular area."

But, she adds, "university faculty are not used to laying things out at that kind of specific level. They're not used

to having their courses standardized to the extent that we're going to need to do."

Like faculty members in most universities, many UNT faculty have never attempted to measure the effectiveness of their own teaching, says Adkison, who serves as liaison between UNT and the SREB network.

"Depending on age and background, university faculty have also tended to be more content-focused than skills-focused," Adkison explains. "So how do you take that content and show not only that students have acquired the knowledge, but that they can apply that knowledge in a real-world setting?"

One vital step, she believes, will be to listen carefully to those who hire principals produced by the UNT program. "Dialogue with people in the districts will be really important as you decide what is an acceptable level of mastery. What does that look like? What do we measure and how do we measure it? We're really still just thinking and talking about that."

Adkison's comment calls to mind an observation by SREB Senior Vice President Gene Bottoms, shared with the Board's gubernatorial and legislative members last June. "It is important that we not prepare leaders on one set of standards and then evaluate their on-the-job performance on another," he said. Eliminating the "major disconnects" between these two sets of standards, Bottoms proposed, may be the master key that unlocks the door to outcomes assessment.

CAN'T WAIT FOR EXEMPLARY MODELS

As conference participants cast about for ways to measure the impact of university preparation on the performance of principals, one clear tendency emerged: Many university leaders and faculty are waiting for someone else to come up with an exemplary model.

They may be waiting in vain, says Betty Fry, who leads the university program redesign effort at SREB. "Exemplars are rare and they may be non-existent," she says.

"We understand that design teams want to examine models they can adapt or that may inspire them," says Fry. "We've created a network to provide opportunities for faculties and staff to talk to one another and share ideas. But in many instances, no one has a fully developed model to share."

Most universities have relied on external audit teams to "inspect their quality" during five-year accreditation reviews, Fry says. "Very few, if any, have embraced the kind of continuous, self-directed improvement that would lead to an assessment model linking program preparation to a principal's ability to raise student achievement in a real school."

University design teams will simply have to bite the bullet and do the hard work it will take to develop this kind of outcomes-based assessment, says Fry. "Somebody will have to become the model."

QUALITY VS. QUANTITY

Universities and academies need to reorder priorities and focus on quality, not quantity. Presently, counts of full time equivalent students (FTEs) drive university planning. Administrators at the top need to understand that it will take additional resources and a different kind of planning to carry out comprehensive leadership program redesign. Quality programs where faculty and students work side by side in schools to solve real world problems require a far different pattern for staffing and assigning faculty loads.

One solution being tried by some network members is to limit enrollment in the redesigned program to cohorts of candidates selected through a tapping and screening process developed in collaboration with district partners, while maintaining the regular leadership program to handle qualified applicants who are not in these cohorts. The plan is to phase out the old program as the redesigned program is tested and refined and they are able to get more districts to buy into the practice of tapping and preparing their own pool of future leaders.

(Excerpted from *Learning to Navigate the Leadership Preparation Redesign Process: SREB's First Lessons from the Field* by Betty Fry and Kathy O'Neill.)

Opening the Schoolhouse Door to Nontraditional Leaders

In most states, leadership certification is open only to those who have education experience and who have a degree in educational administration.

In its April 2001 report, *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action,* the Southern Regional Education Board concluded that allowing proven educators to seek initial leadership certification before earning an advanced administrative degree "would be an effective and efficient way to build a large cadre of school leaders."

Although most states continue to require potential school leaders to complete university coursework before they assume leadership positions, the report said, there is little evidence that the university programs "as now conducted" make any difference in preparing principals who create high-performing schools.

In fact, the report continued, some successful leaders are not products of a traditional leadership preparation program, and others credit their success to learning experiences outside of formal leadership preparation. The report quotes an education dean at a major university who said, "If you want to change educational leadership preparation in universities, you have to change the certification process."

The SREB report proposes that states could open leadership preparation and expand their leadership pool by considering a multi-step certification process. For example, states might consider granting initial leadership certification to persons who have at least a master's degree and successful experience in education — or to persons with related work outside of education who have cleared a screening process that verifies their understanding of teaching, learning and curriculum.

CORE MESSAGE

States can expand their leadership pool by adopting flexible certification processes that allow individuals with proven skills to enter leadership positions before they complete university coursework.

Several states now award initial or first-level leadership certificates to persons with advanced degrees and demonstrated successful experience inside and outside education. "The process is relatively new," says the report, "and very little information is available about quality and numbers. However, the idea is sound, provided the individuals who receive the initial certificates have proven leadership skills, a commitment to high achievement for all students, an advanced degree, and access to a high quality preparation program that will move them up the ladder to the next level of leadership."

ties have initiated programs that allow for a variety of preparation models. Education Service Center Region XIII and Tarleton College have programs that emphasize leadership skills through a variety of experiences developed around real problems of administrative practice. Some program participants serve as principals and assistant principals in participating school districts while others remain in the classroom as they complete their work.

New Jersey allows an individual with a master's degree or the equivalent in a recognized field of leadership and management to obtain a provisional license. Participants then must pass a test and serve a year in the Principal Residency Program conducted under the direction of a state-approved mentor. This opportunity is open to those who have the support of the school system and who have been hired to work in a leadership capacity.

At the SREB conference in Louisville, during a table discussion

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One report said there is little evidence that university programs "as now conducted" make any difference in preparing principals who create high-performing schools.

The report notes that Texas and New Jersey are among several states that allow alternative leadership certification.

Texas now has different alternative leadership preparation programs in place. The Texas requirements for leadership certification focus on meeting standards, not completing coursework. Education Service Centers and universi-

about preparing non-traditional leaders, James Clark told participants that Florida is moving toward certifying principals through a leadership examination. Clark, who works with the Duval County-based Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership, said the new policy will not include graduate course

requirements and may not require teaching experience.

"At least this approach makes institutions more responsive to customers," SREB Senior Vice President Gene Bottoms told the table group. "It's hard to justify the traditional certification requirements states have used. Nobody can prove that they have any relationship to effective school leadership."

CONDITIONS FOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM REDESIGN: SREB UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK

■ Create an advisory board made up of faculty, business leaders, exemplary principals, state education department representatives and other school leaders with diverse backgrounds who represent a wide range of schools and school systems who meet regularly to assist in designing the program.

Primary responsibility: Leadership Program Design Team & District Partners

■ 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.

Primary responsibility: Leadership Program Design Team & District Partners

■ Create a preparation program that can be customized for individuals on the basis of their experience in providing leadership while serving in other positions.

Primary responsibility: Leadership Program Design Team & District Partners

■ Provide faculty, practicing educators and others with broad, research-based knowledge, and redesign university leadership preparation to provide emphasis on school-based learning.

Primary responsibility: Leadership Program Design Team & District Partners

■ Contribute staff time and expertise to design, develop and field test leadership training modules that address problems leaders must solve in school, and develop a team structure among leadership faculty to facilitate their working together to teach modules that are, at least in part, school-based.

Primary responsibility: Leadership Program Design Team & District Partners

■ 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.

Primary responsibility: College of Education Administrators and Faculty

■ Realign the faculty advancement and reward system to include acceptance of school-based work as part of tenure and promotion requirements.

Primary responsibility: College of Education Administrators and Faculty

■ Support school districts in identifying potential leaders with demonstrated leadership ability, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and a proven record of high performance.

Primary responsibility: Leadership Program Design Team & District Partners

■ Adjust budgets to allocate additional time, resources and staffing to coordinate, develop and implement a new curriculum for school leader preparation.

Primary responsibility: University Chief Administrators & State Regulators

■ Solicit waivers from state agencies as needed to address certification issues.

Primary responsibility: University Chief Administrators & State Regulators

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- Attract and place a broader pool of able candidates into the principalship and superintendency.

- Strengthen the abilities of principals and superintendents to improve student learning.

- Create conditions that facilitate and support leadership for successful schools.

ABOUT SREB

The Southern Regional Education Board, the nation's first interstate compact for education, was created in 1948 by Southern governors. SREB helps educational and governmental leaders work cooperatively to advance education and, in doing so, to improve the region's social and economic life.

SREB assists state leaders by directing attention to key issues: collecting, compiling and analyzing comparative data; and initiating studies and discussions that lead to recommendations for state and institutional action.