

SUMMARY
Better Leaders for America's Schools: A Manifesto

Document can be downloaded at:

<http://www.broadfoundation.org/med-pubs/BetterLeadersforAmericasSchools.pdf>

Overview:

“For America to have the great schools it needs, those schools must have great leaders – and so must their school systems.” The report tackles the certification process as the unit of analysis for examining problems in school leadership. Part one makes a case for drastically changing and deregulating how we certify principals and superintendents. Part two provides profiles of six unconventional but outstanding school leaders. Part three summarizes the findings of a major survey by the National Center for Educational Information, which looked at requirements for school leader certification in all 50 states. This summary focuses on part one of the report.

Statement of Problem: “We face a leadership crisis.”

- We face a wave of vacancies in school leader positions
 - A great wave of principals & superintendents are retiring
 - Many principals are leaving the job earlier
- We do not have a shortage of certified candidates
 - Surplus of certified administrators
 - Certified doesn't mean qualified
- Principal & superintendent positions are growing more difficult and unappealing
 - Principals are profoundly accountable, yet have scant authority to make and execute important decisions.
 - Principals are not paid much.
 - Superintendents have complex, tough jobs that require collaboration with a wide variety of constituencies.
 - Accountability demands are escalating
- We do not have the caliber of leaders that we need
 - Shortage of top-notch principals and superintendents, particularly in difficult urban & rural locations
 - 3 in 5 superintendents were not satisfied with their principals' ability to make tough decisions, engage teachers, manage finances, delegate responsibility
 - 60% of superintendents said “you take what you get” when hiring principals
- Problems with certification process
 - Bureaucratic process
 - Conventional training & certification requirements are burdensome
 - Includes prior teaching, ed-school courses in ed. Admin., graduate degrees
 - Deters many educators with leadership qualities from moving into key administrative roles
 - Bars proven leaders from other professional fields
 - Minimal selectivity

- Anyone who goes through the hoops and gets a degree can become certified, without demonstrating any proven leadership skills
 - Candidates apply. They aren't recruited.
 - Content not relevant to actual job of leading schools
 - Job has changed profoundly. They have become CEOs of small public businesses whose chief product is learning.
 - ***“The skills that school leaders need to do their jobs are not taught in colleges of education, and no amount of credentialing can create them, either.”***
 - Tightening requirements will not work
- School leader preparation is a problem
 - Wrong incentives
 - Teachers take ed admin courses for a pay increase – not to enlarge their responsibilities
 - In most states, teachers certified as principals automatically move up the pay scale
 - Most do not want to be leaders (hence the surplus of those holding certification)
 - Many states reimburse tuition to teachers, who widely attend public institutions. Hence the public subsidizes a process that fails to yield leaders.
 - Wrong instruction
 - ***College of education courses have “little bearing on the problems that real school leaders face.”***

“It’s an unholy alliance of colleges of education, state departments of education, and local education agencies that have created a credit-hour accumulation system to supply revenue to colleges and authorities to supply a large reserve pool of unqualified people and to promote the certification process at the state level.” Richard Elmore, Harvard University

Recommendations:

- Simplify certification requirements to the bare minimum
 - Reduce certification requirements to a bachelor’s degree, background check, test of laws & regulations pertinent to the job
 - ***(Significance here is that they do not believe a graduate degree in education administration is necessary for the position.)***
 - Eliminate teaching experience requirement
 - 10% of private school leaders have not been teachers
 - Distributed leader paradigm says one need not have technical expertise in order to lead an organization
 - Recruit and select candidates for leadership qualities
 - Recruit for essential skills first, supply specialized knowledge later
- Broaden search for candidates
 - Take initiative to locate and develop educators with leadership potential
 - Widen the net to include candidates from outside education
- Change the jobs to make them doable and attractive
 - Better compensation
 - Increased authority over personnel, finances, operations, curriculum, testing/assessment
 - Use school performance as an indicator of job performance

- Tie contracts to results
 - Reward, renew, retain those who are successful
 - Fire those who fail to produce needed results
- ***Improve and rely upon on-the-job training, rather than preparation through graduate education***
 - ***Today, graduate schools of education ... offer a menu of courses that may or may not be relevant to the day-to-day realities of school leadership. People who dine on that menu then get hired as principals, regardless of whether their skills, experience, and academic courses have readied them for the issues they will confront on the job.”***
 - School districts should determine what the training will be
 - School systems should use a wide array of training approaches
 - Apprenticeships
 - Mentoring
 - Residency program within successful schools under proven leaders
 - School system based leadership training academies, blending courses with internships
 - ***Colleges of education should be just one of many possible providers***

Finn, Jr., C. E. & Broad, E. (May 2003). Better leaders for America’s schools: A manifesto. Washington D.C.: The Broad Foundation / Thomas B. Fordham Institute.