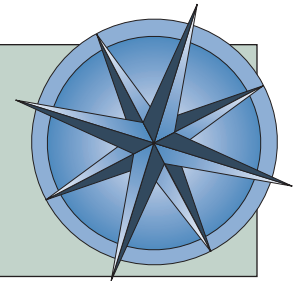


School Leadership Study

Developing Successful Principals



OVERVIEW

The School Leadership Study was launched in December 2003 through a grant from the Wallace Foundation to Stanford University. The study will conclude in December 2006.

The purpose of the study is to identify effective ways of developing strong school leaders, equipped to create effective learning environments for America's diverse student populations.

This study is motivated by two key premises:

- High quality teaching and learning for all students depends substantially on effective school leadership.
- American schools are hindered from providing effective education for all students because of a significant shortfall of effective leadership.

The study defines "effective school leadership" as that which promotes and sustains learning gains for students, professionals, schools, and districts.

The study analyzes both principal preparation and in-service principal professional development programs that have been recognized as exemplary. This study will identify the structure and content of each of these programs and investigate whether program graduates exhibit effective practice as school leaders. In addition, the study will define the context of each program, identifying the state, district, and institutional policies and funding mechanisms that support and constrain them.

RESEARCH TOPICS

The research addresses three primary sets of questions:

1. Qualities of Exemplary Programs. Why are these programs exemplary? What models of leadership and instruction do these programs explicitly and implicitly enact? How are they designed and implemented?
2. Context of Exemplary Programs. What state, district, and institutional policies foster the

development of exemplary programs? How are they supported politically, organizationally, and financially? What does it cost to provide an exemplary professional development program? How do state and district financing policies shape the configuration of professional development programs available to support school leaders?

3. Impact of Exemplary Programs. Are aspiring principals developing the knowledge and skills taught by these programs? Do graduates of exemplary programs demonstrate the effective leadership practices identified in the research literature? Are graduates of these programs more effective than other principals?

STUDY DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The research design develops in-depth case studies of select preparation programs, supplemented by surveys of a national comparison sample of school principals.

The design of the study has two components. First, the research team will conduct a series of in-depth case analyses of eight preparation and professional development programs in five states. The case studies will include analysis of the institutional and organizational infrastructure at the state and district levels and a study of the leadership practice of graduates who have completed the programs. Each case study will provide an analysis of the costs and the context of the program, including an examination of the policies and financing that foster the development of exemplary principal training programs. Second, the study will document the preparation and leadership practices of a comparison sample of principals. The combination of these two components will enable researchers to compare their findings from the case studies (the first component) to findings from a broader sample (the second component), and to develop insights about national and state level policy trends and implications.

Cost analysis of case studies will be conducted

by The Finance Project, a Washington, D.C.-based, nonprofit research organization. They will gather data regarding the policy context, financing, and cost of implementing the selected programs.

SELECTION OF PROGRAMS

The sample of case studies includes eight programs in five states. To facilitate deep study of context, the research team selected a sample of both pre- and in-service programs with several cohorts of graduates who work in a concentration of districts.

Each of the programs has a reputation in the field for being effective. With one exception, these programs — generally through district-university partnerships — represent a continuum of principal preparation and on-going professional development programs. These exemplary programs were also selected to represent a variety of approaches with respect to their design, policy context, and the nature of the collaboration with their district.

Our sample includes the following programs:

Pre-service	In-service
University of San Diego	San Diego Public Schools
Bank Street College (NY)	New York City Public Schools - Region I
University of Connecticut	Hartford School District (CT)
Jefferson County (KY)	Jefferson County (KY)
Delta State University (MS)	

The program sample was augmented with an additional three states (Georgia, North Carolina, and Delaware) to allow for a broader perspective on how state policy and financing structures influence program financing, design, and orientation.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

One research objective is to increase the knowledge base of principal preparation and development programs that advance the leadership capabilities and practices of graduates. At the program level, the dissemination of this knowledge through publications and case studies can assist universities, local districts, and schools in rethinking how they conduct, support, and finance training for principals and other educational leaders. The research will also include descriptions of the salient characteristics and components of high quality professional preparation and development programs and recommendations about how states and program providers can effectively support and finance such programs.

RESEARCH PRODUCTS

Findings from this study will be developed into a series of publications for practitioners, decision-makers, and academics, including: a literature review that provides an overview of current trends in principal preparation and professional development, a set of case studies providing an in-depth description of each program, a final report with cross-site analysis of trends and lessons for the field, and various policy briefs and research articles. Published pieces, including the literature review and working papers, can be purchased or downloaded from <http://seli.stanford.edu>.

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