

Marsha E. Modeste, Ph.D.



Marsha E. Modeste is an Assistant Professor of Education (Educational Leadership) in the Department of Education Policy Studies at The Pennsylvania State University, College of Education. Dr. Modeste earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Dr. Modeste’s dissertation research focused on urban school principals in New York City. She examined the ways in which school leaders interpreted and implemented in their schools the reform policies that came from the school system’s central office. Findings indicate that principals’ leadership practice in the thin place between district-level policy and school-level practice requires discernment and action. The ways in which principals received, interpreted and implemented reform policy mandates from the central office varied by the amount of experience they had as a school leader in the system and the degree of philosophical alignment they had with the Mayor and Chancellor’s approach to reform in New York City.

Dr. Modeste’s research focuses on school leadership across three key areas: (1) district governance, specifically urban districts under system-wide reform, (2) the policy and cultural environment that informs school leadership and (3) distributed leadership. Her work with the Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning (CALL) has taken her to Copenhagen, Denmark where she has led the expansion and implementation of CALL, an online, formative, assessment of distributed leadership practices, in schools and districts (municipalities) under reform.

A former middle school teacher and Central program office director, her work focuses on organizational change in urban school districts using mayoral control and how system-wide school reform impacts urban school leadership.