Case Study: **A District-driven Principal Preparation Program Design**

The Providence School Department and the University of Rhode Island Partnership

Providence, Rhode Island

Background

The Providence School Department is part of a 15-state initiative funded in 2002 by a grant from the Wallace Foundation to put leadership at the core of systemic school reform by strengthening and diversifying the pool of potential leaders, improving the training of leaders and their professional development, and creating conditions in which they can do their jobs better. The Leadership for Educational Achievement in Districts (LEAD) Initiative provides support to districts that enroll large numbers of low-income students and that show the willingness and capacity to achieve systemwide reform of leadership that increases student achievement. Each of the 12 urban districts selected by the Wallace Foundation to participate in LEAD partners with one or more universities to develop and deliver a new model of leadership training that prepares aspiring and practicing school leaders to improve student achievement. Providence and its partner, the University of Rhode Island (URI), have designed a leadership preparation program that they believe will result in better-prepared principals who can lead urban schools to success.

Providence has formed working relationships with other groups to help them stay current with the knowledge and research about the processes and principles of learning, effective school leadership practices, the design of principal preparation programs and related policy issues, and the licensure and professional development of school leaders. These groups are the Institute for Learning (IFL), the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP), the Wallace Foundation, the Education Development Corporation (EDC), and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

This publication tells the story of the initial effort by the partners to design a principal preparation program aligned to the district's vision of higher achievement for all of its students. The Providence story begins with a *new* design of an educational leadership program, *not a redesign* of a traditional university-based one. Included in this telling of Providence's story are descriptions of what the collaborative process has meant for each partner, the program they designed and its early implementation, lessons learned, challenges faced, and possible actions for closing the gaps between where they currently are and where they need to go to meet their vision for Providence schools.

Currently, the research base for district and university collaborations on school leadership program design is thin. Many universities have not viewed local school districts as having the responsibility for preparing future leaders or the valuable knowledge and other resources needed for effective program design and implementation. Traditionally, districts have accepted what they got from universities as the best that scholarship and research can offer.

Until there is collaboration between districts and universities, a serious disconnect will continue between what districts and schools need principals to know and do and what universities prepare them to do. As a result, many aspiring principals will receive outdated, "one-size-fits-all" training that is long on management theory but short on knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to ensure the academic success of all students. **It is impossible to provide quality school-based experiences that engage aspiring principals in a developmental continuum of *observing*, *participating in* and *leading* teams in solving school problems without the district's commitment to principal preparation and the contribution of staff time and expertise.**

The Story Begins with a Vision

The Providence school system faces many challenges. During the past 30 years, the faces of the students within the district have changed significantly. The city has experienced outward migration of white middle- and upper-income families who choose to send their children to private schools and academies. One principal said there is an unspoken belief that students who are bilingual — whose primary language is not English — struggle to learn rigorous academic subjects, **and that this diminishes the quality of education for other students.**

> *Thirty years ago, the city had approximately 2,000 Hispanic residents; today it has 60,000. Currently, of the more than 27,000 students in Providence schools, 55 percent are Hispanic, 22 percent African-American, 14 percent white, 7.6 percent Asian and 0.72 percent Native American. The student population presents the familiar challenges of most urban areas — high poverty and a high rate of mobility with rising dropout rates.*

In 1999, Rhode Island adopted a state test based upon the New National Standards and enacted a law that assigned accountability for improving student achievement to individual schools and school districts. In August 1999, the Providence School Committee and city government officials hired Diana Lam as superintendent. Lam, fluent in Spanish, had been the superintendent in one of San Antonio's largest school districts. The board also hired a new deputy superintendent, Melody Johnson, who had worked closely with Superintendent Lam in San Antonio.

Upon her arrival to the district, Lam recognized that no systemic change had taken place in Providence. Instead, a system of Band-Aid projects and individual agendas had been implemented but they failed to raise student achievement. Lam's vision was to improve the instructional leadership capacity of current principals and **develop new principals who had the skills to work with faculties and the community to improve teaching and learning**.

Lam left the district in 2002, but the board maintained the continuity of her vision by appointing Deputy Superintendent Johnson as acting superintendent and later as superintendent. Under Johnson's leadership, the district has created learning groups that continuously seek ways to increase student achievement through a comprehensive focus on teaching and learning.

The centerpiece of the district's improvement effort is a school reform framework developed by the Institute for Learning (IFL) in which teachers, principals and central office administrators form learning groups that focus on improving their practices as leaders of learning. The work is supported by a shared set of instructional principles and strategies. The IFL framework calls for school leaders to be committed to and have the knowledge and skills for working with teachers to implement an effort-based system of education that promises all students as much high quality instruction as they need to meet rigorous achievement standards. (See www.instituteforlearning.org.) Other strategies that support this vision of teaching and learning are as follows:

- alignment of standards with classroom instruction;

- assessments that reflect the higher standards of learning;

- a culture emphasizing continuous learning and two-way accountability for learning across the system; and

- continuing professional development for all staff linked to the instructional program for students.

Following are the IFL key practices that school leaders are expected to master and routinely use to lead instructional improvement:

- applying the nine research-based IFL *Principles of Learning* to create an effective learning environment;

- conducting *Learning Walks* to assess teaching quality;

- providing instructional coaching for teachers; and

- leading teachers in analyzing student work.

Providence has relied upon consultants from IFL to provide extensive training to current principals on the four key practices, on-site coaching in schools and classrooms, and learning groups in which educators analyze their own practices against examples of "best practices" and principles of effective instruction. The district has also assigned certain operational tasks to assistant principals so that principals have time to work with teachers and coaches on improving their instructional practices.

The creation of the Providence Aspiring Principals Program (APP) is an important strategy for ensuring that all of its schools have quality leadership. The program recruits young, talented teachers who have demonstrated instructional expertise and leadership potential for a customized principal preparation program that supports their learning and development. Preparing these aspiring principals in the right way to implement the district's reform vision was the impetus for its partnership with URI.

> *"In no other profession is the quality of its leaders more significant, the demands on its leaders more urgent, the decisions of its leaders more critical to the growth of so many young minds and so much great potential."*
>
> — *Dr. Melody Johnson, Superintendent*

Collaborating for Leadership Preparation

The district staff's commitment to a well-defined vision and a reform framework brought URI and the district together in 2001 to design APP. District leaders realized that connecting with an institution of higher education eager to take on the challenge of co-developing a program that was tailor-made to local schools' needs was critical to the implementation and success of their vision.

Collaborating to create a preparation program for aspiring principals was new territory for both groups. While district staff members had often taught courses at surrounding universities, they had little input into their design. The district wanted a university partner open to new thinking about how to prepare school leaders; able to staff a program with faculty having content expertise in educational leadership; willing to co-design, plan cooperatively and teach differently from the usual university academic model; and having the capacity to deliver a complete program within 18 months. URI might have seemed an unlikely partner since there is no educational leadership department or state-approved principal preparation program offered at this institution. However, beginning with a blank slate meant not having to deal with strong resistance to change that is often present among faculties with vested interests in existing programs.

The program's overall structure, curriculum, intensive field-based component, shared delivery strategies and other features are a result of close collaboration between the district and the university. The program design process began with the deputy superintendent designing the initial curriculum along with then University of Rhode Island professor Robert Felner, and in consultation with Rhode Island Department of Education certification officers. Dialog about program content and instructional strategies, staffing and delivery issues, ongoing implementation, and coordination of further developmental work occurs through these structures:

- The director of the LEAD program meets regularly with University of Rhode Island program faculty to review ideas, identify potential conflicts and analyze feedback from professors, administrators and students.

- A LEAD Advisory Board meets regularly to discuss updates, changes and progress of APP. The board is comprised of the director of leadership and support, three principal coaches, the middle school director, the director of elementary education, the head of the high school redesign project, the director of assessment and evaluation, the chief academic officer and a member of SAELP leadership team.

URI brings the contemporary research knowledge base and the district provides the operational application base for the program design process. They work together for a common purpose, have mutual respect for what each partner brings to the table, and share insights about teaching, learning and school leadership. **In effect, the design teams have become a true learning community that is continuously learning how to prepare principals who can achieve the district's vision.**

For university administrators and faculty, this cooperative partnership has required new thinking about the content and process of leadership preparation and about very different ways of working in the university environment. This work with Providence meant the following:

- making time for collective, comprehensive planning that leads to a focused and cohesive program of courses, instead of planning them independently;

- focusing first on designing a program that prepares principals to meet the district's specifications for success, instead of beginning with state and national standards and accreditation requirements;

- engaging in a program and course development process in which an outside entity, the district, shares decision making on how the program will be structured, what knowledge and skills will be taught, how they will be taught, and who will teach them, instead of having complete control, ownership and responsibility for the program;

- choosing content and curriculum materials aligned with Providence's vision and school improvement framework, instead of relying on popular textbooks on organizational management and school leadership;

- working with the district to recruit and select candidates demonstrating expertise in curriculum, instruction and leadership, instead of waiting for candidates to self-select and admitting all who meet university criteria;

- co-teaching with district staff in the district instead of teaching solo at the university;

- crafting academic and clinical assignments that prepare participants to solve real school problems of student achievement, instead of making assignments that only require reading, discussing and reporting; and

- adjusting teaching plans as candidates' prior experiences and strengths — gained from serving as literacy or numeracy coaches, training or serving in other leadership roles — indicate the need for mid-course adjustments, instead of adhering strictly to predetermined course syllabi.

Collaboration means mid-course adjustments

For example, LEAD Director Ed Miley, knowing that the current professor teaching the curriculum course is an expert in her field, felt comfortable suggesting a change in the focus of the course three weeks into the term. His request was based on what he knows the students' learning needs are to function as a leader within the district's instructional guidelines and the present level of curriculum expertise these students have.

Approximately 50 to 60 percent of each cohort of aspirants are either literacy or numeracy coaches and have a strong background in the fundamentals of curriculum theory. Since the professor has extensive knowledge of the research in the field, she was able to transition deeper into curriculum development and effective implementation practices. The change was easily made and it was a win-win for both sides.

Conditions such as long-standing beliefs about the mission and role of universities and schools of education, a prevailing norm of academic freedom, formalized procedures for creating programs and developing courses, and a system for promotion and reward that places highest value on research and scholarly work often stymie even the most dedicated efforts to do things differently in creating new programs and courses. The fact that URI is engaging in collaborative work with the Providence School Department is strong evidence of good leadership within the School of Education and its National Center for Public Education and Policy. There is a true commitment to serve the needs of the local schools and the faculty is willing to learn and work hard for change.

School districts, too, have an organizational culture, governance structure, fiscal policies and operational procedures that can be barriers to change. District staff understood from the beginning that a "cookie-cutter," academic-model leadership program with a limited emphasis on curriculum and instruction would not fit the IFL school reform framework — no matter how well-grounded in state and national standards or

how closely it adhered to program approval, licensure and accreditation requirements. Taking this message to the university meant stepping into the new role of developers of school leaders and taking on the responsibilities of co-designers and co-teachers of a program — work that historically has been the purview of universities and their faculties.

Members of the district staff brought to this collaboration a firm grasp of the need for the program, how it fit with and supported the district's vision for schools and student achievement, what aspiring principals would need to learn to be a part of realizing that vision and knowledge of how to get things done within the district's organizational environment.

Still, the district staff faced some new issues and ways of work such as:

- having voices from the university and other technical assistance providers from outside the district providing input on decisions;

- sharing the responsibilities that were "owned" by just a few people during the first year of the LEAD project with a much larger group;

- working within policies and other conditions inherent in the university's organizational culture;

- developing and implementing a recruitment process that is open to all but results in the selection of a limited number of the most promising candidates, instead of waiting for volunteers who take the initiative to complete preparation;

- selecting and preparing mentor principals for a new role as developers of aspiring school leaders;

- co-developing teaching materials that help participants translate leadership curriculum and instructional theories and strategies into practices deemed essential in Providence's schools and co-teaching with university faculty;

- providing ongoing attention and support to aspiring principals as they advance through their preparation; and

- allocating and managing professional development resources in a different way — tuition assistance, substitutes to cover participants' release time for field experiences and training for mentor principals — instead of concentrating on professional conferences and workshops.

It is evident that both partners have had their interests and needs sufficiently served to keep motivation high and sustain their best efforts. For university and district staff, **reciprocal learning** has emerged as an effective means of getting better at what one does in order to make a greater contribution to improving schools.

> *Some other important benefits being reaped by the university and its faculty include a new and innovative leadership program that is drawing interest from across the nation, broader and deeper understanding of school reform, and greater connectedness to schools and to real instructional problems that can help to inform and add authenticity to all aspects of their professional work. The district and its staff members are becoming more comfortable and gaining expertise in the new role of university partner and developers of school leaders. They are receiving more information and assistance for making sound decisions about future appointments to the principal's position, increased support for the ongoing work with the IFL framework, and access to a ready pool of better-prepared new leaders.*

Moving Toward the Vision: The Aspiring Principals Program Design

The district vision and the learning reform framework drove the district's definition of what principals must know and be able to do to achieve improved student achievement in Providence's schools. By starting from the vantage point of a district vision and its adopted school reform framework, Providence has created a program that:

- gets the right people into the future principal pipeline and supports their preparation;

- provides a balanced curriculum of academic and practical content and assignments aligned with real school problems and the district vision for improvement;

- teams university faculty and district staff to co-teach courses, ensuring an integration of research-based knowledge and practitioner knowledge;

- involves participants in extended school-based experiences where they develop leadership competencies by observing, participating in and leading activities to improve curriculum, instruction and student achievement; and

- provides all participants with trained mentors to guide their learning.

Getting the Right People

The district and the university work hard at getting the right people to apply. Application to participate in APP is open to all Providence teachers who aspire to become principals, but the criteria for selection are more demanding than most programs, as the numbers reveal:

Cohort 1	Cohort 2
60 applied	45 applied
40 selected for interviews	40 selected for interviews
23 admitted	16 admitted

The district created a formal application and selection process for the program (See Appendix A, Providence School Department Announcement of Vacancies, Aspiring Principal.) Each applicant must have the following:

- a recommendation from a colleague, a parent, an administrator and one community/business representative;

- a professional portfolio and a personal essay explaining, among other things, why the applicant would make an effective leader in an urban setting; and

- three years of successful teaching experience.

The application materials are reviewed by the LEAD Advisory Board and the university faculty. The individual teacher, the district and the university share the cost of the program. Candidates agree to remain working in the district for three years following completion of the program or they reimburse the district for the expenses incurred on their behalf.

The Program Structure and Curriculum

The program design involves 18 months of course work, action research, assignments in clinical practice, a nine-week internship at two different schools and a nine-week clinical residency. The aspiring principals attend classes after school hours during the school year, and full time (eight hours per day) in the summer. Aspiring principals are mentored by certified administrators as they complete clinical work in instructional leadership in schools.

The curriculum is organized around six instructional strands that comprehensively address the key issues that face new principals as they work to reform schools in Providence. The six strands include curriculum and instruction, organization and management, leadership, technology, teacher development, and assessment and accountability.

Providence/URI Aspiring Principals Program: Major Strands of Study

I. Curriculum and Instruction
- **Principles of Learning**
  - ☐ New Standards
  - ☐ National Standards for Professional Development
  - ☐ Resource Selection
- **Instructional Leadership**
  - ☐ Content-focused Coaching
  - ☐ Framework for Lesson Design and Reflection
  - ☐ Facilitating Study Groups
- **Numeracy: Computation, Concepts, Problem Solving**
- **Balanced and Disciplinary Literacy and Writing**
- **Diversity and Equity**
  - ☐ Differentiation of Instruction
  - ☐ Special Populations

II. Organization and Management
- **Organization: Organizing for Effort-based Schools**
  - ☐ Staffing and Scheduling
  - ☐ Mentoring and Support Systems
  - ☐ Facilitating Teacher Leadership
- **Finance**
  - ☐ Budgeting
  - ☐ Allocation of Resources
  - ☐ Contracts and Grants
- **Management**
  - ☐ Law
  - ☐ Policies and Procedures
  - ☐ Contract Interpretation
- **Governance**
  - ☐ School Board Relations
- **Human Resource Development**
  - ☐ Interviewing
  - ☐ Support Development and Intervention
  - ☐ Documentation and Due Process

III. Leadership
- **School Climate and Culture**
  - ☐ Facilitative Leadership
  - ☐ Team Building and Effectiveness
  - ☐ Conflict Management and Resolution
  - ☐ Building a Professional Learning Community
- **Organizational Development**
  - ☐ Theory and Practice

- ☐ Public Engagement
- ☐ Parent and Community Involvement
- ☐ Issues of Race and Class
- **Building a Professional Learning Community**
  - ☐ Principles for Professional Learning Communities
  - ☐ Content-focused Coaching
  - ☐ Classroom and School Inter-visitations
  - ☐ Facilitating Principal/Teacher Study Groups
- **Personal Development**
  - ☐ Public Speaking, Professional Writing, Listening, Making Presentations
  - ☐ Public Relations and Communications
  - ☐ Leading Meetings, Robert's Rules

IV. Technology
- **Applications**
  - ☐ *PowerPoint*
  - ☐ Databases
  - ☐ Electronic Portfolios
  - ☐ E-mail
  - ☐ Spreadsheets
  - ☐ Word Processing
  - ☐ Web sites
  - ☐ *Access*
  - ☐ *Excel*

V. Teacher Development
- **Building Teacher Capacity**
  - ☐ Professional Development
  - ☐ Mentoring and Collegiality
  - ☐ Classroom Management
  - ☐ Appraisal
  - ☐ Beginning Teacher Standards
  - ☐ I-plans

VI. Assessment and Accountability: School and Student Performance
- **Current Issues in Assessment**
  - ☐ Assessment to Inform Strategic Planning
  - ☐ Data Analysis: School and Student Performance
  - ☐ Planning POP: High Performance Learning Communities
  - ☐ Monitoring High Performance Learning Communities
  - ☐ Instructional Quality Assessment

These strands incorporate the priority curriculum that is mapped across the 12 courses that provide the 36 hours of university credit required for the Master of Arts Degree in Education from URI.

Providence/URI Aspiring Principals Program

EDC 502	Foundations of Curriculum
EDC 586	Problems in Education: Leadership and Organization
EDC 587Y	Curriculum and School Reform
EDC 587N	Assessment and Accountability
EDC 586Y	School Climate and Culture
EDC 529	Foundations of Educational Research
EDC 575A	Supervised Field Study Practicum and Seminar in Education Part I
EDC 577	Organization and Administration in Elementary Schools
EDC 587	Organization and Administration in Secondary Schools
EDC 586	School Law and Finance
EDC 587P	Problems in Education Leadership and Accountability
EDC 575B	Supervised Field Study Practicum and Seminar in Education Part II

Source: Providence School Department

At first glance, the list of courses included in APP might suggest a very traditional university leadership preparation program. A closer examination of the course content, instructional strategies, assignments and field experiences incorporated into each course reveals some very important differences. One newspaper reporter described the series of courses as a "work-study program" after discovering that participants spend a great deal of their time learning by working in schools. The Providence partners realize that if the leadership program is to produce a new generation of school leaders who are ready and able to lead school improvement then they must build in ample opportunities for aspiring principals to observe what their mentor principals do and to *participate in* and actually *lead* groups of teachers in doing this work.

Intensive Field-based Learning Experiences

Aspiring principals are involved in a nine-week internship in which they work closely with school principals, completing various activities in assigned schools. The internship assignments are not in the schools in which they currently teach. At the conclusion of their clinical internships, aspirants return to their teaching assignments for the remainder of the semester. In the spring semester, aspirants complete a nine-week residency assignment during which they assume unofficial administrative roles with specific tasks and responsibilities determined by the mentor principal. **In total, the aspirants are released from their teaching duties for direct experiences in school leadership for 18 weeks.**

Interns engage in work that is aligned with the district's school reform framework and the model of distributive leadership that is endorsed and promoted by the district. Required school-based activities include the following:

- participating in *Learning Walks*, an instructional leadership practice that enables principals and other leaders to assess teaching quality and discuss findings with teachers;

- planning, developing and conducting professional development sessions that follow up on what was learned during *Learning Walks*;

- assessing the quality of teaching and learning in actual school settings and drawing inferences and conclusions based on observations;

- engaging in a strategic planning process to help teachers develop a school vision for curriculum, instruction and student achievement;

- constructing a design for an engaged learning community and determining existing barriers and actions;

- presenting case studies about school problems of achievement and implementation of interventions that require data collection and analysis;

- attending, analyzing and presenting at school board meetings; and

- heavy reading requirements of both educational and business "state-of-the-art" books.

Looking for better curriculum materials, planning field experiences and revising courses are continuous aspects of the design process. For example, several of the instructors and faculty in APP have been trained and are certified to teach SREB's Leadership Modules. (See www.sreb.org for a description of the SREB Leadership Modules.) Much of the work required in the internship correlates with the content and application activities included in the modules.

Recently, two courses were revised to incorporate content and field assignments from two of the modules. University faculty and district staff worked together to redesign the course syllabi for:

- EDC 587N: Assessment and Accountability — incorporates SREB module *Using Data to Lead Change*.

- EDC 586Y: School Culture and Climate — incorporates SREB module *Creating a High Performance Learning Culture*.

Other modules will be considered as a potential source of integrated academic and field experiences as additional courses are revised.

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

Action Research Projects

As part of the program, each aspiring principal completes an action research project that becomes the basis for the thesis or project required for graduation from the university program. These school-based projects become more than academic exercises as they address real issues that have an impact on the district's policies, the school's practices and student achievement. The goal is to have a lasting impact on or make a contribution to the quality of education.

Action Research Projects

Some examples of action research projects completed by aspiring principals:

- Designing a subject-specific professional development program for district middle grades teachers of mathematics and working with them to incorporate literacy strategies into the mathematics curriculum.

- Designing a new teacher induction program, which the district is incorporating into its policies and programs.

- Designing a program for autistic students at the middle grades and high school levels, which is an extension of the program in the elementary schools and a project that was adopted and implemented for the entire district.

- Designing an introductory school for all students new to this country who have a limited command of the English language. The focus of this project is ESL — bilingual and outreach to parents so they better understand attendance requirements, performance standards and assessments. The project also helps them understand other pertinent conditions that will ease their students' transition into "schooling in America" and how to work with the school and with their students to support learning. One aspiring principal actually implemented and led this design as part of the internship and residency requirement.

Proof that there are real differences between the design of APP and the typical university leadership preparation program is best reflected in an excerpt from a report of an interview with a participant that reveals why she changed her mind about a career in school leadership.

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*She was a literacy coach who enjoyed her role in helping teachers help students learn and grow. Both her current principal and the director of leadership talked to her about becoming a principal. She was not interested, knowing that in the past the role of a principal was one of control, discipline, management and operational activities assigned from the central office — the principal was a bureaucrat. She wanted no part of that role. However, when real change in the expected role of the principal became evident, she decided that she would find satisfaction in the role of the instructional leader of the whole school. She applied to the APP, was accepted and is moving quickly to her new role in education. She says she has "come to believe that the changes are real and **the role of the principal is one that focuses on children's learning and requires the commitment, passion and skill level she possesses**."*

In Providence, talented classroom teachers no longer have to choose between an administrative track that prepares them for a job that distances them from instruction and learning and a curriculum and professional development track that prepares them to provide support for improving schools and student achievement.

A Formative Measure of Internship Experiences

With a solid leadership preparation design in place and a second cohort of aspiring principals in preparation, the Providence partners recognized that it was important to begin collecting information that could help answer the important questions about the internship and residency components of APP. One question posed is as follows:

Is the Providence APP providing future school leaders internships that incorporate practice in leading the changes in schools and classrooms that will bring the district's school reform framework to scale and increase student achievement?

To answer this question about program quality, the district needed information about the extent to which participants are having field-based experiences that help them master the competencies the district's school reform framework, including:

- contributing to high standards of learning for all students;

- having a deep understanding of curriculum and learning standards for students;

- having content-focused expertise;

- facilitating change in teacher beliefs and practices;

- discerning quality teaching;

- effectively observing teaching, examining student work, interpreting test results and providing feedback to teachers;

- leading participatory school improvement planning processes;

- working with teachers to create school cultures of professional collaboration; and

- holding teachers accountable for student learning and high-quality teaching.

Observation, participation and leading constitute a continuum of increasingly more demanding application and practice of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that comprise school leadership competencies. Therefore, aspiring principals who are provided practice in leading school-based activities that focus on improving schools and increasing student achievement are more likely to master the competencies principals must apply in their work than those whose opportunities to practice are limited to observation or participation in activities led by others.

A questionnaire, developed for a regional survey of internships in educational leadership conducted by SREB in 2003, was administered to graduates and current participants of the program. (See Appendix B, SREB Internship Survey Instrument.) The questionnaire gathered information on the extent to which aspiring principals were provided the opportunity to *observe*, *participate in* or *lead* 36 school-based activities that develop the competencies essential for leading schools and increasing student achievement. To tailor the analysis to APP, these activities were matched to the nine leadership competencies required to implement the district's reform framework.

Summary of Questionnaire Results

Of 39 APP program participants, 19 returned questionnaires for a return rate of slightly more than 48 percent. The majority of the questionnaires returned were from Cohort 2, which was only half way through the Aspiring Principals Program at the time participants completed and returned the questionnaire and had not been able to access half of the experiences they were being questioned about. Data gathered with the questionnaire were analyzed by SREB staff and the findings shared with district and university staff. The overall findings are reported below and findings specific to the nine Providence leadership competencies are highlighted in Appendix C.

The opportunity for aspiring principals to engage in field-based activities that help them master the leadership competencies required for implementing the district's reform framework varies widely across the 36 activity categories on the questionnaire, but overall there is significant opportunity to *observe*, *participate in* and *lead* most of the activities.

Across 36 activity categories —

- The percentages of participants indicating that their internship or residency experiences provided opportunities for *leading* ranged from a low of 37 percent on one activity category to a high of 89 percent on another.

- The percentages indicating opportunities to *participate* ranged from 5 to 89 percent.

- The percentages indicating opportunities to *observe* ranged from 37 to 68 percent.

- The percentages of participants indicating that an activity was *not required* ranged from 5 to 16 percent. Responses for 19 percent (seven out of 36) of the items reflect that at least a few participants were *not required* to have any experiences with these particular activities.

APP participants have slightly more opportunities to *participate in* than *lead* the kinds of activities that would develop their mastery of the key leadership competencies for implementing the district's reform framework. For more than half (20 out of 36) of the activity categories, the percentages of participants indicating *participate* were higher than the percentage indicating *lead*. Though a majority indicated that they experienced *leading* many activities, this was often a thin majority.

For 20 of the 36 activity categories (55 percent) the percentages of participants indicating *leading* ranged from 37 to 68 percent, with 63 percent being the most frequent. Further examination of the data on *leading* experiences reveals that the percentages reporting experiences in *leading* were 74 percent or higher for 15 of the 36 activity categories, 63 to 73 percent for 12 categories, and 37 to 58 percent for nine categories.

Implications of Questionnaire Results

The Providence partners are making a strong effort to provide quality field-based experiences aligned to Providence's school improvement initiative. The fact that a majority of the participants currently or previously served as literacy or numeracy coaches might be a factor in the finding that the number reporting *leading* an improvement activity was, with the exception of three activities, higher than the number reporting *observing* that activity. These participants had been provided many prior opportunities to observe or participate in school improvement work and were comfortable with going directly into a leading role without first observing. **This indicates that prior academic coaching experiences are promising criteria for selecting an aspiring principal pool.**

The Providence School Department and URI leaders must address areas where leading experiences need to be added or activity requirements strengthened. These include the following:

- scheduling time to work with struggling students, and to engage faculty in meaningful school improvement work;

- working with a curriculum that is interdisciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum;

- working with study groups, problem solving sessions and ongoing meetings to promote student achievement;

- building a learning community that includes all stakeholders;

- analyzing and communicating school progress, school achievement and the school improvement agenda to teachers, parents, staff, school board and the community;

- inducting and mentoring new staff; and

- seeking resources to support school improvement through writing grants and developing partnerships.

Addressing these will require a variety of actions. In some cases it will mean restructuring the internship schedule to provide time for interns to work with mentors in real time — that is, the critical points in the school year when certain activities usually occur. For example, building scheduling activities into the internship may require restructuring the internship to make arrangements for interns to work with their mentor principals during the summer months when scheduling for a new school year is usually completed. In other cases, it will require creating new clinical assignments; providing more direction and supervision of interns; and providing more training and direction for mentor principals, university faculty and district coaches.

Other Indicators of Program Quality and Impact

APP is a win-win for both groups — the district and the university. The district has intentionally recruited people for the program that it wants to become future principals. The district has worked with the university to align what is taught to the district improvement plan and created authentic field experiences. The district provided mentor principals who guide participants as they try out their new knowledge and skills in real schools with real teachers solving real problems of student achievement. The district is putting a group of well-prepared aspiring principals into the administrative pipeline.

The university, through this program, is involved in high-profile urban education, which serves to keep the program grounded in what schools need leaders to know and be able to do to achieve success. APP provides a laboratory for scholarly research on the training of school leaders, increases program enrollment and provides an opportunity to work with highly qualified and motivated candidates who are receiving the support necessary to successfully complete the program.

> *Since the program first began, one cohort of 23 students completed the program and the second cohort is ongoing with 16 students. All 16 students were either district literacy or numeracy coaches or teachers who had completed the Institute for Learning training from the University of Pittsburgh. The decision made by the LEAD team to reduce the number of participants in any one cohort allows the director to work closely with them — coaching, supporting, counseling and addressing each aspirant's individual learning needs. Of the 23 members of the first cohort, 16 are now in positions of leadership, including six serving in school principal positions, three in assistant principal positions, six in school program director positions, and one in the assistant program director position. Eleven of the 23 represent minority groups within the district's teaching and student population — a goal of the LEAD project. Forty-five percent of the second cohort is minorities.*
>
> *Currently three graduates of the program work at Hope High School, a high-needs school. They have opportunities to apply their leadership learning to their work on a daily basis and support each other in their learning and their practice. These three work in the Technology House (a school within a school). Nikoli Onye, a graduate of Cohort I who is now the Director of the Technology House at Hope High School, believes that "everything she learned in the APP was extremely relevant to her work as an administrator." The former principal at Hope, Nancy Mullen, stated, "The graduates of the program have a short learning curve because of the hands-on experiences they participated in during the internship and residency. They know about curriculum scope and sequence and how to analyze student data."*

District administrators and mentor principals believe the candidates leaving the program are well-schooled in leading the instructional process. The graduates have gained self-confidence to function as educational leaders and have developed strong written and verbal communication skills. As aspirants work through the program, strong professional relationships are established that build a network of effective future administrators in the district.

Inserting a new team into an existing school has the potential to create conflict between current building administrators who focus on the old roles of leaders versus a new group of rising stars who are dedicated to improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement. As one principal suggested, graduates of APP have a black-and-white mentality. They are full of enthusiasm and feel that decisions have a right or wrong orientation. LEAD Director Ed Miley stated, "At the end of the program the aspirants view themselves as bright, knowledgeable and skillful leaders. Many, especially the Latino women, have for the first time given themselves permission to be "smart" and to assume a strong leadership persona."

In the final analysis, the key questions about these newly prepared leaders are these:

- Do they have the intellectual toughness to withstand the pressures to conform to old ways of school leadership?

- Do they have sufficient understanding of the change process and the leadership skills to shift school leaders' primary function in Providence's schools?

These are the hopes, but at this stage they are unanswered questions.

Lessons Learned

Over the past two years of APP, the Providence partners have learned some important lessons about collaboration and leadership development. These lessons include the following:

- A school district must have a laser-sharp vision for comprehensive school improvement. The Providence vision grew from a belief **held by administrators at the top** that all students can learn what had historically been taught to only their best. Making this shift from an ability- to an effort-based model of education becomes a reality when adults at all levels of the organization form learning communities that are continually focusing on how to improve teaching and learning.

- It is essential to connect with a university that is willing to work as an equal partner with an urban district to think through what school leaders need to know and be able to do and how best to prepare them to do these things.

- Intentional recruitment, selection and preparation of talented and diverse teachers with strong backgrounds in instruction, evidence of leadership among colleagues, and a passion for improving student achievement provides opportunities for previously under-represented groups to gain access to leadership positions.

- Political pressure from unions and other groups to maintain the "status quo" often prevents change. However, it is possible to develop positive, cooperative relationships that result in changes that support leaders' and teachers' efforts to improve schools when leaders at the top are adept at working with union representatives.

- External money, whether from the federal government, state or foundations, is helpful in launching a district and community leadership initiative. Initially these activities are often considered unnecessary by the public and by the school committee until their value has been demonstrated.

The Remaining Challenges

The Providence School Department strives to build the instructional leadership capacity of current principals and to develop new principals who have the skills to work with their faculties and the community to improve teaching and learning for all students. Challenges that remain in order to meet this goal include the following:

- **Making the leadership program at URI an ongoing program rather than its current "project" status.** The current principal development program is not one that the university can officially offer as a degree program since URI has not been designated by the Higher Education Board to offer an educational leadership program.

- **Continuing to develop and revise courses to keep content, assignments and performance assessments aligned with the district vision and school reform framework.** This means program participants must have opportunities to become competent in creating and sustaining learning communities, developing a culture of high expectations, moving standards into the curriculum by leading teachers in examining their assignments and the quality of their students' work, supporting teachers' learning of new teaching strategies and ways of helping all students reach the standards, and a host of other leadership practices related to an effort-based model of education.

- **Continuing to improve the field-based components of the preparation program by providing a continuum of *observing, participating in* and *leading* the improvement of school and classroom practices.** Achieving a balance of academic study and field-based work is not enough. The district and university must be intentional and specific in planning what will be done in the internship and residency so that aspirants are applying essential knowledge in leading groups of teachers in solving real school problems related to students' learning and achievement.

- **Strengthening the action research component of APP by requiring leaders to address problems relating to having all students meeting or exceeding academic content standards in a Providence school.** This would give future school leaders an opportunity to work with teachers in a school setting to gain practice in leading change.

- **Developing an evaluation process for determining the effectiveness of the program.** Formative assessments are needed to measure whether aspiring principals are making progress in mastering the essential competencies as they move through critical stages of their preparation. Summative assessments should be administered at the end of the program to provide evidence of mastery and point the way to needed improvements. Once aspirants are in leadership roles, measures of performance, changes in school and classroom practices and student achievement are needed to provide proof that the program is accomplishing its goal.

- **Continuing to work with the union to effect changes in the labor contract that will provide the working conditions that are conducive to principals and teachers building supportive relationships and working together for continuous improvement of teaching and learning.** Under Superintendent Johnson's leadership, the district's relationship with the union has improved and recent negotiations have resulted in agreements on needed changes in principals' and teachers' working conditions. These changes create more opportunities for collaborative district/union teams to engage in joint decision making around professional development, alternative programs, school support and intervention, and site-based management.

- **Providing ongoing support for graduates of the program as they move into principal positions.** First-time principals or assistant principals, moving into schools where the transition from an ability-based concept of education to an effort-based concept has not yet reached a tipping point, will encounter strong forces of resistance to changing school and classroom practices. This support might include continuing mentoring on change strategies regarding school and classroom practices that engage teachers in changing their basic beliefs about how much students can learn, creating new principal networks, providing professional development with coaching and other forms of assistance.

- **Sustaining APP by taking steps necessary to ensure stable funding. Some possible steps include the following:**

  - making recruitment, selection and support of a pool of future principals adequate to fill vacancies a line item in the district's continuation budget;

  - securing supplemental funds that are dedicated to principal preparation and development through grants or endowments from state, non-profit and private sources;

  - requiring participants to pay a larger part or all of tuition costs; and

  - placing aspiring principals who are participating in the preparation program in assistant principal positions and structuring this position to serve as an internship.

Conclusions

As a result of the Providence School Department's efforts to create the conditions for successful school improvement, the trend of underperformance that has existed for so long in its schools is being reversed.

This year, fourth-graders showed strong gains in all three areas of the mathematics assessment on the state's rigorous New Standards Reference Examination (NSRE) that measures proficiency in mathematics and English/language arts. At the middle grades level, eighth-graders showed dramatic gains in reading and writing and moderate gains in mathematics. At the high school level, 52 percent of all 11th-graders demonstrated mastery of writing conventions, the percentage achieving *standard* or better in mathematics skills increased by 14 percentage points, and the percentage achieving *standard* in mathematics concepts increased by nine percentage points. (The three proficiency levels on NSRE are *nearly meeting standard*, *meeting standard* and *meeting standard with honors*.) Compared with 2003, gains in the percentages of students scoring proficient or higher occurred in every subject cluster for both English/language arts and mathematics, except for eighth-grade mathematics concepts where the percentage remained the same. In 1999-2000, the high school graduation rate was 63 percent and by 2002-2003, it had increased to 72 percent.

Still, there is a gap between where the district is currently and the ultimate vision. There are other working conditions that must be changed in order for principals to fully engage all teachers in effective learning communities that have a deep impact on classroom practices and result in higher achievement for all students. Accountability measures are recent and are continuing to be developed. Full-scale implementation of the IFL school reform framework is moving forward, but all district staff, principals, teachers and students have not made the full transition to an effort-based concept of education. And, APP is still a work in progress for which the ultimate impact on student achievement has not been thoroughly tested.

The Providence School Department and the University of Rhode Island will know they have achieved their goal when:

- Their collaboration for the preparation of school leaders is institutionalized in the district and university culture.

- The process for recruiting and selecting school leaders is well established and brings into the preparation program the most promising classroom teachers who have demonstrated expertise in curriculum and instruction, established a record of increasing student achievement, and proven their capacity to lead peers in working to change school and classroom practices; and provides adequate numbers of well-qualified school leaders with diverse backgrounds to fill vacancies.

- All courses comprising the preparation program are designed to include rigorous content, academic and practical assignments, and assessments that build aspiring leaders' capacity to implement the district's school reform framework and raise student achievement and, together, the courses form a coherent leadership curriculum.

- All aspiring principals are provided a well-planned series of field experiences that give them opportunities to lead professional learning communities that are working to change school and classroom practices in ways consistent with the district's school reform framework and that will result in higher student achievement.

- There is valid and reliable evidence that graduates of APP are selected to fill vacancies in the principal position and are having a positive impact on school practices, teaching and learning.

- All who are involved understand the new role of school principals and are working collaboratively to create the working conditions necessary to attract and retain effective leaders into the position and provide the support required for them to succeed in improving schools.

The Providence School Department is a school system in transition. The system has a well-researched and well-developed plan in place with a strong focus on leadership development and with changing beliefs and practices. A commitment to teach rigorous content, to use best teaching practices, to develop students as independent learners and develop a new breed of school leaders who can help faculty reach consensus on these points is forging a path of improved achievement for all students.

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APPENDIX A: Application Process for the Aspiring Principals Program

PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT
797 WESTMINSTER STREET
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903-4045
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

ANNOUNCEMENT OF VACANCIES
Contingent upon Funding

TITLE: ASPIRING PRINCIPAL
(Partial Defrayment of Program Costs as Outlined in Program Description)

PARTICIPANTS: Up to 25 Positions

SALARY: IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TEACHER'S CONTRACT SALARY SCALE

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:
The Aspiring Principal positions are open to all Providence teachers who hope to have a future career in educational leadership and administration. The position involves an 18-month program of course work, field-based experiences, action research, mentoring, assignments in clinical practice days and clinical residency in schools. All candidates will develop and have their program experiences guided by an individualized learning plan developed in consultation with program advisers. Participants will be expected to keep a journal, build a portfolio, and have a final exhibition for other professionals. The program is offered through the Providence School Department with course work to be provided by the University of Rhode Island and other Providence School Department Collaborators (e.g., University of Pittsburgh and others). Successful candidates will be expected to pay for all books and materials, graduate fees and one-third of URI tuition for the 30 required hours, with the remaining costs to be defrayed through an agreement between the Providence School Department and URI, including external resources. Successful candidates will finish the program with a combination of course work and fieldwork through the Providence School Department and its collaborators that should prepare them to meet the individual learning goals and plans required of successful candidates who seek certification as a school administrator in Rhode Island through transcript analysis. Further, successful candidates will also be provided with the opportunity to complete the course work for and obtain a Master of Arts Degree in Education, pending required competencies and products as determined by URI. Those who already have a Master's Degree in Education will be provided either with the opportunity to obtain a second one or be required to take advanced graduate work in accordance with the individual plan as approved. In either case, course work and field experiences will be required of candidates that will strengthen their understanding and skills in critical areas of curriculum and instruction, in addition to those required by the Rhode Island Department of Education for Administrator Certification. Extensive summer seminars and fieldwork will also be involved and attendance is required. Target date for orientation activities is (beginning date) in the spring of (year). Full course work will begin in the summer of (year).

JOB SPECIFICATION:
The Aspiring Principal will maintain his/her current position and undertake all assignments, clinical experiences, an internship and residency during which time he/she reports directly to the principal or supervisor assigned. He/she will assist the principal with all duties to include development and implementation of all instructional programs. Release time may be provided for some course work and activities. Attendance at all program courses and activities is a requirement for those selected for the program.

DUTIES AS CLINICAL RESIDENT:

1. Reports directly to the principal or supervisor as assigned.
2. Assists the principal in all aspects of the organization.
3. Assists the principal in identification, development and implementation of the state-of-the-art research-driven programs, teaching strategies and staff development.
4. Assists the principal in maintaining and promoting a positive learning environment.
5. Promotes various teaching/learning styles appropriate for achieving developed learning outcomes.
6. Assists the principal in implementation of the Principles of Learning.
7. Assists the principal in the interpretation of school policies, goals and programs.
8. Provides assistance to the principal in the development and implementation of the schoolwide mission and priorities, as stipulated in the school improvement action plan (POP).
9. Assists the principal in establishing goals and objectives for professional development.
10. Assists the principal in managing and administering student programs.
11. All other duties as assigned.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CLINICAL INTERNSHIP AND RESIDENCY:

1. Participate fully in all required program activities.
2. Completes all program requirements.
3. Willingness to participate fully as required and attends all professional development and required experiences, program activities, course work, summer seminars and clinical experiences without remuneration from the district.
4. Willingness to complete all requirements of the district, university and department of education as assigned ongoing throughout the program.
5. Commitment to complete the program as scheduled or modified, or reimburse the district for expenses incurred to date of exit.
6. Commitment to remain in the district's employ for a minimum of three years following program completion or reimburse district for all expenses incurred.
7. Must have continuous access to a laptop computer.

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Certificate required by the Rhode Island State Department of Education:
   - ANY TEACHING CERTIFICATE AND/OR
   - RHODE ISLAND TEACHERS CERTIFICATE GRADES PK-12
2. Minimum of three years successful teaching experience.
3. Letters of recommendation including one from a colleague, business or community representative, parent and administrator.
4. Four letters of recommendation including one from a colleague, business or community representative, parent and administrator. Letters must be current and specific in content.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE:

1. Letters of recommendation as noted above.

2. Completed application to URI Master's Program.

3. A written essay addressing the following:
   - Details of professional experience
   - Those characteristics which would make you an effective leader in an urban setting
   - Additional areas of development that you envision needing to pursue to make you an effective urban principal

4. Professional Portfolio which includes a product that demonstrates your understanding of standards-based education. (Finalists only: to be brought to interview)

5. Must have a certification status form completed and reviewed by the Rhode Island Department of Education. This certification status form will provide you with feedback and guidance on the course work, professional experiences and other credentials that will be required for you to develop an individualized plan that will meet state school administrator certification requirements. Form to be provided by the district upon entry. It is the individual candidate's obligation to work with the Rhode Island Department of Education to complete all documentation and requirements to obtain the certificate.

Administrative applications may be obtained from the Web page or the Office of Human Resources, 797 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903-4045. The completed form must be returned to the Office of Human Resources in care of Mr. Ed Miley, Directory of Leadership, Support and Development, no later than the above closing date at 4:30 pm.

THE PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER. THIS POSITION WILL BE FILLED WITHOUT REGARD TO RELIGION, RACE, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AGE OR DISABILITY.

Appendix B: SREB Internship Survey Instrument

An Underlying Assumption of the Questionnaire

Observation, participation and leading constitute a continuum of increasingly more demanding application and practice of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that comprise school leadership competencies. Therefore, aspiring principals who are provided practice in leading school-based activities that focus on improving schools and increasing student achievement are more likely to master the competencies principals must apply in their work than those whose opportunities to practice are limited to observation or participation in activities led by others.

Survey Purpose and Foundation

The questionnaire gathers information on the extent to which leadership preparation programs provide opportunities for aspiring principals to **observe**, **participate in** or **lead** school-based activities that develop the leadership competencies essential for improving schools and raising student achievement. School leaders who are prepared to lead schools designed for higher student achievement need to:

- have a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement.

- know how to work with teachers and others to fashion and implement continuous student improvement; and

- know how to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices.

These competencies are more discreetly defined by 13 critical success factors identified in the practices of principals who lead changes in school and classroom practices that result in higher student achievement. (See SREB publication, *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action*, 2001.) The critical success factors serve as the basis for 36 questionnaire items about the level of engagement in specific categories of leadership activities. The response options allow respondents to indicate whether their internship provided opportunities for **observing**, **participating in** or **leading** activities in each of the 36 categories.

Definition of Key Terms for SREB Survey

Field Experience: Any school-based experience that engages the student in observing, participating or leading, as described in the Response Key.

Response Key:

Aspiring Principal:

(NR) Not Required — Has no opportunity for involvement nor is the activity part of the required field experiences.

(O) Observing — Has opportunity to watch the activity without any active involvement.

(P) Participating — Has opportunity to join/share in the activity and decision-making resulting from it.

(L) Leading — Has the opportunity to plan, direct and develop activities and oversees decision making that may be required by, or result from, the activity.

Directions for Responding

For each item, check all responses (you may check more than one) that reflect the practices followed in your program.

Be sure to read the numbered, bold-type header statement for each section of the survey before responding to the items in that section.

(NR) Not Required   No opportunity for involvement is offered nor is the activity part of field experiences.
(O) Observing   Has opportunity to watch activity without any active involvement.
(P) Participating   Has the opportunity to join/share in the activity and decision-making resulting from it.
(L) Leading   Has the opportunity to plan, direct and develop activities and oversees decision-making that may be required by or result from the activity.

CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY

1. School leaders are able to create a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.

	Field experiences require	(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
1a.	…working with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement as defined by the mission of the school.				
1b.	…working with the administration to develop, define and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision.				
1c.	…working with the faculty to develop, define, and/or adapt best practices, based on current research, that support the school's vision.				
1d.	…assisting with transitional activities for students as they progress to higher levels of placement (e.g., elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to higher education).				

2. School leaders are able to set high expectations for all students to learn high-level content.

	Field experiences require	(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
2a.	…developing/overseeing academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate student's success at all levels of ability.				
2b.	…activities resulting in raising standards and academic achievement for all students and teachers.				
2c.	…authentic assessments of student work through the use and/or evaluation of rubrics, end-of-course tests, projects.				

3. School leaders are able to recognize and encourage implementation of good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement.

	Field experiences require	(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
3a.	…using a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices being implemented in a school.				
3b.	…working with teachers to select and implement appropriate instructional strategies that address identified achievement gaps.				
3c.	…working on a school team to prioritize standards and map curriculum in at least one content area across all grade levels of the school.				
3d.	…working with a group of teachers to unwrap adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards.				
3e.	…working with a school team to monitor implementation of an adopted curriculum.				
3f.	…involvement in the work of literacy and numeracy task forces.				
3g.	…working with curriculum that is interdisciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum.				

4. The school leader is able to create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult.

	Field experiences require	(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
4a.	…working with staff to identify needs of all students.				
4b.	…collaborating with adults from within the school and community to provide mentors for all students.				
4c.	…engaging in activities designed to increase parental involvement.				
4d.	…engaging in parent/student/school collaborations that develop long-term educational plans for students.				

5. **The school leader is able to use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement.**

Field experiences require		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
5a.	…analyzing data (including standardized test scores, teacher assessments, psychological data, etc.) to develop/refine instructional activities and set instructional goals.				
5b.	…facilitating data disaggregation for use by faculty and other stakeholders.				

6. **The school leader is able to keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement.**

Field experiences require		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
6a.	…analyzing and communicating school progress and school achievement to teachers, parents and staff.				
6b.	…gathering feedback regarding the effectiveness of personal communication skills.				

7. **The school leader is able to make parents partners in their student's education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration.**

Field experiences require		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
7a.	…working in meaningful relationships with faculty and parents to develop action plans for student achievement.				

8. **The school leader is able to understand the change process and has the leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively.**

Field experiences require		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
8a.	…working with faculty and staff in professional development activities.				
8b.	…inducting and/or mentoring new teaching staff.				
8c.	…building a "learning community" that includes all stakeholders.				

9. The school leader is able to understand how adults learn and knows how to advance meaningful change through quality sustained professional development that benefits students.

	Field experiences require	(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
9a.	…study groups, problem-solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement.				
9b.	…scheduling, developing and/or presenting professional development activities to faculty that positively impact student achievement.				

10. The school leader is able to organize and use time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement.

	Field experiences require	(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
10a.	…scheduling of classroom and/or professional development activities in a way that provides meaningful time for school improvement activities.				
10b.	… scheduling time to provide struggling students with the opportunity for extra support (e.g., individual tutoring, small-group instruction, extended-block time) so that they may have the opportunity to learn to mastery.				

11. The school leader is able to acquire and use resources wisely.

	Field experiences require	(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
11a.	…writing grants or developing partnerships that provide needed resources for school improvement.				
11b.	…developing schedules that maximize student learning in meaningful ways with measurable success.				

12. The school leader is able to obtain support from the central office and from community and parent leaders for their school improvement agenda.

Field experiences require		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
12a.	…working with faculty to communicate with school board and community stakeholders in a way that supports school improvement.				
12b.	…working with faculty, parents and community to build collaboration and support for the school's agenda.				

13. The school leader is able to continuously learn and seek out colleagues who keep them abreast of new research and proven practices.

Field experiences require		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
13a.	…working with faculty to implement research-based instructional practices.				
13b.	…working with professional groups and organizations.				

Alignment of the Nine Leadership Competencies for Implementing the Providence Reform Framework with SREB Internship Questionnaire Items

Competency	Related Internship Questionnaire Items
■ **Contribute to high standards of learning for all students.**	**1a.** … working with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement as defined by the mission of the school. **2a.** … developing/overseeing academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate students' success at all levels of ability. **2b.** … activities resulting in raising standards and academic achievement for all students and teachers. **3b.** … working with teachers to select and implement appropriate instructional strategies that address identified achievement gaps. **4a.** … working with staff to identify needs of all students. **4b.** … collaborating with adults from within the school and community to provide mentors for all students. **4c.** … engaging in activities designed to increase parental involvement. **4d.** … engaging in parent/student/school collaborations that develop long-term educational plans for students. **10b.** … scheduling time to provide struggling students with the opportunity for extra support (e.g., individual tutoring, small group instruction, extended-block time) so that they may have the opportunity to learn to mastery of standards. **11b.** … developing schedules that maximize student learning in meaningful ways with measurable success.

Competency	Related Internship Questionnaire Items
■ **Have a deep understanding of curriculum and learning standards for students.**	**1d.** … assisting with transitional activities for students as they progress to higher levels of placement (e.g., elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to higher education). **3c.** … working on a school team to prioritize standards and map curriculum in at least one content area across all grade levels of the school. **3d.** … working with a group of teachers to unwrap adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards. **3e.** … working with a school team to monitor implementation of an adopted curriculum. **3g.** … working with curriculum that is interdisciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum.
■ **Have content-focused expertise.**	**3f.** … involvement in the work of literacy and numeracy task forces.
■ **Be knowledgeable of ways to facilitate change in teacher beliefs and practices.**	**1c.** … working with the faculty to develop, define and/or adapt best practices, based on current research, that support the school's vision. **8a.** … working with faculty and staff in professional development activities. **9a.** … study groups, problem-solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement. **9b.** … scheduling, developing and/or presenting professional development activities to faculty that positively impact student achievement. **10a.** … scheduling classroom and/or professional development activities in a way that provides meaningful time for school improvement activities.
■ **Be able to discern quality teaching.**	**1b.** … working with the administration to develop, define and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision.

Competency	Related Internship Questionnaire Items
■ **Effectively observe teaching, examine student work, interpret test results and provide feedback to teachers.**	**2c.** … authentic assessments of student work through the use and/or evaluation of rubrics, end of course tests and projects. **3a.** … using a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices being implemented in a school. **5a.** … analyzing data (including standardized test scores, teacher assessments, psychological data, etc.) to develop/ refine instructional activities and set instructional goals. **5b.** … facilitating data disaggregation for use by faculty and other stakeholders.
■ **Be able to lead participatory school improvement planning processes.**	**6a.** … analyzing and communicating school progress and school achievement to teachers, parents and staff. **6b.** … gathering feedback regarding the effectiveness of personal communication skills. **7a.** … working in meaningful relationships with faculty and parents to develop action plans for student achievement. **11a.** … writing grant proposals or developing partnerships that provide needed resources for school improvement. **12a.** … working with faculty to communicate with school board and community stakeholders in a way that supports school improvement. **12b.** … working with faculty, parents and community to build collaboration and support for the school's agenda.
■ **Work with teachers to create school cultures of professional collaboration.**	**8b.** … inducting and/or mentoring new teaching staff. **8c.** … building a "learning community" that includes all stakeholders.
■ **Hold teachers accountable for student learning and high-quality teaching.**	**13a.** … working with faculty to implement research-based instructional practices.

Appendix C: Findings Specific to the Competencies

The findings for the nine leadership competencies that are the foundation for the APP are presented in **five subsections** highlighting either a single competency or a competency cluster.

Contribute to high standards of learning for all students.

Schools can be places where all students learn and achieve high standards when principals understand that increasing academic rigor and giving all students access to high-level content have a positive impact on student achievement. They also know how to work with teachers, parents and the community to help them share the belief that all students can learn what was previously taught only to their best students. Table 1 presents the Providence aspiring principals' responses regarding their engagement in contributing to high standards of learning for all students.

A majority of participants in APP (79 to 84 percent) had experiences in *leading* activities in five out of 10 categories and more than half had opportunities to engage in a full continuum of *observing*, *participating in* and *leading* activities in all but two areas. Almost half (47 percent) of the participants did not have experiences in *leading* scheduling activities that provide time for giving struggling students extra help. More than a third (37 percent) *did not lead* the development of academic recognition programs, activities that raise standards and academic achievement for all students and teachers, or work with teachers to select and implement appropriate instructional strategies that address achievement gaps. The percentages of participants *leading* and *participating in* activities related to providing mentors for all students were high for this competency, but 16 percent had no experiences in this category.

Have a deep understanding of curriculum and learning standards for students *and* have content-focused expertise.

More than ever, school principals must have a deep understanding of national, state and local standards and the curriculum that can help students meet them. They must be able to give leadership and support to teachers in prioritizing and unwrapping standards, and in understanding how to align assignments, student work and classroom assessments to higher standards. Effective school leaders have content expertise that enables them to monitor the implementation of the school curriculum across subject areas and grade levels to ensure that the intended curriculum is being taught and all students have the opportunity to learn what they are expected to learn in order to progress to a higher level of placement. Because literacy and numeracy are essential for learning in all other curriculum areas, school principals must be especially knowledgeable of research-based strategies for improving students' performance in these areas and how to help teachers effectively incorporate these into all subject areas and at all grade levels. Table 2 reports questionnaire responses related to these practices.

A high percentage (84 percent) were developing or increasing their content-focused expertise through taking a leading role in literacy and numeracy task forces. This was a not surprising finding for many members of the first two cohorts have prior experience as school-based literacy coaches. However, for three of the six activities, more than a third of APP participants did not have an opportunity to *learn to lead*, while three-fourths or more had experiences *leading* in the other three activity categories. More than one-third were *not leading* transitional activities, and a few (10 percent) had no experience in this important area. Forty-two percent did not have the opportunity to *lead* work on interdisciplinary curriculum — a key strategy for reinforcing and connecting content and helping students find relevancy in what they are expected to learn.

Table 1
Contribute to high standards of learning for all students

Item Number	Activity Category	NR	O	P	L
1a.	…working with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement as defined by the mission of the school.		63%	74%	79%
2a.	…developing/overseeing academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate students' success at all levels of ability.		53	84	63
2b.	…activities resulting in raising standards and academic achievement for all students and teachers.		58	79	63
3b.	…working with teachers to select and implement appropriate instructional strategies that address identified achievement gaps.		58	68	63
4a.	…working with staff to identify needs of all students.		58	74	84
4b.	…collaborating with adults from within the school and community to provide mentors for all students.	16	47	79	84
4c.	…engaging in activities designed to increase parental involvement.		53	5	79
4d.	…engaging in parent/student/school collaborations that develop long-term educational plans for students.		68	63	84
10b.	… scheduling time to provide struggling students with the opportunity for extra support (e.g., individual tutoring, small group instruction, extended block time) so that they may have the opportunity to learn to mastery.	5	68	74	53
11b.	…developing schedules that maximize student learning in meaningful ways with measurable success.	5	53	79	63

NR = Not required   O = Observing   P = Participating   L = Leading

Table 2
Have a deep understanding of curriculum and learning
and standards for students; have content-focused expertise

Item Number	Activity Category	NR	O	P	L
1d.	…assisting with transitional activities for students as they progress to higher levels of placement (e.g., elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to higher education).	10%	68%	74%	63%
3c.	…working on a school team to prioritize standards and map curriculum in at least one content area across all grade levels of the school.		53	74	74
3d.	…working with a group of teachers to unwrap adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards.		47	74	74
3e.	…working with a school team to monitor implementation of an adopted curriculum.		47	74	63
3f.	…involvement in the work of literacy and numeracy task forces.		47	79	84
3g.	…working with curriculum that is inter-disciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum.	5	47	79	58

NR = Not required   O = Observing   P = Participating   L = Leading

Be knowledgeable of ways to facilitate change in teacher beliefs and practices *and* work with teachers to create school cultures of professional collaboration.

Effective principals understand that change occurs when other school leaders agree there is a problem and take ownership for it and the solution. They know how to provide the school staff experiences and conditions that create dissatisfaction with the current level of student achievement and with current school and classroom practices. They are adept at organizing, leading and facilitating experiences that bring consensus about goals and improvement strategies among faculty, parents and community leaders. They know how to orchestrate an array of experiences that result in more staff changing their beliefs about how much students can learn, and how to challenge people in ways that cause them to change their priorities, their values and their habits.

Further, good school leaders know how to tie professional development to a school improvement plan, make sure teachers are well-trained in new instructional methods and create a strong support system for new teachers that orients them to the school's vision and provides long-term mentoring. They know how to support continuous learning for everyone in the school by building learning communities where teachers and administrators engage in study groups, problem-solving sessions and regular meetings to discuss students' needs and other interactions that keep the focus on improving teaching and learning, and where students learn how to share responsibility for their own learning.

Table 3 presents data on the extent to which internships in APP provide experiences that prepare participants to lead change through a culture of collaboration.

Table 3
Be knowledgeable of ways to facilitate change in teacher beliefs and practices; work with teachers to create school cultures of professional collaboration

Item Number	Activity Category	NR	O	P	L
1c.	…working with the faculty to develop, define and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision.		53%	74%	63%
8a.	…working with faculty and staff in professional development activities.		53	84	79
8b.	…inducting and/or mentoring new teaching staff.	11	58	79	42
8c.	…building a "learning community" that includes all stakeholders.		53	84	77
9a.	…study groups, problem solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement.		58	79	53
9b.	…scheduling, developing and/or presenting professional development activities to faculty that positively impact student achievement.		32	68	84
10a.	…scheduling of classroom and/or professional development activities in a way that provides meaningful time for school improvement activities.		53	74	53

NR = Not required   O = Observing   P = Participating   L = Leading

At least 75 percent of the participants had experiences in leading school change by working with faculty and staff in professional development activities; scheduling, developing, and/or presenting professional development activities; and building a "learning community" that includes all stakeholders. However, only slightly more than half (53 percent) of the participants led study groups, problem solving sessions and meetings to promote student achievement and led attempts to organize time for school improvement activities. Participants had the least experience leading efforts involving inducting and/or mentoring new teaching staff.

Be able to discern quality teaching; effectively observe teaching, examine student work, interpret test results and provide feedback to teachers; *and* hold teachers accountable for student learning and high quality teaching.

A school principal's most direct avenue of influence on student achievement is through leading changes in teachers' instructional practices, including those related to assessment of students' learning. When principals make sound assessments of the quality of instructional practices being used in schools, lead teachers in examining data on the effects of their current practices and help them improve instruction by identifying and implementing research-based practices, the quality of instruction improves and student achievement increases. Table 4 presents the results of aspiring principals' responses to questionnaire items that focus on leading improvement in the quality of instruction.

These data reveal that 74 to 89 percent of the aspiring principals *led* activities that prepare them for analyzing data on the quality of instruction being provided in a school and working with faculty to refine their practices and implement research-based instructional strategies. While these results are impressive and indicate that the Providence partners are taking care to plan a focused set of internship experiences, there is room for improvement in seeing that all participants are experienced in the leading of each of the three competencies. The percentages of aspirants working with administrators to identify best practices that support their school's vision were somewhat lower (58 percent). There is also a need for increasing opportunities for all aspiring principals to gain a thorough understanding of the use of authentic student assessments, since teacher-developed assessments provide direct and objective measures of the quality of instruction.

Table 4
Be able to discern quality teaching; effectively observe teaching,
examine student work, interpret test results and provide feedback to teachers;
hold teachers accountable for student learning and high quality teaching

Item Number	Activity Category	NR	O	P	L
1b.	…working with the administration to develop, define and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision.		53%	89%	58%
2c.	…authentic assessments of student work through the use and/or evaluation of rubrics, end of course tests, projects.		63	58	68
3a.	…using a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices being implemented in a school.		53	63	79
5a.	…analyzing data (including standardized test scores, teacher assessments, psychological data, etc.) to develop/refine instructional activities and set instructional goals.		42	74	89
5b.	…facilitating data disaggregation for use by faculty and other stakeholders.		47	77	79
13a.	…working with faculty to implement research-based instructional practices.		37	74	74

NR = Not required   O = Observing   P = Participating   L = Leading

Be able to lead participatory school improvement planning processes.

Successful school leaders know that they cannot do the job alone or wait for someone else to provide what may be needed to improve their schools. They take steps to keep everyone informed and involved in their school's improvement agenda. They make parents partners in their student's education, create a structure for parents and educators to work together, and develop action plans for student achievement. Good principals take steps to ensure that their actions and communications send a clear message about the things that matter the most to student achievement. They are proactive in working with faculty to prepare and share meaningful information with the central office, the school board and community leaders that supports the school's improvement agenda. They reach out to a variety of sources to secure resources needed to support student achievement, writing grant proposals and developing partnerships with businesses, universities and community agencies. Table 5 reports findings from the questionnaire regarding the extent to which APP participants are engaging in participatory school improvement planning.

Table 5
Be able to lead participatory school improvement planning processes

Item Number	Activity Category	NR	O	P	L
6a.	…analyzing and communicating school progress and school achievement to teachers, parents and staff.		58%	84%	53%
6b.	…gathering feedback regarding the effectiveness of personal communication skills.		63	68	68
7a.	…working in meaningful relationships with faculty and parents to develop action plans for student achievement.		63	79	63
11a.	…writing grants or developing partnerships that provide needed resources for school improvement.	11	53	68	37
12a.	…working with faculty to communicate with school board and community stakeholders in a way that supports school improvement.		47	84	42
12b.	…working with faculty, parents and community to build collaboration and support for the school's agenda.		42	79	68

NR = Not required   O = Observing   P = Participating   L = Leading

Too few participants *led* activities that would help develop their knowledge and skills required for leading a participatory school improvement planning process. About two thirds of the participants *led* work with faculty, parents and the community to build collaboration and support for the school's agenda and in gathering feedback regarding the effectiveness of their personal communication skills. Yet just a little more than half (53 percent) *led* in the analysis and communication of school progress and achievement to teachers, parents and staff, and less than half (42 percent) led faculty in communication with the school board and community stakeholders for the purpose of garnering support for school improvement. Less than 40 percent *led* proposal writing and partnership development activities though about two thirds (68 percent) had opportunities to participate in these activities and a little over half (53 percent) observed how this work is conducted by school leaders and their faculties.

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