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PRESS RELEASE

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STUDY IDENTIFIES EFFECTIVE APPROACHES FOR PRINCIPAL EDUCATION

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STANFORD, CA — Principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools, but a shortfall in qualified leaders is hindering many American schools from providing effective education for all students. These are among the first findings, to be released this week, from a major research effort currently underway to gain a clearer understanding of what is known about principal preparation and development, what works and how to create scalable models that can bring effective leadership to all America's schools.

The project, titled "School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals," is taking place in several phases. The first phase, being released August 10, is *Review of Research* — an examination of existing knowledge in the field. Investigators identify the ways that school leadership and school performance are closely linked, examine the essential skills of good leadership, key features of effective principal education programs, structures of effective programs, and successful financing and policy reform strategies (for further details, see below).

The *Review of Research* establishes what is already known about leadership preparation and development — a vital step in identifying and replicating successful programs. The study has been commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and undertaken by Stanford University in conjunction with The Finance Project. Copies of the *Review of Research* are available on request or can be downloaded from:
http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/csi/programs/seli_research_activity.html or the Knowledge Center at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org>.

"The role of the principal has swelled in recent years to include a staggering array of responsibilities," said Stephen Davis, lead author of the review and an associate professor of education at Stanford University. "Principals are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. Traditional methods of preparing administrators are no longer adequate to meet the leadership challenges posed by modern

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schools. There are programs that have successfully managed this new reality, and our goal is to identify the effective practices in these programs so that they can be replicated."

"We know that what a school principal does is second only to teaching in raising student achievement, especially in our nation's lowest performing schools," said M. Christine DeVita, President of The Wallace Foundation. "Yet, existing training for principals often fails to prepare them for their central task of creating a climate for improved learning – nor does it use approaches that we know are effective in achieving that goal, including a coherent curriculum, mentors and cohort groups. These findings of Stanford's first report of an in-depth investigation on improving the preparation of school leaders will be instrumental in moving us to effective solutions."

With the *Review of Research* completed, researchers are now compiling a series of in-depth case studies of eight highly developed pre- and in-service programs in five states. The case studies will examine the programs and the perceptions of participants, track graduates (along with a comparison sample of principals) into the schools they lead. Cost analysis of case studies will be conducted by The Finance Project, a Washington, D.C.-based, nonprofit research organization, which will also explore the state policy and finance structures that foster effective programs.

The School Leadership Study is being conducted by a team of more than a dozen researchers from around the country. The lead authors of the *Review of Research* are associate professor of education Stephen Davis, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Linda Darling-Hammond, research director Michelle LaPointe, and associate professor of education and professor of organizational behavior Debra Meyerson, all of Stanford University.

For more information on The Wallace Foundation, visit: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org>.

For more information on The Finance Project, visit: <http://www.financeproject.org>

For more information on the School Leadership Study, visit:
http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/csi/programs/seli_research_activity.html

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Review of Research Key Findings

Current trends:

Lack of qualified leaders. A shortage of highly qualified principal candidates has been reported by school districts across the nation. In some parts of the country nearly 60 percent of principals will retire, resign, or otherwise leave their positions over the next five years. In other parts of the country the issue has less to do with dwindling supply than with the inequitable distribution of qualified candidates in suburban and affluent communities. In California, for example, the problem is not a shortage of certified administrators, but a shortage of highly qualified administrators with a commitment to working in underserved communities and schools.

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Legislating accountability. An increasing awareness that principals play a significant role in affecting student achievement has influenced policy in some states, where policymakers have placed greater pressures on principals for accountability. For example, California law threatens to fire principals as one possible consequence for low-performing schools while in Portland, Oregon, a small portion of a principal’s salary is based on a set of professional standards theoretically linked to student outcomes.

Essential Elements of Good Leadership

Successful school leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways — the support and development of teachers and the implementation of organizational processes. This viewpoint is increasingly reflected in preparation and licensing requirements around the country.

Effective Program Design

The processes and standards by which many principal preparation programs traditionally screen, select, and graduate candidates are often ill-defined, irregularly applied, and lacking in rigor. Effective programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools.

Structures of Effective Programs

Most preparation programs fall under one of four general types: university-based programs, district initiated programs, programs run by third parties, and programs run through partnerships between stakeholders. While a diversity of in-service programs exist most (but not all) preparation programs are still university-based. Programmatic approaches vary, with some reformers emphasizing leadership and management skills while others focus foremost on instructional knowledge.

Policy Reform and Finances

There is an unmet need for better understanding of program costs, the financing strategies used to fund them and the policies needed to sustain them.

School Leadership Study — Case Studies

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)	

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