Successful Principal-Making Collaborations: From Perspective of a University Partner
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Successful principal making requires collaboration between key personnel working in higher education institutions and P12 school districts who commit to assuring that new principals have requisite knowledge, skills, and proficiencies for leading contemporary schools (e.g., Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1998; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991; Murphy, 1992; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1989). Through this shared commitment across institutional boundaries, the theory-practice integration of school leadership is strengthened (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Jackson & Kelley, 2002), and the "making of a principal" (Lane, 1984, p. x) process achieves desired outcomes. In other words, because "neither districts nor universities can single-handedly provide the breadth of experience needed to adequately develop and nurture leaders for today's P-12 schools" (Laboratory for Student Success, 2005, p. 2), leadership educators and leadership practitioners must collaborate.

In successful collaborations, university professors provide a leadership knowledge base and assist with disposition refinement toward effective school leadership, while practicing administrators guide the socialization of candidates into the community of principal practice during mentored internships (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004, 2006; Capasso & Daresh, 2001; Crow & Glascock, 1995; Mullen & Lick, 1999; Orr, 2006). Preparation programs delivered through university-district collaborations can thus improve the quality and relevance of program content, support career advancement of program graduates (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Grogan & Robertson, 2002; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002), and minimize criticisms of university-based preparation programs by building stronger links between preparation and practice (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Jacobson, 1998; Murphy, 1992; Stein, 2006). Further, the prolonged interaction between professors and practitioners can strengthen the continuum of recruitment, preparation, hiring, and induction of new principals (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Milstein, 1992) and provide mutually beneficial renewal of both universities and schools (Rumberger, 1992; Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988).

Some district-university collaborative relationships transform into partnerships that address specific district needs (e.g., Browne-Ferrigno, 2004; Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006; Orr & Barber, 2006; Peel, Wallace, Buckner, Wrenn, & Evans, 1998; Whitaker, King & Vogel, 2004). In these more tightly coupled arrangements, professors and practitioners work together to develop curriculum, deliver instruction, assess learning progress, and monitor internships. Participation by practicing principals serving as program designers and as mentors to prospective candidates "provides authenticity" (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004, p. 471) and ensures learning embedded in authentic practice (Beck, 1994; Billet, 1996; Smith, 2003).

The Wallace Foundation recently funded research to explore different approaches used in eight of its funded urban-based leadership preparation initiatives and extent to which those districts influenced the work of their university collaborators or local universities. Like the other Wallace-funded projects visited, the one designed and implemented by Springfield District 186 (District 186) and Illinois State University (ISU) exhibited all aspects of the core quality features that guided the national study, i.e., selective admission of candidates, closed-cohort grouping, relevant course content, differentiated

learning activities and field experiences, ongoing performance assessment, mentored internship, and qualified faculty (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Among the eight cases in this study, however, only the District 186-ISU program evidenced a true partnership from the onset—and even sustained it beyond Wallace funding.

This paper begins with a review of challenges and opportunities presented when district and university personnel attempt to collaborate, followed by a short description of the methodology used to examine the collaboration between District 186 and ISU. The remainder of the paper describes the two partners and the partnership program; perspectives by individuals interviewed during the site visit are woven throughout the text. The paper closes with lessons learned from this case study.

District-University Collaborations: Conceptual Framework

Although collaborations between university professors and educational practitioners have been recommended for decades as a strategy to contextualize learning and enhance professional practice (e.g., Boyer, 1994; Bruner, 1960; Dewey, 1899, 1938; Goodlad, 1990, 2000), studies have exposed challenges that must be recognized and addressed if universities and districts are to work together successfully (e.g., Barnett, Hall, Berg, & Camarena, 1999; Basom & Yerkes, 2004; Peel, Peel, & Baker, 2002; Whitaker et al., 2004). Most often, impediments to collaboration are caused by differing "purpose, function, structure, clientele, reward systems, rules and regulations" (Goodlad, 1988, p. 14) unique to each organization or institution.

Conflicting Dichotomies: Activity versus Reflectivity

Educational practitioners work in cultures that value action and application of experience-based knowledge, whereas university professors work in cultures that value reflection, analysis, and research-derived knowledge (Cuban, 1990; Rumberger, 1992). The activity-reflectivity dichotomy between P12 systems and postsecondary institutions spans a continuum from a focus on "localized, practical concerns and activities" by school districts to "emphasis on research and scholarship" at universities (Knight, Wiseman, & Smith, 1992, p. 269). Especially at research-extensive universities, professors' work expectations are centered on knowledge creation and dissemination, particularly time-consuming academic writing for grants and publications (Basom & Yerkes, 2004; Stein, 2006). These differing personnel roles and responsibilities and competing organizational goals and policies can stymie potential for district-university collaborations (Ledoux & McHenry, 2008; Teitel, 1993; Zimpher & Howey, 2005).

Collaboration Building: Critical Developmental Stages

Successful collaboration building is a process that requires a sequence of (a) *negotiation* during which purposes are clarified and joint expectations are developed, (b) *commitment* during which relationships are formed and a framework for joint efforts is created, and (c) *execution* when the work is conducted and commitments are delivered (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Ring & van de Ven, 1995). The potential for collaboration, however, can be thwarted at any stage of collaboration building due to strained relationships formed during previous collaboration attempts, personality conflicts among key collaborators, and fear of the unknown. Hence, inter-organizational collaboration is a process that "moves through a number of developmental stages . . . that may require as many as 10 years to become fully restructured" (Auger & Odel, 1992, p. 266).

Partnerships: Tightly Structured Collaborations

When a loosely coupled collaboration transforms into a tightly structured relationship, it is typically called a *partnership*, a word implying "an active, direct form of cooperation . . . [achieved] only after people connect with ideas, form relationships based upon equity and trust, and develop commitment to shared goals" (Osguthorpe, Harris, Black, Cutler, & Harris, 1995, p. 7). Unlike a loosely coupled collaboration, a partnership has well defined organizational structures, established practices and procedures, and parity among all partners. Partnership building requires mutual openness and relational trust, individual and collective commitment, and shared vision of goal accomplishment reinforced through shared experiences and action (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Perman, 2007; Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988). Successful partnership arrangements typically utilize public relations to build broad-based ownership, strategic planning and collective visioning, and written agreements stipulating clear roles and responsibilities of each partner (Barnett, 1995; Grobe, Curnan, & Melchoir, 1993). Sustainability of the partnerships requires that structures and procedures be adaptive to changing needs of the partners and responsive to changing leadership within the partnership.

Partnership Leadership: Multi-level Responsibilities

According to Goldring and Sims (2005), building effectively functioning district-university partnerships requires three levels of leadership. First are *top-level leaders* (e.g., university deans, department chairs, district superintendents) who gain commitment for the partnership, particularly through acquiring the much-needed financial resources to support the initiative. Second are *frontline leaders* (e.g., senior faculty, experienced principals) who work together, often on a day-to-day basis, to establish the mission, vision, and strategies of the partnership. These individuals must be carefully selected because they create "operational and strategic ideas" and "translate plans into action" (Senge et al., 1999, as cited by Goldring & Sims, p. 233). Finally, partnerships need *bridge leaders* (i.e., mentors, internal consultants, thinking partners) skilled at engaging like-minded individuals across the partnering organizations. These individuals participate in a "sophisticated dance between those in organizational power in each of the partner organizations and those who [have] only informal power within these same institutions" (p. 234).

Methodology: Case Study

The case study of this district-university program spanned ten months (July 2008-April 2009) and utilized (a) individual and group interviews at both sites, (b) observations of university classes and district training sessions, and (c) document reviews (Yin, 1994). Standard protocols and procedures developed by the national research team and aligned with design elements of the larger study were used in this case study (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2002).

A unique feature of this program among the others in the national study is evidence of characteristics found in partnerships—particularly its sustainability beyond cessation of Wallace Foundation funding by the launch of another cohort in the fall of 2008. The quoted material in the text contains words lifted from transcripts of interviews with individuals and groups involved with the leadership program (e.g., program designers, professors, district administrators, principals, graduates). Only when is important for understanding the significance of a quotation is attribution to the source provided. It is important to note for clarity that "ISU" refers to the university partner, whereas "EAF" refers to the department and faculty of the department that delivers the leadership preparation programs described below.

District-University Partnership: The Story

The unique District 186-ISU partnership emerged from the professional relationship and personal friendship between Dr. Diane Rutledge, former District 186 superintendent, and Dr. Dianne Ashby, former chair of the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations (EAF) at ISU. The women met while completing doctoral studies and strengthened their friendship while serving together as members of a statewide taskforce. They shared the belief that effective school leadership was necessary for student achievement and decided to invite others from their organizations to join their conversations about a possible collaboration. Applying for a LEAD grant from The Wallace Foundation served as the catalyst for establishing a formal partnership between District 186 and ISU to design and deliver innovative school leadership preparation. In other words, Rutledge and Ashby were the top-level leaders whose shared vision and commitment initiated partnership building.

One of the first tasks was determining the roles and responsibilities of each institutional partner and goals for the partnership. Rutledge and Ashby assigned this task to three frontline leaders: the District 186 associate superintendent, District 186 human resources director, and EAF co-chair at ISU. The three were known as the "key collaborators," a term used by personnel at both the district and university. According to the human resources director, who also served as the LEAD project director, the three women maintained "informal, easy conversations" about the design and delivery of the program and agreed that a "learn as we go" strategy was the best approach to use.

Partnership Building and External Support

Receipt of a LEAD grant from The Wallace Foundation, which paid all expenses for two principal preparation cohorts (one beginning in Fall 2003, the other in Fall 2005), supported partnership building. Although grant funding has ceased, the partnership launched a third—totally self supporting—principal preparation cohort in Fall 2008. According to the current professional development director, District 186 maintains its ties with ISU because the university is recognized throughout Illinois for "producing high quality teacher graduates." Other district personnel assert that the partnership's success is due to "shared values and vision" and willingness of ISU faculty to modify courses and the internship to "accommodate district needs." ISU professors remain committed to the partnership because it provides an opportunity for them "to customize [their] program for a client."

District Partner: Contextual Challenges

Located near the geographic center of Illinois, Springfield serves as both the state capital and the seat of Sangamon County. Many memorials and nationally preserved buildings associated with Abraham Lincoln commemorate his living and practicing law there from 1837 to 1861. The city is center for wholesale trade, retail, and distribution; beyond its limits is a rich agricultural region noted for sorghum, corn, cattle, and dairying[2]. With a population of approximately 112,000 residents, Springfield is the sixth largest city in Illinois. Nearly all of its residents (90.9%) are high school graduates, and one-third (31.6%) hold at least a baccalaureate degree. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the most prevalent races are White (81%) and Black (15.3%), and approximately 12% percent of Springfield's population live below poverty level.

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[2] Retrieved February 25, 2009, from http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0108209.html

Nearly one-fourth (23.7%) of Springfield's residents are children (persons under age 18)[3], of which approximately 14,000 are served by District 186. The system has 33 regular schools (24 elementary, 6 middle, 3 high), an early learning center, a charter middle school, and 4 alternative/adult centers. The 2008 district report card[4] indicates the pupil racial or ethnic composition is White (52.9%), Black (36.8%), Hispanic (2.1%), and Other (7.2%). Although nearly 60% of its student population is classified as low-income (i.e., coming from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches), District 186 graduated 85% of that student subpopulation in 2008. That same year, its overall graduation rate was 89%, which exceeded the statewide rate of 86.5%.

Although the City of Springfield is experiencing population growth, District 186 cannot extend its boundaries to incorporate newer, affluent housing areas. The district is thus becoming more "urban" due to increasing racial/ethnic diversity and decreasing socioeconomic status of its residents. Although the size of its student population remains constant, the subpopulation of children and youth requiring special services is increasing.

The district's slogan, *Working Together to Achieve Outstanding Result,* is a testament to the strong support for public education in the area. Since 1981, district has received funds from the Springfield Public Schools Foundation, a community-based, not-for-profit organization whose mission is *creating a margin of excellence*. The Foundation has contributed nearly $2 million through donations, fundraising, and memorial gifts. Funds are distributed to the district through teacher grants, funding of special projects, and contributions to school libraries.

Need for school improvement. Despite systemwide efforts to assure student achievement, a review of annual accountability reports by the Illinois State Board of Education indicates that District 186 has consistently had from six to nine schools listed on the Academic Watch Status lists since 2001; five of the schools (elementary, middle, high) have appeared multiple times[5]. Between 19% and 30% of Springfield's schools have been under performing since student-performance accountability measures have been instituted.

School restructuring. When the case study was conducted, restructuring secondary schools was the district's current reform initiative with "rigor, relevance, and relationships" serving as the cornerstones of the initiative. In the fall of 2008, which was the beginning of his second year with District 186, the superintendent demonstrated his commitment to restructuring by removing all three high school principals and replacing them with successful elementary principals. Four small "learning academies" composed of staff and students were created in each high school to strengthen relationships among adults and students as well as their families. Alignment of curriculum across all high schools was initiated, and options for time-delivery systems (e.g., number of periods in a day, ways the school day is structured) were being explored[6].

University Partner: Commitment to Public Service

ISU is a doctoral-granting institution serving over 20,000 students located in the Bloomington-Normal metropolitan area (population over 160,000), about 75 miles north of Springfield and within a two- to

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[3] Retrieved February 25, 2009, from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/17/1772000.html
[4] Retrieved September 15, 2008, from http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/schools/reportcards/DistReportCard08.pdf
[5] Retrieved January 2, 2009, from http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/schools/reportcards/DistReportCard08.pdf
[6] Retrieved October 2, 2008, from http://www.springfield.k12.il.us/about/186connections/7541-059-94b.pdf

three-hour drive to Chicago, Indianapolis and St. Louis. Originally founded in 1857 as a normal school, it later because the state's first public university. ISU has a rich heritage and long-standing reputation as a center for the preparation of educational practitioners (e.g., teachers, administrators, policy analysts), and today is one of the largest producers of teachers in the nation. Its "mission-driven public service and outreach activities complement the University's teaching and research functions."[7]

That commitment to public service and outreach by the EAF department at ISU is evident in the statement appearing in its 2003 accreditation application to ELCC/NCATE:

> A philosophy of preparation involves beliefs about learning, leading, curriculum, assessment, and the role of practitioners in preparing educational leaders. As a department we are committed to on-going significant involvement with practitioners in both program development and delivery. This commitment is reflected in our hiring of former and current practitioners as clinical and adjunct faculty. . . . Both the Illinois Principals Association and Illinois Association of School Administrators have chosen the EAF department at ISU as their academic home, again reflecting the department's strong relationship with the field. (Cover Sheet, p. 2)

Candidates can earn the Master of Science in Education degree linked to the Illinois Type 75 (principal) certification. Individuals holding Type 75 certification and having at least two years administrative or leadership experiences can earn advanced general administrative endorsements (e.g., superintendent, chief school business officer) while simultaneously earning an Education Doctorate (EdD) degree or a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

Experienced collaborators. EAF faculty members deliver P12 leadership preparation programs on campus, off campus, and online—often through collaborative initiatives with districts. Prior to partnering with District 186, faculty delivered cohort-based graduate programs on site in the Chicago Public Schools, Peoria Public Schools, and Quad Cities. Its program with Wheeling Public Schools, a suburb of Chicago, was the first collaboration in which EAF faculty worked with a district "to identify and prepare future principals on-site with a curriculum individualized to district issues" (ELCC/NCATE Application Cover Sheet, 2003, p. 18). This joint effort yielded an important outcome: Within three years of completing the program, most graduates of the Wheeling program were serving as administrators. EAF faculty view working in partnership with districts not only as an "opportunity to customize" leadership preparation that addresses unique "needs of clients," but also as a means to understand better districts' efforts to improve and implement reforms. Through the department's sponsorship of two doctoral cohorts in Thailand, the faculty has gained international perspectives. They assert that delivering programs through partnerships provide contexts for research, which allows them to "connect scholarship with practice" in their professional practices.

Active professionals. All EAF professors and instructors have experience as K-12 educators (e.g., classroom teachers, department chairs, school principals, district administrators). They are active members and officers in state-based professional organizations, such as the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), Illinois Principal Association (IPA), Illinois Women Administrators, and Large Unit District Association (LUDA), and collaboratively plan and co-sponsor an annual Administrators' Round-UP for those groups. The Illinois Board of Education "recognizes the expertise of EAF faculty by regularly requesting their assistance on statewide initiatives."

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[7] Retrieved December 27, 2008, from http://www.educatingillinois.ilstu.edu

EAF faculty members are likewise active nationally through ISU's membership in the Holmes Partnership, National Network for Educational Renewal, and University Council for Educational Administration. Professors are members of or hold leadership positions in the American Association of School Administrators, National Council for Professors of Educational Administration, and University Council for Educational Administration.

EAF faculty members also assume editorial responsibilities for several publications housed at ISU. Examples include *Planning and Changing: An Education Leadership and Policy Journal* (a peer-reviewed publication about issues and policies relevant to educational leaders, practitioners, and policymakers), *Illinois State Education Law and Policy Journal* (a forum for interchange of ideas, theories, and issues on school law and policy among practitioners, professors, and attorneys), and *The Grapevine* (an annual compilation of data on state tax support for higher education).

Department mission. The mission of the EAF department is to prepare people of diverse backgrounds for leadership roles in education; academic programs are based on the assumption that leadership in educational systems is essential for society to produce an enlightened citizenry. Programs and degrees are grounded in the belief that educational leaders require knowledge, skills, values, and commitment appropriate for administrative, policy, instructional, and research roles in societies striving to realize the democratic ideal.[8] Programs are structured by and delivered through two specific philosophical orientations—constructivism and democracy.

Philosophical orientation toward constructivism. Constructivism as a theory about how children, adults, and organizations learn is the foundation for EAF preparations programs for principals and superintendents. This philosophical perspective is informed centrally by the work of Lambert and colleagues (1995) who assert that constructivism is unique from other learning theories in the following ways:

- *Knowledge and beliefs are formed within the learner.*
- *Learners personally imbue experiences with meaning.*
- *Learning activities should cause learners to gain access to their experiences, knowledge, and beliefs.*
- *Learning is a social activity that is enhanced by shared inquiry.*
- *Reflection and metacognition are essential aspects of constructing knowledge and meaning.*
- *Learners play a critical role in assessing their own learning.*
- *The outcomes of the learning process are varied and often unpredictable.* (p. 17)

The EAF approach to leadership preparation and assessment is also informed by the concepts of learning organizations and continuous growth articulated by Senge (1990) and Wheatley (1992) as well as shared leadership for school improvement by Barth (1990), who served a consultant to the EAF department during its program redesign during the mid-1990s. According to the cover letter of the department's 2003 accreditation application, the faculty's collective philosophical perspective is evidenced in the curriculum that

- Engages students in significant content presented from multiple perspectives using active learning experiences that involve individual reflection and group process.

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[8] Retrieved December 27, 2008, from http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/eafdept/standards/index.shtml#principal

- Uses Conceptual Course Frameworks to provide a structure that allows for faculty individuality, yet insures students will experience the same curriculum when course instructors differ.
- Stipulates in the Performance Assessment System authentic developmental performance assessment activities that are the central learning experiences to develop students' awareness, understanding, and leadership skills.
- Honors periodic Self Assessment Inventories as a significant measure of student progress toward mastery of the standards and meaningful data for program improvement.
- Requires a sustained substantial internship (3 credit hours midway and the final 3 credit hours at the program's end) that occurs at two or more levels and sites, involves two or three field mentors, and is mutually planned and evaluated by the student, a faculty member, and the field mentor.
- Culminates with the standards-based Professional Portfolio project developed throughout the program and submitted for evaluation during the final 3 credit hours of internship, a portfolio centered around students' self-selected artifacts of work including their reflections about how the artifacts chosen demonstrate that they meet the ELCC standards.

Philosophical orientation toward democracy. The EAF commitment "to the college's conceptual framework, *Realizing the Democratic Ideal*, strengthens and informs" how faculty prepare leaders "who will build democratic community in their schools, and districts." Faculty commit to modeling the department mission statement to affirm "the importance we place on working with people of diverse backgrounds" and to honoring "diverse voices as we strive together with our students to develop the *moral virtues* of caring as well as the *intellectual virtues* of knowing." They are committed to their philosophical stance and carefully select like-minded individuals to join their faculty when openings occur.

Regular Principal Preparation Program

The regular EAF principal preparation program was designed for practicing school professionals (e.g., teachers, counselors, psychologists) who demonstrate leadership potential and have sufficient experience (i.e., four years full-time experience in P12 settings) to contribute to the program and the field. The Illinois Certification for the General Administrative Endorsement may be obtained through the P12 master's program or as a post-master's certification-only program. The program requires completion of at least 39 hours of coursework taken in a required sequence, and students are expected to own a computer. Courses are offered nights and weekends to accommodate schedules of full-time educational professionals; some online options exist for selected courses[9].

Program goals and objectives. Graduates of the EAF program with concentration in P12 school leadership are expected to have developed the ability to approach challenges and opportunities using multiple perspectives and leadership skills. Hence, they should be able to

- Develop, articulate, implement, administer, and share with the school community a vision focused on learning.
- Develop and sustain a school instructional program that promotes student learning and staff professional growth at the building level.

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[9] Retrieved December 27, 2008, from http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/eafdept/programs/p12masters.shtml#outcomes

- Manage a school's organization, operation and resources to produce a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Work positively with families and community members by identifying and responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Promote the success of all students in their building by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Understand and respond to the political, social, economic, legal and cultural context of the school and larger community[10].

Content relevancy to standards. Program content and requirements (at least 39-credit-hours) are framed by the ELCC/NCATE and state standards and informed by recommendations of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, University Council for Educational Information, and Southern Regional Education Board. An extensive review of research literature about effective school leadership and effective preparation of school leaders is also apparent in program documents[11]. The curriculum "targets content and skill development" and conforms to field-based learning activities described in the ELCC/NCATE standards.

Curriculum coherence. According to the EAF department chairs and faculty, constructivist and adult-learning theories guide the design and delivery of all their courses. Focus is on the "need of students," not what the professors love to teach. Coursework leading to an Illinois Type 75 administrator certification[12] focuses on the principalship, administering educational technology, research methods and statistics, administering programs for students with disabilities, evaluating student performance, public relations, professional ethics, managing human and fiscal resources, legal bases of public education, and organization development; an administration seminar (3 credit hours) and two semesters of professional practice (6 credit hours) are also required. When the program is delivered off campus, some courses are adapted to specific district needs and taught by district personnel. Prior to enrolling in the second practicum, students are expected to have successfully passed the required Illinois certification examination for principals.[13]

Quality internships. Field-based learning activities are threaded throughout the ISU program to develop candidates' "awareness of principal work." A clinical professor (typically a former Illinois school administrator) serves as the intern supervisor and instructor of record for the two 3-credit-hour practicum courses, one taken at program midpoint and the other near program end. Candidates work with two different mentor principals and at schools that are distinctly different (e.g., elementary or secondary, public or private, rural or urban). They keep weekly logs of their activities, write professional reflections about their experiences, and complete an extensive online self-assessment at the close of each course. The goal of the two internship experiences is to assure that candidates' thinking about a school changes "from a teacher perspective to a principal perspective."

Assessment and evaluation. The principal preparation program uses an online Performance Assessment System to assure that authentic activities are the central learning experiences for developing candidates' awareness, understanding, and leadership skills. Candidates complete online self-assessments at three

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[10] Retrieved December 27, 2008, from http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/eafdept/programs/p12masters.shtml#goals
[11] Retrieved December 29, 2008, from http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/eafdept/programs/p12masters.shtml#outcomes and from http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/eafdept/programs/cohorts/d186brochure.pdf
[12] Retrieved December 29, 2008, from ttp://www.coe.ilstu.edu/eafdept/programs/p12masters.shtml#certificationreqs
[13] Retrieved February 24, 2009, from http://www.icts.nesinc.com/PDFs/IL_field186_SG.pdf

points in the program to assess their progress toward mastery of standards and to provide meaningful evaluation data for program improvement. Mentors and instructors also complete performance assessments for candidates participating in practicum courses.

During the internship courses, candidates develop a professional practice plan and maintain a practicum log. Self-selected artifacts generated through major course assignments and internship projects are presented in candidates' portfolio; their reflections about those artifacts provide additional evidence of their professional growth and accomplishment of program standards. At least two EAF faculty members review and rate the contents of candidate portfolios. Prior to graduation from the program, candidates must pass the state examination for administrator certification.

Social and professional support. Whenever the principal preparation program is delivered off-campus, the closed-cohort model is used (i.e., candidates begin and proceed through the program together as an intact group). The EAF faculty intentionally uses this delivery method for partnership programs not only to manage course scheduling, but also to create a controlled learning environment through which candidates can develop long-term relationships with their district peers.

Unique District 186-ISU Partnership Preparation Program

The District 186-ISU preparation cohort program spans six semesters with "embedded professional practice" throughout; weekly evening classes in the district are supported by online learning activities. The program aligns with the regular ISU program with three exceptions: (a) Some courses are taught by District 186 personnel, (b) candidates must complete a capstone course developed and assessed by district personnel, and (c) professional practice is integrated throughout the program through a practicum each semester.

During early years of the partnership, an advisory team composed of representatives from District 186 (i.e., principals, district administrators) and ISU (professors) offered suggestions for course content, learning activities, and assignments. The advisory team disbanded at their request after the first year because team members felt their assistance was no longer needed.

Admission, Retention, and Completion

Early in the program-planning phase, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and human resources director conceived the notion of an "ideal principal" for District 186 as one who (a) values relationships and communicates well, (b) has extensive knowledge of curriculum, (d) understands data and its use in assuring that learners' needs are addressed, (e) has a strong sense of community, (d) is flexible and willing to take risks, and (e) is open to constructive criticism. These characteristics became the foundation for selection of candidates for the LEAD cohorts in the partnership program.

Selective admissions. Admission to the program is a two-phase process, which requires individuals to apply to both partners. A recruitment flyer is collaboratively developed by the university and district to articulate specifically the steps in the process. ISU requires the traditional documents for admission to graduate studies (e.g., university application form, official transcripts from all postsecondary institutions awarding degrees, official Graduate Record Examination [GRE] scores) that are used in assessing applicant's potential of success in graduate studies. The documents listed below are required by District 186 and focus on applicant's professional experiences and leadership potential:

- A cover letter requesting consideration for admission in which an applicant outlines her or his desire to work as a school leader serving the needs of all students, professional qualifications making her or him a good candidate for the program, and assessment of academic skills and disciples possessed to complete the intensive program while working full time;
- An up-to-date professional resume;
- A writing sample indicating applicant's ability to complete master's level projects; and
- A letter of recommendation from her or his principal that assesses applicant's leadership experience, ability to make a difference in student academic performance, ability to work with colleagues and staff as a team, oral and written communication skills, and potential to become a leader who can motivate and support faculty to promote student learning for all.
- Two additional letters of recommendation from other district personnel serving in leadership roles.

Application files for the Wallace-funded cohorts were reviewed by the District 186 superintendent, assistant superintendent, human resources director, and other central office administrators. [Files for the Fall 2008 self-supported cohort were reviewed by the director of professional development.] When asked to describe the selection process for the first two cohorts, the former human resources director recalled,

> We [looked] at the leadership opportunities that [applicants] had already availed themselves—were they teacher leaders in their buildings, [members] on their instructional or site leadership teams? . . . . [We then carefully reviewed the] three letters of recommendation that they had to have from a current principal and from two other people in the district in leadership roles. . . . If we needed to follow up with interviews or with phone calls to the people writing the letters, we certainly did. We looked at the experiences that [applicants] had had and where they had been in the district. Springfield is a large district, [but]. . . .There were very few [applicants for] these cohorts that I either didn't know personally or I knew somebody who I could easily talk with and would be honest with me about their abilities.

Once initial selections were made by the district, a roster of prospective cohort members and appropriate application files were sent to the EAF department at ISU for review. Faculty assessed applicants' writing sample, transcripts from all postsecondary institutions awarding degrees, and GRE scores. All proposed cohort members meeting department-established GRE cut scores (i.e., 450 Verbal and Quantitative, 4.5 Analytic) were admitted. For those with GRE below cut scores, an holistic review of the application file was completed; if admitted, candidate were required to take a 1-credit independent study to improve their academic writing. Although admission to the partnership program is primarily determined by the district, the EAF faculty accepts district-recommended applicants if and only if they meet ISU requirements for admission to graduate studies. The faculty holds firm to its commitment to deliver a "quality program" because "quality will attract people" that ultimately determine the reputation of the institution.

Candidate recruitment. Most members of the Fall 2003 cohort determined independently to submit applications because district administrators were too busy developing the program to tap or recruit potential applicants; conversely, many applicants for the Fall 2005 cohort were tapped or recruited. According to the former human resources director, the district supported self-selection because she either knew each applicant's abilities and leadership potential or contacted candidates' references to get additional information if she did not. The Fall 2003 cohort included 19 candidates (18 graduated),

and the Fall 2005 cohort had 18 candidates (17 graduated). Relocation and health issues were the reasons that the two candidates did not complete the program.

Because the Fall 2008 cohort (and any future cohorts) must be self supported and because ISU requires at least 10 students be enrolled for an off-campus program to pay operational expenses, applicants were actively recruited. The 14 candidates paid their own tuition and fees, approximately $800 per 3-credit course, and purchased their course materials. After successfully completing the first semester, they were eligible to apply to ISU for financial assistance.

Partnership Curriculum

All courses are delivered from 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM in the District 186 board room on Thursdays, known as "LEAD Night" among district personnel. Due to the distance between the university and district, ISU professors typically teach the first course. Partnership candidates take the same courses as those in the regular ISU program but with two important differences. First, the courses marked with asterisk (*) in the list below are taught by district personnel who provide training in specific district procedures and tools. Second, EAF 498 Professional Practice (total of 270 practicum clock hours) is delivered across all 6 semesters, rather than as two 3-credit-hour courses.

ISU professors develop course syllabi and send them to District 186 for review and modification, if needed. The EAF 482 Administrative Seminar is a district-developed capstone course, which is usually taught by an instructional team composed of practitioners and professors. Following is the course sequence for the partnership program:

Y1 Fall:	EAF 485, Principalship
	EAF 401, Administering Educational Technology*
	EAF 498, Professional Practice (1 credit = 45 hours)
Y1 Spring:	EAF 410, Research Methods/Statistics in Education I
	C&I 478, Evaluating Student Performance
	EAF 498, Professional Practice (1 credit = 45 hours)
Y1 Summer:	EAF 494, Public Relations
	EAF 465, Human and Fiscal Resources*
	EAF 498, Professional Practice (1 credit = 45 hours)
Y2 Fall:	EAF 423, Professional Ethics in Education
	EAF 447, Administering Education Programs for Students with Disabilities
	EAF 498, Professional Practice (1 credit = 45 hours)
Y2 Spring:	EAF 423, Legal Bases of Public Education
	EAF 487, Organizational Development*
	EAF 498, Professional Practice (1 credit = 45 hours)
Y2 Summer:	EAF 482, Administration Seminar*
	EAF 498, Professional Practice (1 credit = 45 hours)

Like courses delivered on campus, active-learning strategies are integrated into all partnership courses; reading and reflective writing are major components of first- and second-semester courses. A hybrid delivery model (i.e., face-to-face meetings, online activities) was introduced in the Fall 2008 cohort.

Professional Practice

The EAF department provides candidates with a Guide for Students that outlines specific tasks and projects to be completed during the professional practicum each semester. It is strongly recommend that candidates work with three or more mentors at different sites during the preparation program to expand their understanding of the district as a complex system.

The overarching requirement for embedded internship is that it "must provide structured, sustained, standards-based experiences in authentic settings." Candidates must develop a professional practice plan, maintain a practicum log, create artifacts appropriate for inclusion in their portfolio, and complete online self-assessments at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the program. EAF faculty train practicum mentors and provide a Guide for Professional Practice Mentors to assure that each candidate receives full benefits of the required fieldwork. Mentors, typically experienced principals in District 186, complete online assessment of their mentees.

Learning Assessment

The District 186-ISU program uses the same Performance Assessment System (i.e., online self assessments created by the EAF faculty) as the regular program. These self-assessments measure candidates' progress toward mastery of program standards and provide evaluation data for program improvement.

Project-based assignments, including action research, are required in all courses in the partnership program. Portfolio artifacts presented by candidates must demonstrate the skills they learned and evidence field experiences that are aligned with the performance indicators within the state standards for administrative practice; each portfolio is reviewed and rated by two EAF professors. Candidates must pass state certification exam before final semester in program

Post-Program Support

District 186 assumes sole responsibility for post-program support. Depending upon availability of positions, graduates have opportunities to serve as a LEAD intern or an administrative intern, both full-time, paid positions. LEAD internships were originally paid by the Wallace grant, but are now funded through a line item in the annual district budget. LEAD interns (originally 4 per year, now up to 5 per year) are teachers on special assignment serving as quasi-administrators. Schools or principals apply annually for LEAD interns following posting of the district's request for proposal. Placements of the interns are determined by the district office and based on appropriateness of fit between prospective intern's abilities and school needs, principal expertise, and assurances that the LEAD intern will engage in instructional leadership activities at least 50% of time. The one-year position provides LEAD interns with full-time experience working side-by-side an exemplary principal. Some individuals serve as a LEAD intern multiple times; however, the district only guarantees that LEAD interns will have a teaching position at conclusion of the internship year.

Long before receiving a LEAD grant from The Wallace Foundation, the district created the administrative intern position. Middle schools and high schools are allowed to use a teacher-allocation unit to fund a teacher on special assignment as an administrative intern. The position is for at least one year, but may be longer. These interns may be assigned diverse responsibilities that range the continuum from purely

operational to purely academic. Administrative interns typically hold principal certification, but that is not a requirement.

Cohort members in the first two LEAD cohorts had to sign an agreement to remain employed by District 186 for the five years following program completion and to pursue leadership opportunities. Those same cohort members, however, were not guaranteed a leadership position because district leadership believes it is important to provide opportunities for graduates of other programs to become principals.

Program Outcomes

Most graduates of the Fall 2003 and Fall 2005 cohorts serve in some leadership capacity. Demand for principal replacements, however, is low for two reasons. First, District 186 is small (i.e., 35 principalships for its 33 regular schools, early childhood center, and charter middle school) and maintains a stable population of approximately 14,000 students. A managing principal at the district office oversees the four alternative/adult centers with help from four on-site assistant principals. Second, most principals are lifelong residents of Springfield and have principal tenures far above the national average of 4.3 years at the same school (Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, & Orlofsky, 2006).

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District-University Partnership: Why It Works

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A surprising finding during the site visit was that both top-level leaders and two of the three frontline leaders playing key roles in development and implementation of the partnership were no longer directly involved. Both the superintendent and human resources director retired the year previous to the site visit and assumed leadership positions at LUDA; the assistant superintendent relocated to another locale. The EAF chair became dean of the college of education and was promoted to ISU Vice President of Advancement shortly before the site visit. The only remaining original partnership developer and implementer (at that time EAF co-chair) now serves as EAF chair.

Despite these leadership changes in District 186 and ISU, the partnership continues. Interviews conducted during the September 2008 site visit provided insights into why the partnership emerged and continues to be sustained. Following is a discussion, based on three of the four major elements of the conceptual framework presented in the opening pages of the paper, from the university perspective.

Mutual Understanding of Partner Differences

The district and university are two education systems with different personnel expectations and organizational goals that can potentially stymie partnership building (Ledous & McHenry, 2008; Teitel, 1993; Zimpher & Howey, 2005). During interviews with personnel at both the district and university, assertions were made that personal relationships and shared commitments were key drivers in the design and delivery of high-quality principal preparation through the District 186-ISU partnership.

During a group interview with EAF faculty, discussion turned to the department's philosophical orientation toward constructivism and democracy. When asked how the department sustains this orientation, a faculty member replied, "When we do our telephone interviews [with perspective faculty candidates], we are very specific in what we ask and what we define in terms of candidates—what they might bring to the university." A peer explained that although the department evaluates prospective faculty based on their "teaching, excellent service, and publications," faculty are particularly concerned with candidates' teaching expertise and learning outcomes. Thus, "students serve on search

committees" and "evaluate the candidates" performance during lessons taught. Faculty expressed pride that ISU is recognized as "the most respected preparer of educators in Illinois."

When asked what they thought made ISU appealing to District 186 as a prospective partner, the department co-chair asserted, "We were going to provide a quality program with the flexibility that we can" but not "water down the program just to be a partner." In fact, ISU did not want to be "in competition with" the university located in Springfield during the district's initial collaboration attempts, and thus, EAF faculty "stayed out of the picture until the district invited us."

In an attempt to understand how ISU addressed the needs of District 186, a member of the research team asked, *Are there aspects of urbanicity in your work in Springfield that is different from ways in which you engage with your candidates not in the Springfield cohort?* A further prompt asked the group to consider the differences, if any, between urbanicity in Springfield compared to other sites funded by Wallace (e.g., Chicago, Providence, St. Louis). After several professors shared their definition of "urban," the professor who teaches the ethics course offered her understanding.

> I just had two thoughts about the concept of urbanicity, and they're not in competition necessarily [with early definitions shared]. One is that it's a euphemism for brown skin and low income, and the other one is an idea I use in my classes. The more urban an area is, the more likely you are to see the full range of humanity in very short order. . . . Urban is cosmopolitan, very high income, flamboyant, theatrical, commercial . . . all those things. When you try to counter the euphemistic meaning of urban as brown skin and low income, then the other thought that I think is relevant is that in this global age, urbanicity is leaving the cities. . . . We do have an uncontroversially defined urban population relocating to places like Bloomington [ISU location] and Springfield [District 186 location], and we don't know what that means.

Her comments initiated further dialogue among her peers that in other university settings may not have evidenced respect for different points of view, references to resources to support perspectives, or applications to principal preparation. It was acknowledged that most candidates in the campus-based program live in small towns and rural communities that are not diverse. After several more minutes of dialogue, a professor summed up the collective thinking of the group: "We talk about ways to improve student learning, rather than ways to find reasons to exclude students from the regular classroom [or] regular school." This stream of commentary provided a glimpse into the faculty's authenticity concerning its philosophical orientations, suggesting that they approached their interactions with District 186 with the same sensitivity to differences and needs as they do with one another.

Negotiation, Commitment, and Execution

Partnership building requires a developmental sequence of negotiation, commitment, and execution (Auger & Odel, 1992; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Ring & van de Ven, 1995) built on mutual respect, shared risk taking, and goal commitment. Although the District 186-ISU partnership preparation program was supported by The Wallace Foundation, it was not fully funded. Each partner provided valuable in-kind and monetary support for delivery of a high-quality principal preparation program.

Because most adjuncts served in district administrative positions (e.g., superintendent, assistant superintendent, human resource director, director of technology, director of special education), they were not paid for teaching in the program. ISU charged full tuition rates, but no campus fees for students. Salaries paid to university professors were partially generated through tuition; however, they

were not compensated for time traveling roundtrip between Springfield and the ISU campus (at least 3 hours each week) to facilitate face-to-face classes.

District 186 provided meeting space, laptops for cohort members who do not own computers, and practicum mentors. In turn, ISU contributions to the program included (a) travel expenses for program faculty between campus and Springfield; (b) practicum supervision by the ISU Academic Professor, a retired administrator in full-time non-tenure track position; (c) videoconferencing technology for IP-based connections from ISU to District 186; and (d) candidate access to the ISU Center for Education Policy and Placement Office for assistance in developing portfolio, resumes, and interview skills.

Perhaps the most significant evidence of negation, commitment, and execution relates to development of the program curriculum. While planning for the first cohort, ISU faculty meet with District 186 personnel to review proposed course syllabi, discuss possible textbooks, and determine if the assignments would support candidates' professional learning needs. A veteran professor recalled her response to the district request for interviews with faculty: "My attitude was that I was proposing a course, and it was up to them to accept it or propose modifications. I was certainly willing to do that." A peer did not teach a course until the second cohort stated, "They wanted copies of the text, syllabus, and assignments, but there wasn't a review process." Customization of curriculum by ISU faculty included using district materials to assure program graduates "were prepared to use district's evaluation system" and that the program was "fulfilling what the district wanted and needed."

Changing the two-semester, 3-credit-hour internship into an "embedded practicum" spanning all six semesters was a major program modification. The ISU practicum instructor "sat down with each student and mentor in a one-one kind of meeting to talk through the whole process" to assure that "one standard per semester" was well covered. The modification for the District 186 cohort was so successful that the EAF department adopted the embedded-practicum model for all its principal preparation programs. Another major negation was distribution of teaching assignments—from some courses typically taught by professors being assigned to district personnel, to others being co-taught by both a university professor and a district administrator.

Clearly Defined Partnership Agreement

Unlike loosely coupled collaborations, a partnership has well defined organizational structures, established practices and procedures, and parity among partners (Barnett, 1995; Grobe et al., 1993; Osguthorpe et al., 1995). The partnership in this case study initiated its structure and governance long before grant funding arrived with representatives from the district and university "working a full year in advance" of the proposal submission. The 22-page formal agreement between District 186 and ISU outlines responsibilities to be assumed by each partner in the redesign and delivery of the partnership program.

Although a formal written agreement is renewed with launch of each new cohort, the relationship between the district and university is adaptive to changed circumstances. Collegial decision making and responsiveness by both partners occurs relatively quickly. The interview with the EAF chair and co-chair produced insights into why the partnership has been successful: "A partnership should be a win-win for both partners." In this case, District 186 has been "able to grow its own administrators . . . [and] leadership inside the district."

The partnership also benefited EAF faculty, particularly in the area of professional learning. For example, the co-chair asserted,

> Cohorts are a very different set of individuals, and they have a tendency, if they let you in, to really talk about some of the grinding things that go on inside the larger organization. If you take the right attitude, you can also learn a lot . . . in terms of being better prepared for your teaching experiences with others.

And although the district had "voice in terms of giving input" concerning various aspects of the program (e.g., admissions, curricular content, materials used, co-teaching), all modifications "had to meet both the university and the district criteria." EAF faculty were very proud that the District 186-ISU principal preparation program was very different from "just delivering the regular program off site."

Lessons Learned

The Wallace Foundation provided grants to districts and states to fundamentally improve the preparation of education leaders and the conditions that support their ability to lead change efforts to improve student achievement. Our purpose for conducting the case study of the District 186 program was to gain understanding about how the district collaborated with a local university on program design and delivery. We anticipated finding evidence of collaboration between the district and university and hoped to find evidence of the district influencing—in some way—how the university prepared principals.

Our initial review of documents and communication with key personnel at both locations prior to our site visit suggested to us that the collaboration was actually a more tightly coupled relationship, but we did not know what kind it was. Shortly after arriving, we discovered that District 186 and ISU were actually equal partners in designing and implementing an innovative preparation program. A shared vision for innovative school leadership by the former superintendent and former department chair was the impetus for partnership building, yet many individuals contributed to the success of the District-ISU LEAD program. We were pleased to discover that the partnership was sustained beyond external funding as evidenced by launch of a self-supporting cohort. We perceive that it is important, however, to give considerable credit to the EAF faculty in making the partnership a reality. Without their willingness to engage thoughtfully with district personnel and to modify the university program to meet the needs of the district, the District 186-ISU program could simply have been the implementation of the regular program off site.

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