Strengthening School Leadership

Preparing and Supporting Superintendents and Principals

October 2006

The Education Policy and Leadership Center
Strengthening School Leadership:
Preparing and Supporting Superintendents and Principals

October 2006

Part I  • The K-12 School Leadership Project .................................................1
Part II  • Is there a Shortage of School and District Leaders ..........................2
Part III • 21st Century School Leadership.........................................................4
Part IV  • Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership ....................7
Part V   • Preparing and Supporting Future School and District Leaders........11
Part VI  • Recommendations ........................................................................16

Appendix  • EPLC Study Group Members ......................................................19
Notes ............................................................................................................20
It is imperative that we assure that leaders for schools and districts are well-prepared and supported and that school districts have a sufficient pool from which to select the best possible leaders for their communities.
Part I: The K-12 School Leadership Project

Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Therefore, it is imperative — especially in this era of increased focus on successful learning for all students — that we assure that leaders for schools and districts are well-prepared and supported and that school districts have a sufficient pool from which to select the best possible leaders for their communities.

The Pennsylvania K-12 School Leadership Project of The Education Policy and Leadership Center is intended to review the status of district and school leadership and to recommend policy changes to enhance the quality of that leadership — particularly with regard to district superintendents and school principals.

The Pennsylvania K-12 School Leadership Project is sponsored by The Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC), with the cooperation of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), and the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (PAESSP).

To assist in identifying and considering both underlying issues and potential recommendations, EPLC appointed a 20-member study group (see Appendix for a list of members). Members included school and district leaders, leadership educators, policymakers, association representatives, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) personnel, foundation staff, and education advocates. The study group held an initial conference call meeting on April 11, 2005, followed by face-face meetings in Harrisburg on May 23-24, 2005 and February 13, 2006. The study group conducted a final conference call meeting on June 29, 2006. While the study group was instrumental in preparing this report, it is not intended to be a consensus document that necessarily represents in all respects the views of all its members. The report ultimately is the product of EPLC, which bears responsibility for its contents.

EPLC also reviewed and summarized research on the roles and expectations of school and district leaders today, the knowledge and skills necessary for successful performance of school and district leadership roles, administrator preparation programs and continuing professional education opportunities, the supply of and demand for school and district leaders, and state policy related to these issues. This research informed the work of the study group and this report.

In addition, EPLC conducted two focus groups on roles, skills, and preparation issues — one with a statewide group of successful superintendents on October 27, 2005 and the other with a statewide group of successful principals on December 12, 2005.

Finally, staff for this project sought input from participants at the EPLC Annual Pennsylvania Education Policy and Leadership Conference in Harrisburg on March 13, 2006.

During the year that this project has been operating, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has moved forward aggressively to improve the continuing professional education opportunities for school leaders in the state, and these efforts also have informed our work.
Part II: Is there a Shortage of School and District Leaders?

It does not appear that there is a shortage of individuals who have been educated and certified to be school and district leaders. On the other hand, there is substantial and credible anecdotal evidence that the pool of actual applicants for these positions is increasingly shallow and more frequently filled with individuals seeking their first principalship or superintendency. This anecdotal evidence generally supports the findings of a state legislative study in 2003. That study noted that standards-based reforms have increased the complexity of administrative jobs; that some districts are experiencing shortages despite the adequate statewide supply of certified potential administrators; and that compensation packages not commensurate with responsibilities, lack of support, and high levels of stress, make school administrative positions less and less attractive.

Between 2000-01 and 2004-05, PDE issued 859 letters of eligibility to candidates for the superintendency. This averages 172 per year, or enough candidates to fill superintendent slots in one-third of all Pennsylvania school districts annually. Clearly, the demand for new superintendents is less than this. But those conducting searches report that there are fewer applicants for the top school district post than there were a decade ago and that more applicants are seeking their first superintendency — many without prior central office experience. It is likely that many of those certified as superintendents are candidates for other central office positions such as assistant superintendents.

The situation for principals is similar. During the same time period, PDE issued initial principal certificates to more than 4,500 individuals, or an average

While 25 percent of the state’s public school students are members of racial and ethnic minorities, only 2 percent of superintendents and 11 percent of principals are.
of over 900 per year. This would be enough to replace nearly 30 percent of all building leaders annually — again a more than sufficient supply. In focus group discussions with experienced and successful superintendents, we learned that the supply of applicants for principal positions also is much smaller than it once was and that in some cases districts have to advertise multiple times because they do not receive any applications at all in response to their initial advertisements. As with superintendent candidates, principal applicants tend to have less administrative experience (typically as assistant principals) than they did in the past. Superintendents report, however, that the quality of applicants tends to be high, although the quantity and prior experience are both lacking.

Some who have principal certification initially intend to become principals but are discouraged by relatively low compensation (on a per diem basis) for first year principals compared with that for experienced teachers. In addition, in an era of increased accountability, a classroom appears to be a much safer work environment than a principal's office. A number of experienced principals in our focus group discussion told us that while they find their work rewarding and appreciate the opportunity to help a larger number of children than they could in a single classroom, they probably would not seek to become principals if faced with that option today. Others with principal certificates actually never intend to become administrators. They enter principal preparation programs, according to a number of leadership educators, because that provides them with a straightforward and coherent approach to getting master's degrees which provide increased compensation on the teacher salary schedule.

Finally, in some districts, where school board members do not always respect the management roles of district and school leaders, both incumbents and potential future leaders are discouraged by the increasingly political nature of both principal and superintendent jobs.

So while there are enough “qualified” candidates for superintendencies and principalships in Pennsylvania, school districts often are forced to choose from a very small applicant pool of individuals with relatively little prior administrative experience.

And that pool is not very diverse. While 25 percent of the state’s public school students are members of racial and ethnic minorities, only 2 percent of superintendents and 11 percent of principals are. This reflects a serious “pipeline” issue, as only 6 percent of teachers (the source of almost all administrator candidates) are nonwhite. And that pipeline goes back to the public schools, where minority students are less likely to take rigorous curricula, less likely to graduate, and less likely to go to college (where they might prepare for careers in education).

We do know that it is possible to promote diversity of administrators from within the pipeline of the teacher corps. Between 1997-98 and 2004-05, the percentage of women superintendents in Pennsylvania increased from 12 percent to 20 percent, and the percentage of women principals increased from 33 percent to 44 percent.

The next question is whether their training actually prepares future leaders for the changing roles of school and district administration in the 21st century. A discussion of those issues follows.
District leaders cannot rely upon an authoritarian leadership model, but rather must be flexible and collaborative in their work. They must provide vision for the district and must oversee the execution of that vision.

Part III: 21st Century School Leadership

Decades of effective schools research — going back to the work of Ron Edmonds in the 1960s — continues to find a strong relationship between effective instructional leadership of schools and high levels of student achievement. Leading schools and districts has become more complex than ever before, due in part to increased pressure to perform, increased diversity of students, and an unstable political environment within which schools must operate.

The National Commission on Governing America’s Schools reported in 1999 on the need to rethink the roles of school boards and superintendents so they are responsible for creating a district mission and for holding schools accountable for achieving results. This kind of shift will require additional training for most superintendents and school board members. EPLC studied these roles and relationships during 2003-04 and issued a report and policy recommendations — Strengthening the Work of School Boards in Pennsylvania — in March 2004.

In addition, recent reports by the two national principals associations make clear that multiple demands and conflicting priorities make it difficult for principals to focus on school improvement to the degree they think they should. Since the issuance of these important studies, school and district leaders have come under even more scrutiny and accountability, especially as a result of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

As waves of school and district administrators — particularly principals and superintendents — retire, there is an emerging national shortage of highly qualified school leaders, although recent research
suggests this problem may be concentrated in schools with the most challenging working conditions, high concentrations of poor and minority students, and low salaries. Anecdotal information, discussed in Part 2 of this report, suggests that at least some Pennsylvania schools and districts are facing similar problems. There is evidence that the academic programs and professional experience of would-be administrators does not adequately prepare them for the challenges they will face, nor is much of the in-service professional development meeting their very real needs. This problem is compounded by increasing pressure on administrators for student performance improvements and, in many places, declining salaries relative to those of teachers. Pennsylvania school district administrators face even greater demands — more students and teachers per capita — and are paid relatively lower salaries than their peers nationally.

In order to deal with shortages in the number of administrator candidates and promote non-traditional school leadership models, states and districts have begun recruiting superintendents and principals from the military, corporate, and government worlds. This is especially true for urban superintendencies.

What are the characteristics of effective leadership for 21st century schools and districts in a standards-driven system? There appears to be a growing consensus that school leaders must be first and foremost instructional leaders. Other necessary characteristics include communication skills, collaboration, community building (both within and outside the school), ability to articulate and be guided by a clear vision, and willingness to take risks and lead change. Quality educational leadership is a key to successfully implementing school reform.

**Evolving Roles of Superintendents**

Much has been written in the past decade or two about the evolving and increasingly complex roles of school district superintendents. This is an age of rapid change and expectations that are both increasing and new. District leaders therefore cannot rely upon an authoritarian leadership model, but rather must be flexible and collaborative in their work. They must provide vision for the district — a vision focused on good instruction for all children — and must oversee the execution of that vision. In addition, they must lead people in the district — principals and teachers — as well as board members and the community and must assess district personnel’s effectiveness in achieving the vision of high level learning for all students. A recent study conducted for The Wallace Foundation concluded that the three primary roles of superintendents today are setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization to better achieve its mission. Increasingly, the effective superintendent must serve as an effective political leader, working with the school board and other community leaders and increasingly (and especially in large urban districts) with state and national political leaders to obtain adequate resources and ward off political interference in the operation of the schools.

In our earlier work on school boards and superintendents, EPLC concluded that effective superintendents today must serve as district CEOs, implement school board policy, establish organizational structures and school programs to help all students succeed, lead the development of strategic plans, recommend to the board the hiring (and if necessary the dismissal) of all personnel, propose and oversee the implementation of the budget, maintain positive relationships with community stakeholders, practice and institutionalize the concept...
Instructional leadership today is a more complex undertaking than it was even a decade ago, in part because of the increasing pressure of accountability for the academic achievement of all students.

Evolving Roles of Principals

Recent research buttresses decades of stated (but not always implemented) beliefs about the role of the building principal in promoting improved student achievement. But instructional leadership today is a more complex undertaking than it was even a decade ago, in part because of the increasing pressure of accountability for the academic achievement of all students. Today’s successful principals must be “educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facilities managers, special programs administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives.” In addition, they are responsible for maintaining safe and orderly learning environments for students and teachers. Because of the breadth of these responsibilities, some have suggested the necessity of a distributive leadership model, in which some aspects of the principal’s “job” are shared with others in the building, including teacher leaders.
Part IV: Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership

Most of the academic research on leadership has focused on principals, rather than on superintendents. But there is substantial agreement within the research literature as well as among practitioners about the knowledge and skills needed by both principals and superintendents if they are to be effective in their evolving and increasingly complex roles. This section of the report draws upon the available research as well as focus groups of successful principals and superintendents and the input of members of EPLC’s school leadership study group.

Both principals and superintendents must be able to:

- Create an organizational vision focused on student success and communicate the vision to all relevant stakeholders.
- Create an organizational culture of teaching and learning in which student learning is paramount.
- Manage resources effectively to bring about desired results.
- Collaborate, communicate, engage, and empower others — both inside the organization and in the larger community.
- Operate fairly and equitably displaying personal and professional integrity.
- Make informed decisions based upon the best information available.
- Advocate for public education and for children in the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts.
- Support the professional growth of self and others through both practice and inquiry.

This list was developed by PDE’s Work Group on School Leadership Standards in 2004-05 and serves as the basis of much of the work on leadership development currently being undertaken by PDE (and described in Part 5 of this report). These standards, now part of PDE’s Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership (PIL) program, were designed to cut across school leadership positions — from teacher leaders to superintendents — and to inform professional preparation, professional development, and professional practice.

The list also reflects and summarizes much of the research literature on effective principals and superintendents. That research gave rise a decade ago to a set of six standards developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The ISLLC standards reflect all of the points noted above except for informed decision-making and professional development of self and others. The ISLLC standards have become the basis of leadership preparation programs in many states, including Pennsylvania.

What knowledge and skills are needed to meet these standards? Both our study group and focus groups provided essentially the same answers summarized in the following charts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Skills of Effective Superintendents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of supervision and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artful use of infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective bargaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest-based negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change theory and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and economic trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult learning theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human relations skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These standards and lists of knowledge and skills needed for effective performance in school and district leadership roles should be at the heart of initial and continuing leadership education. In addition, for principals there is an especially rich research literature to help inform leadership education. Perhaps the most extensive review and summary of the research has been conducted during the past few years by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). This includes a meta-analysis of 69 studies involving 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers. The authors conclude that there is a direct correlation between the principal’s leadership behavior and student achievement; an improvement of one standard deviation in the leadership skills of an average principal yields a 10 percentile point increase in student achievement in an average school. Furthermore, the authors identify 21 specific leadership behaviors that contribute significantly to student achievement.25 These are summarized in the table that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical skills</th>
<th>Understanding the political climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to focus and prioritize</td>
<td>Maintaining a safe, orderly environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making skills</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-based management</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills, including listening to multiple audiences</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of school staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff assessment, development, discipline</td>
<td>Mental toughness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective instructional practices</td>
<td>Strong sense of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum management</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic content (ability to teach something well)</td>
<td>Flexibility and adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current social trends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School law, especially special education law</td>
<td>Organizational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the same factors are noted for principals, albeit in somewhat different terminology and in different organizational contexts.
# 21 Principal Responsibilities Correlated with Increased Student Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Demonstrated by the Extent to Which the Principal…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Affirmation</td>
<td>Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Change Agent</td>
<td>Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Contingent Rewards</td>
<td>Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communication</td>
<td>Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Culture</td>
<td>Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Discipline</td>
<td>Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Flexibility</td>
<td>Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Focus</td>
<td>Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td>Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Input</td>
<td>Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Optimizer</td>
<td>Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Order</td>
<td>Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Outreach</td>
<td>Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Relationships</td>
<td>Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Resources</td>
<td>Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Situational Awareness</td>
<td>Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Visibility</td>
<td>Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several conclusions can be drawn from all of this work.

1. The roles of superintendents and principals have become more complex, requiring a broad array of substantive and procedural knowledge as well as a diversity of skills.

2. Much of the knowledge and skill base relates directly to the core elements of education — curriculum, instruction, and assessment — and to the management of education — effective use of resources, understanding school law, and professional development.

3. Some of the knowledge and skill base relates to a set of broader leadership attributes — communications, collaboration, data-based decision-making, and politics.

4. Only the rarest individual demonstrates excellence in all these areas, lending credence to the need for a leadership team (at district and building levels) to draw upon the disparate strengths of men and women in formal and informal leadership positions across the organization. State policy must recognize that school and district leaders work in complex organizations with other skilled professionals, not simply as solitary administrators acting alone.

5. Some of the necessary knowledge and skill base can be learned in graduate school leadership programs, while some can best be developed in practice, either during initial preparation or subsequently on the job.

Part 5 of this report discusses leadership preparation and continuing support for school and district leaders once they assume leadership positions.

Part V: Preparing and Supporting Future School and District Leaders

Almost all principals and superintendents are prepared for their positions in graduate-level university training programs. PDE has approved 23 institutions of higher education to prepare superintendents and 40 to prepare principals. Each administrative area has a set of PDE standards by which individual university programs are judged every seven years. These are based upon the ISLLC standards.

Most university programs include coursework in leadership theory, organizational theory, human resources management, curriculum and instruction, school finance, school law, school planning, and school-community relations and communications. Aspiring superintendents are required to complete at least 180 hours of authentic simulations, field experiences, and at least a 90-hour internship. Principal candidates are required to complete at least 360 hours of authentic simulations, field experiences, and at least a 180-hour internship.

In addition to completing the appropriate training program, a candidate for the superintendency must have six years of professional experience in the schools, at least three of which must have been in a supervisory capacity. In order to become a principal, an individual must have at least five years of professional experience in education.

There have been a handful of exceptions in recent years, in which the Secretary of Education granted letters of eligibility to urban superintendents who did not complete the traditional education leader-
It appears that the knowledge and skill items where there are cited major weaknesses in the preparation programs are precisely the knowledge and skill areas deemed to be most important for school and district leadership.

Administrators are required to complete the same amount of continuing professional education as teachers — six credits of collegiate coursework, six credits of approved continuing professional education courses, 180 hours of continuing professional education programs, or any combination of these every five years. Failure to comply with this requirement renders inactive the administrative certificate of a school principal or the letter of eligibility of a district superintendent.

Both our focus groups of successful superintendents and principals and the EPLC study group identified several weaknesses of current leadership preparation programs.

Gaps in knowledge and skills for district superintendent and school principal candidates were identified in the following areas:

- K-12 academic standards.
- Use of assessment data to lead curriculum change and instructional improvement efforts.
- Labor relations and teacher supervision.
- Interpersonal skills and group dynamics.
- School law and contracts.
- Special education.
- Crisis management.
- School finance.
- Community relations.
- Change processes.
- Working effectively with the school board (for superintendent preparation programs).
This list is especially problematic given the findings in Part 4 of this report on the knowledge and skills needed for effective school and district leadership. It appears that the knowledge and skill items where there are cited major weaknesses in the preparation programs are precisely the knowledge and skill areas deemed to be most important for school and district leadership.

Several members of our study group suggested that the requirements for clinical practice be increased, either through longer preservice internships or through mandatory induction programs for new principals and superintendents. While study group members acknowledge the cost of doing this, they generally believe that the key to improving preparation is more and better clinical practice.

One of the most significant studies — and critiques — of school leadership programs was released last year. This report is the first of four to be produced by the Education Schools Project, a national study of education programs, including a survey of deans and representative samples of faculty and alumni (graduating between 1995 and 2000), as well as a survey of 1,800 current principals and case studies of 28 programs. Its primary author, Arthur Levine, offers nine criteria and argues that administrator preparation programs in the aggregate fail to meet any of the nine:

1. The program purpose is explicit, focusing on the education of practicing school leaders; goals reflect the needs of today’s school leaders, schools, and children; success is tied to student learning.

2. The curriculum is rigorous, coherent, and organized to teach the skills and knowledge needed by leaders at specific types of schools and at the various stages of their careers.

3. Curriculum integrates the theory and practice of administration.

4. Faculty is composed of scholars and practitioners expert in school leadership, up to date in their fields, intellectually productive, and rooted in the academy and the schools; the number of professors and fields of expertise is aligned with curriculum and student enrollment.

5. Admissions criteria are designed to recruit students with the capacity and motivation to become successful school leaders.

6. Graduation standards are high and the degrees awarded are appropriate to the profession.

7. Research is high in quality, driven by practice, and useful to practitioners and/or policymakers.

8. Resources are adequate to support the program.


According to Levine, the curriculum in master’s programs is almost a random collection of survey courses and in doctoral programs is designed more to educate scholars than practitioners. He sees little connection between the courses of study and the needs of schools and administrators. Theory overshadows practice, and there is insufficient mentorship by practicing administrators. He finds that there is inadequate integration of theory and research and too much reliance on adjunct faculty. Admissions and graduation standards both are low, and the Ed.D. degree is poorly suited to the needs of practicing administrators. He argues that research is of poor quality and rarely used, that most programs are “cash cows” that are insufficiently supported by their universities, and that self-assessment is rare.
Another point of view is offered by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), an organization representing 73 doctoral granting institutions. It sets forth 11 standards for effective education administration programs:

1. Faculty identify, develop, and promote relevant knowledge for the leadership field.

2. Programs involve a critical mass of full-time faculty who exhibit excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service.

3. Programs collaborate with practitioners and other stakeholders in candidate selection, program planning, teaching, and field internships.

4. Programs collaborate with scholars, practitioners, and other stakeholders to inform program content, promote diversity, and develop sites for clinical practice and applied research.

5. Programs are conceptually coherent, aligned with quality leadership standards, informed by current scholarship, and incorporate best practices in leadership preparation.

6. Programs engage in ongoing evaluation and enhancement.

7. Programs include concentrated periods of study and supervised clinical practice in settings that provide an opportunity to work with diverse groups of students and teachers.

8. Programs have systematic recruitment and admissions plans that use multiple sources of evidence to recruit a high quality and diverse applicant pool.

9. Programs systematically assist students in placement and career advancement.

10. Faculty participate in professional development programs for educational leaders, in cooperation with professional associations and other stakeholders.

11. Programs offer regular professional development for faculty to enhance their skills in leadership preparation and research methods.

Clearly there are significant similarities between Levine’s criteria and UCEA’s standards. In addition to challenging Levine’s methodology, UCEA also argues that leadership preparation programs have made great strides in improving their programs to meet these standards since the class of 2000 (the latest year Levine studied) graduated.27

During the past couple of years, PDE has responded to perceived weaknesses in administrator preparation by convening the Work Group on School Leadership Standards and by using that group’s recommendations as the basis of a standards-based professional development program. The Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership (PIL) program focuses on leadership to improve student achievement. It is designed not as a preservice university-based program but as a continuing professional education program for practicing school administrators.

PIL has three core standards and six corollary standards. The core standards are:

1. The leader has the knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, creating an organizational vision around personalized student success.

2. The leader is grounded in standards-based systems theory and design and is able to
transfer that knowledge to his/her job as the architect of standards-based reform in the school.

3. The leader knows how to access and use appropriate data to inform decision-making at all levels of the system.

The six corollary standards are:

1. Creates a culture of teaching and learning with an emphasis on learning.
2. Manages resources for effective results.
3. Collaborates, communicates, engages, and empowers others inside and outside of the organization to pursue excellence in learning.
4. Operates in a fair and equitable manner with personal and professional dignity.
5. Advocates for children and public education in the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

There are two distinct elements of PIL. “Grow” serves cohorts of novice principals and assistant principals, with training provided by the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL). “Support” serves cohorts of experienced superintendents, assistant superintendents, central office administrators, and principals. Training is based upon a PDE adaptation of the Total Leaders curriculum originally developed by the Pennsylvania Leadership Development Center (PLDC). Both Grow and Support provide Act 48 continuing professional education credit and establish cohorts of colleagues, both regionally and statewide. The programs are offered in conjunction with the state’s intermediate units in eight regions. The 2005-06 school year was the first in which PIL was offered; it rolled out in four of the eight regions — two with a Grow component and two with a Support component. For the 2006-07 school year, PDE anticipates offering both components in all eight regions.

Numerous other professional development opportunities exist for school administrators, including university graduate courses and programs offered by state and national associations of administrators including the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals, and Pennsylvania School Boards Association. Some of these focus on specific skills needed by administrators, and some focus on more generic leadership skills and on the concept of team leadership of schools and districts. Some are directed at aspiring and new leaders and others at more experienced administrators. Our focus groups of superintendents and principals uniformly praised these programs as being very useful.

Other organizations also provide opportunities for the professional development of administrators. Intermediate units frequently organize common learning experiences for administrators in their districts and offer informal or formal support networks. The Pennsylvania Academy for the Profession of Teaching and Learning manages the Pennsylvania Leadership Induction (PLI) program. PLI matches trained mentors (successful principals and those recently retired) with new principals, assistant principals, and aspiring leaders to provide face-to-face and electronic consultation.
Part VI: Recommendations

Recommendations for State Policymakers:

1. In rolling out the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership (PIL) program, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) should assure that statewide implementation is of uniform quality — both with respect to regional delivery and to the delivery of the Grow and Support elements of the program.

2. In its focus on implementing PIL, PDE should not intentionally or inadvertently undermine other effective professional education programs for school and district leaders. While there is generally a need for the state-mandated professional development (Act 48) to be more focused and for the “anything goes” attitude toward Act 48 to be eliminated, many successful administrators have been well served for many years by other programs.

3. In selecting future trainers for PIL, PDE should consider applicants from university-based administrator training programs and staff of other organizations that currently provide professional development opportunities for school and district leaders.

4. Given the scope, complexity, and importance of PIL, PDE should commission an external evaluation of the program and its implementation, along with the impact on administrators’ practice in schools and districts.

5. PDE and the State Board of Education should consider the findings of the Levine study and of UCEA with respect to criteria for effective programs in the next revision of program approval standards for principal and superintendent preparation programs.

6. PDE and the State Board should use the structure and content of the PIL core and corollary standards in the next revision of program approval standards for principal and superintendent preparation programs so that in the future there is an effective pathway from preservice through inservice training for school and district leaders.

7. In revising program approval standards for principal and superintendent preparation programs, PDE and the State Board should consider ways of overcoming the shortcomings cited by current practitioners — preparation for K-12 academic standards, use of assessment data, labor relations and teacher supervision, interpersonal skills and group dynamics, school law and contracts, special education, crisis management, school finance, community relations, change processes, and, for superintendents, working with school boards.

8. PDE and the State Board should require year-long induction programs for new principals and superintendents, and the state should provide financial support so these efforts are appropriately resourced. The induction should be operated in conjunction with PIL training.
and should rely on trained trainers available through NISL and the Principal Leadership Induction Program of the Pennsylvania Academy for the Profession of Teaching and Learning. Since most districts will have inadequate local resources to make such induction effective, it should be organized by the state through the intermediate units.

9. **PDE and the State Board of Education** should authorize an endorsement to the teaching certificate for curricular and instructional leadership. This would provide training for diversified leadership, including teachers who may not want to leave the classroom but who could serve effectively as members of school building leadership teams.

**Recommendations for Universities:**

10. Whether or not PDE standards require it, universities that prepare future school and district leaders should review and revise their programs to reflect the PIL standards.

11. Whether or not PDE standards require it, universities that prepare future school and district leaders should review and revise their programs to overcome the shortcomings cited by current practitioners (see Recommendation 7).

12. Whether or not PDE standards require it, universities that prepare future school and district leaders should consider instituting longer internships, especially in principal preparation programs, and should consider requiring those internships to be served in schools other than those in which the candidates are teachers.

13. Universities should encourage faculty members in leadership preparation programs to become trainers for PIL.

14. In order to increase the pool of minority candidates for leadership positions, universities should provide academic and social support to minority students seeking to become teachers and encourage other talented students to consider careers in teaching. After graduation, universities should recruit successful teachers to consider careers in administration and should support them in their graduate programs.

**Recommendations for School Districts:**

15. **Principals and superintendents** should systematically identify promising future leaders and support their preparation for administrative positions. In doing so, they should take care that potential leaders of color are fully considered and supported.
16. School districts with salaries that make administrative positions not seem viable should increase compensation for administrators — especially for principals — in order to make the positions attractive enough to merit leaving the classroom.

17. School districts should promote the establishment of school leadership teams headed by principals, rather than assuming principals are capable of performing all of the school’s leadership tasks alone. This will entail providing some training (see, for example, Recommendation 9) and probably some release time for faculty members who participate as leadership team members.

18. School boards should treat superintendents as CEOs of their districts and work with them to establish well-functioning district leadership teams that model effective leadership practices at the building level.

19. School districts must support minority students to succeed in a rigorous high school curriculum, graduate from high school, and go on to college at rates equal to those of their non-minority peers. In doing so, they should encourage more talented and motivated young people to consider careers in teaching. Ultimately, this will be the pool from which the next generation of school and district leaders is selected.

**Additional Recommendations:**

20. In order to foster effective systems of identifying, preparing, and supporting school and district leaders, there needs to be alignment among the state, universities, and school districts. This includes standards for administrator preparation programs and their continuity with professional development offerings for current administrators.

21. Professional organizations such as The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (PAESSP), and Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) can play important roles in increasing the diversity of the administrator candidate pool by offering mentoring opportunities and encouraging their members to support women and minorities with potential to be effective school and district leaders.
Appendix

The Education Policy and Leadership Center
K-12 School Leadership Study Group

Joe Bard
Executive Director
PA Association of Rural and Small Schools

William Boyd
Professor
Department of Education Policy Studies,
The Pennsylvania State University

Susan Brownlee
Executive Director
The Grable Foundation

Sharon Brumbaugh
Special Assistant to the Secretary,
PA Department of Education

Dan Collins
Executive Director
PA Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals

Joan Crouse
Principal
New Oxford Elementary School,
Conewago School District

John DeFlaminis
Executive Director
Center for Educational Leadership, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania

Ronald Dufalla
Principal
Brentwood High School, Brentwood School District

Gary Fedorcha
Board of Directors
Pennsylvania State Education Association

Paula Hess
Special Assistant to the Majority Leader
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Frederick McCoy
Director of Leadership & Professional Development
Mid-Atlantic Lab for Student Success,
Temple University

Sharron Nelson
Director
Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation,
PA Department of Education

Vic Papale
Executive Director
A+ Schools (Pittsburgh)

Curtis Rose
Assistant Executive Director
Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Candy Salinger-Lerner
Staff Representative
Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers

Carol Saylor
Superintendent
Manheim Central School District

Sandy Sheppeard
Assistant Director
PA Academy for the Profession of Teaching and Learning, PA State System of Higher Education

Helen Sobehart
Director
Leadership Institute, School of Education,
Duquesne University

Stinson Stroup
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators

EPLC Staff:

Ronald Cowell, President
Robert Feir, Senior Fellow
Karen Molchanow, Manager of Policy
Information and Programs
Notes


8. National Commission on Governing America’s Schools. Ibid.


The 2005-2006 programs and projects of The Education Policy and Leadership Center have been funded through grants received from The Grable Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The Pittsburgh Foundation, the Benedum Foundation, the Buhl Foundation, the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties, and The William Penn Foundation (for EPLC Education Finance Project).

The K-12 School Leadership Project of EPLC also is funded by special grants received from the Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University, the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, and the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals.
The Education Policy and Leadership Center

The Education Policy and Leadership Center is an independent, non-partisan and not-for-profit organization established in 1998 and based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The mission of The Education Policy and Leadership Center is to encourage and support the use of more effective state-level education policies to improve student learning in grades P-12, increase the effective operation of schools, and enhance educational opportunities for citizens of all ages.

The Education Policy and Leadership Center has developed and implements three discrete but complementary core strategies to support its mission. These strategies are to:

- **Strategy #1 — Information**
  Link relevant and reliable research and other information to state-level education policymakers and others and to provide assistance with policy analysis and policy development.

- **Strategy #2 — Leadership**
  Develop awareness and capacity among policymakers, educators, and community leaders to serve as advocates and champions for significant education policy issues.

- **Strategy #3 — Public Advocacy**
  Promote a public climate that expects and holds policymakers accountable to advocate, adopt, and implement effective policies that advance significant education goals.