

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS WANTED: DALLAS  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT'S  
ASPIRING PRINCIPALS PROGRAM

by

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my parents—Dale Parvin and Cecile Cardwell Parvin—who were both educational leaders. My father, born in 1924, was a veteran of World War II and attended college with the support of the G.I. Bill. He was the first in his family to attend college and the only one of his five siblings to do so. He earned a Master's of Science degree and served as a public school principal in Texas for 37 years, demonstrating a model of collaborative leadership before it became the norm. My mother was born in 1918 and taught second grade in Texas for 35 years. She was an innovative and effective teacher leader, who, had she been born a generation later, would have been an outstanding school principal. Both of my parents were motivated by principles of social justice, believing that the brightest future for our nation relies on unlimited life chances for young people and that schools play an important role in shaping that future.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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November 13, 2012

ABSTRACT

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS WANTED: DALLAS  
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The purpose of this research was to explore and describe the development, implementation, and impact of the Dallas Independent School District's (ISD) Aspiring Principals Program. This study of principal preparation has relevance as a K-16 issue for two primary reasons. First, K-12 schools are focused on graduating students who are college and career ready and strong principal leadership is an essential component in achieving this post-secondary success. Second, most school leaders are prepared—and certainly certified—through a university program so a discussion of best practices in principal preparation is pertinent as a K-16 issue.

Following the review of literature which examined the changing role of the principal from colonial to contemporary times, the impact of school leadership on student achievement and best practices in principal preparation, the research methodology was discussed. A qualitative methodology was used in order to richly describe the case of the Aspiring Principals Program. The case study facilitated a deep understanding of the development, implementation, and impact of the Aspiring Principals Program through an examination and analysis of archival documents and interviews. Interviews were conducted with 13 Dallas ISD leaders at different levels in the organization—senior executive, principal, and teacher—who were involved with the development, implementation, and/or the impact of the Aspiring Principals Program. Because of the emphasis on equity as a key component in school effectiveness, the theoretical framework was critical theory.

Findings were reported regarding the purpose and process for developing the Aspiring Principals Program, the description of the philosophy and components of the program, as well as the impact of the program. Program impact was addressed through an analysis at multiple levels from participant attitude to organizational support and student achievement. Since critical theory was the theoretical framework, the impact of the equity focus of the program was assessed. Recommendations regarding the program, with a focus on impact and sustainability, were made as were suggestions for further research, including analyzing program impacts on student achievement and examining models for sustainability

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Today, it is essential that public schools in the United States have highly effective, instructional, and transformational campus leaders to guarantee that all students achieve at high levels in order to graduate from high school to be college and/or career ready. School principals are a critically important component in guaranteeing equitable and excellent schools needed for the 21st century. In fact, school leadership matters so definitively that, “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (Leithwood, 2004, p. 3). Therefore, it is important to define the knowledge, skills, and attributes of the effective 21st century principal and describe the principal preparation program required to develop, support, and maintain that campus leaders are essential to ensuring that *all* students learn at high levels.

The issue of principal preparation and development addresses a K-16 issue for two reasons. First, and primarily, the need for highly effective principal preparation programs which point out the necessity of school district and university partnerships in order to develop alignment between course content and the authentic demands of the principalship. Second, 21st century school leadership requires that campus and district leaders understand that K-12 education must be about graduating students who are college and career ready, necessitating a high degree of awareness of the requirements

and demands of post-secondary education and what must be done to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge and skills to succeed.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The challenge of effective principal preparation is a national problem. There is a current—and growing—principal shortage caused by principal retirement and by inadequate numbers of educators who aspire to be principals. Partly, this is a matter of demographics. For example, in Dallas Independent School District (ISD) at the beginning of the 2010-11 academic year almost 30% of campus principals had 30 years of service and could retire at the end of the school year (Denny, Hewitt, & Pijanowski, 2011). This trend accounts for principal shortages across the country as *baby boomer* principals retire and leave large numbers of vacancies to fill (Denny et al., 2011). In a survey of 197 school districts, researchers found that across all locations and all grade levels, superintendents reported a reduced number of qualified principal applicants over the previous decade (Carnine, Denny, Hewitt, & Pijanowski, 2008). Almost half of the districts participating in a National Association of Secondary School Principals study reported a shortage of applicants for principal openings (Guterman, 2007).

A statewide survey of 176 superintendents in variously sized school districts in a Western state found that almost 40% described a “moderate” shortage of quality principal candidates while 50% reported a “somewhat extreme” or “extreme” shortage of quality candidates (Whitaker, 2003, p. 1). According to Whitaker, the superintendents who responded to the survey mentioned the following factors as reasons: the position's time commitment, high-stakes testing, school report cards,

increased violence, a lack of public respect for education, overall job pressures, and compensation.

Young's 2009 Texas High School Project report, "Tenure and Retention of Newly Hired Principals in Texas" lists four reasons that principals leave the profession: (a) accountability pressures, (b) complexity and intensity of the job, (c) lack of support from central office, and (d) compensation.

Darling-Hammond (2010) in *Preparing School Principals for a Changing World* echoes these aforementioned concerns and identifies additional three problems that contribute to the shortage. First, administrator preparation programs do not attract "high-potential" candidates who will commit to leadership roles in schools where they are needed. Second, the working conditions of high-poverty schools make retaining school leaders difficult. Third, and most important, for this study, was the fact that principals are "too often ill prepared and inadequately supported" to take on the challenging work of the 21st century urban principal (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 9).

Why are so many of these potential principals not adequately prepared for the job? The job has radically changed in the last decade or more, yet many traditional university principal training programs are not aligned with the contemporary demands of the role and therefore relatively ineffective in preparing graduates for the authentic work of the principalship; rather than being designed to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for the 21st century principalship, traditional principal preparation programs are a "collection of courses treating general management principles," school finance, school law, and administrative procedures

(Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 9). The work that principals do that impacts student achievement—visiting classrooms, coaching teachers, designing campus professional development, leading organizational change, structuring the school to meet student needs—are not typically addressed with depth in traditional principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Both of these issues—the need for highly effective principals and the inadequate nature of traditional principal preparation programs—are intensified in urban educational systems where the role of the principal is more complex and challenging than in rural and suburban settings.

Because of the intense demands of the 21st century principalship and the unique requirements for principals in urban districts, districts are increasingly interested in influencing the preparation of principals that lead schools in the district. Some districts develop strong partnerships with universities, others partner with other organizations that provide principal development, and some develop their own internal preparation programs. In the fall of 2009, senior leaders in the Dallas ISD began exploring the possibility of developing an in-house program to prepare assistant principals for the principalship.

Given the importance of the campus principal in creating the conditions for school success, and coupled with the principal shortage, the need for highly effective principal preparation programs is intense. To ensure that the knowledge and skills developed in principal candidates are aligned with the requirements of the job, school districts across the country—many in partnership with universities—are developing aspiring principal programs.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was threefold: First, this study includes the description of the conditions and motivations for developing a principal preparation program in the Dallas Independent School District. Second, the study includes the philosophical foundations for and the development of the curricular and instructional components of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP), and third, the impact of the program on Dallas ISD, especially on the principal pipeline

One purpose of this study was to describe the decisions and processes in which Dallas ISD leaders engaged in order to develop an in-district program for aspiring principals. This study includes a body of research and contextual information to serve as institutional memory for Dallas ISD leaders. In addition, the processes and decisions described enables leaders in other school districts to learn from the principal preparation program that Dallas has built. Importantly, the study enables program leaders to evaluate their programs for effectiveness in preparing aspiring principals for the principalship. Last, this study provides insight into the mindset and skillset of Aspiring Principals Program graduates, sitting principals, in terms of their capacity for excellent, equity-focused instructional and transformational leadership as the program impact is described.

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

In this study, the researcher provides the following: (a) a comprehensive description of an effective, equity-focused 21st century campus leader and explains the importance of school leadership to ensure that students graduate from high school both



college and career ready; (b) effective principal preparation and the process of developing such a program; (c) the characteristics and components—the selection process, the training, the mentoring and support—that comprise an effective principal preparation program; and finally, (d) the impact that Dallas ISD’s aspiring principals program has had on the district.

#### 1.4 Orienting Framework/Theoretical Lens

The theoretical lens for this study was “critical theory” as it provided a way to discuss the historical inequality and the current achievement gap at the heart of K-16 public education in the United States. Compounded inequalities, reinforced over generations, have created what Gloria Ladson-Billings, pedagogical theorist and teacher educator, has called “educational debt, owed to those who have been denied access to quality education for hundreds of years” (as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 28). This historical inequality in U.S. public schools and the ongoing challenge to guarantee that poor and/or minority children, especially in urban school systems, receive high quality education is a critical focus for all with a stake in public education.

As Kincheloe and McLaren (2003) wrote in “The Landscape of Qualitative Research” that,

Critical theory questions the assumption that societies such as the U.S . . . are unproblematically democratic and free. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> century . . . individuals in these societies have been acculturated to feel comfortable in relations of dominance and subordination rather than equality and independence. (p. 303)

Darling Hammond (2010) stated in *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future* that,

[E]normous energy is devoted in the United States to discussion of the achievement gap. Much less attention, however, is paid to the opportunity gap—the accumulated differences in access to key educational resources—expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials and plentiful information resources—that support learning at home and at school. (p. 28)

The leaders who emerge from the Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principal Program must be able to lead the work of ensuring equity and access for all of the students, regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or English language proficiency.

Another component of schooling in the U.S. that requires an examination through the lens of critical theory concerns the historical structure of schools. As Elmore (2008) stated in *School Reform from the Inside Out*, schools have traditionally been governed by locally elected school boards and schools have been populated by “relatively low status (mostly female) teachers working in relative isolation from each other under the supervision of (mostly male) administrators, whose expertise was thought to lie mainly in their mastery of administrative rather than pedagogical skills” (p. 45).

One of the key skill-sets for contemporary school leaders is the ability to develop the leadership capacity of teachers and school staff so that they may engage in continuous professional learning in a collaborative school culture. The mindset and the skillset necessary to facilitate this type of distributed and collaborative leadership, as is true for the equity-focused mission to ensure learning at high levels for all students has to do with issues of equality and independence. For these reasons, critical theory provided the lens through which to view this case study on leadership development.

### 1.5 Research Design

Qualitative research is designed to answer “how” and “why” of the research objective and because one of the primary purposes of this study was to richly describe the creation of the Dallas ISD Aspiring Principals Program, the researcher used the case study in the design. According to Creswell (2002), “a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection” (p. 476). The Aspiring Principals Program is “bounded” since it is a “case” that is “separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (Creswell, 2002, p. 476). The types of case studies that researchers study all apply to the Aspiring Principal Program.

### 1.6 Research Questions

- RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed?
- RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these?
- RQ3: What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?

### 1.7 Definition of Terms

*Adult Learning Theory:* Androgogy, or adult learning principles, were originally developed by Malcolm Knowles (2005) who wrote that adult learners need autonomy

and self-direction, relevance to current goals, practicality and the opportunity to connect theory with practice.

*Aspiring Principal Program:* In Dallas ISD, it is a 14-month, cohort-structured program for current assistant and associate principals who seek additional preparation for the principalship (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010).

*Chief of Schools Officer:* One of four chiefs (the others being the Chief of Staff, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Chief Financial Officer) in Dallas ISD, all of whom report directly to the superintendent. The Chief of Schools Officer is line staff and the Senior Executive Directors—and indirectly, the principals—report to him/her. Dallas ISD Organizational Chart (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010).

*Fellows:* Participants in Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program.

*Learning Community* In Dallas ISD, the district is organized into seven horizontal (by levels—elementary and secondary) learning communities. Each learning community, which consists of approximately 40 schools, is led by a Senior Executive Director and the principals of the campuses report to him/her. Dallas ISD Organizational Chart (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010).

*Leadership Performance Standards:* The Dallas ISD Aspiring Principals Program is based on 12 performance standards in leadership. These are as follows:

- Personal Behavior
- Resilience
- Communication
- Focus on Student Performance
- Situational Problem-Solving
- Learning
- Accountability for Professional Practice

- Supervision of Instructional and Non-Instructional Staff
- Leadership Development
- Climate and Culture
- Technology
- Time/Task/Project Management. (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010)

*Problem-based Learning:* The pedagogical foundation for the APP is problem-based learning in which the APP Fellows engage with complex and challenging problems that are representative of the authentic work of the principalship. Collaboratively, they work toward effective resolutions of the problems (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010).

*National Principal Standards:* Developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ILSCC), these standards address the knowledge, dispositions, and performances required for six essential leadership standards. These standards are the basis for the APP's leadership performance standards (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010).

*Request for Principal Process (RFP):* This was initiated by (then) Dallas ISD Superintendent Michael Hinojosa in 2005. This structural and cultural change brought greater transparency and stakeholder input to the principal selection process. Staff from the Human Capital (HC) division interview stakeholders to create a description of the desired campus principal, with applicants writing a letter of interest putting forth an action plan for the school. The hiring of principals happens collectively—finalists present to and are interviewed by a panel—in a democratic and transparent process. Dallas Achieves (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010).

*Senior Executive Directors:* The supervisors of principals, Senior Executive Directors, each lead one of seven learning communities (Dallas Leadership Academy, 2010). .

### 1.8 Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. First, from June 2010 to June 2012, the researcher was also the Director of the Dallas Leadership Academy under whose umbrella the Aspiring Principals Program resided. Second, research was conducted over a 24-month period, which is one 14-month cycle involving one cohort of the Aspiring Principals Program. Since the study involved the first cohort of the Aspiring Principals Program, there were 21 Fellows that were a part of this study. The APP Cohort 1 completed the 14-month program in July 2011, and as of August 2012, 15 of the 21 were Dallas ISD principals.

### 1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The researcher conducted this study under the following assumptions:

1. The required knowledge, skills, and attributes of the contemporary principal, especially those in urban districts, were fundamentally different from those of principals prior to the implementation of No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.
2. Many traditional principal preparation programs were not designed to effectively prepare principals for the contemporary principalship.
3. The Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principal Program was designed to prepare and develop effective leaders for Dallas ISD schools.

4. Aspiring Principals Program Fellows will be more effective campus leaders as a result of this program.
5. Effective campus leaders positively impact student achievement.
6. The most effective candidates for the principal positions were selected for the principalship.

### 1.10 Summary

This case study began with a school principal shortage, a situation playing out in both the local (Dallas) and the national arenas in the United States. The significant problem today is that as school principals retire, fewer aspiring leaders seek to step into their shoes. There are various and wide-ranging reasons for this dearth of qualified candidates for the principalship. Essentially, due to influences on public education from a changing national and global economy to No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, accountability pressures and the achievement gap, the rise of charters and performance pay, the numbers of educators desiring to lead campuses has declined. This has happened at the time when U.S. schools need dedicated and effective leaders the most.

In this study, the researcher describes the knowledge, skills, and attributes of an effective 21st century school principal, especially focusing on those working in urban school districts and examines the current state of the principal pipeline. The researcher explored and documents best practices in principal preparation programs. The researcher also looked specifically at the development and implementation of the Aspiring Principal Program in the Dallas Independent School District from June 2010 to June 2012. This Aspiring Principal Program's first cohort began in June 2010 and the

second cohort in June 2011. The researcher also describes the selection process for participants, the development of the curriculum, the development of the program facilitators and their instructional stance, the implementation of the curriculum, the work with mentor principals, the perceptions of the Fellows and senior leadership regarding the program and the selection and support of Fellows as principals. This study also includes the changing demands of the principalship and the need for principal preparation programs to change in order to meet the needs of school districts.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role of the principal has changed from a largely managerial and supervisory one to that of an instructional and transformational leader and a leader of learning. Why has this happened? Because society, the role of schools in society and the role of the principal have changed so drastically since Thomas Jefferson's revolutionary dream of universal education, that the principal now must lead change rather than manage the status quo.

#### 2.1 History

##### *2.1.1 From Thomas Jefferson to Frederick Taylor: Public Education in the U.S. from Common Schools to Educational Bureaucracy*

Thomas Jefferson viewed schooling as an essential component in the creation and maintenance of the Republic. Like the philosophers, Locke and Montesquieu, who influenced his thinking, Jefferson knew that, "the whole power of education is required if the virtue that makes men choose public over private interest is to be sustained" (Cremin, 1970, p. 439). To this end, Jefferson proposed to the Virginia Assembly a "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," which proposed that each county in the Commonwealth would have a school, supported by taxes and overseen by the public, where for three years, all of the children of the county could attend free of charge. In addition, Jefferson's bill proposed the establishment of 20 grammar schools where more advanced courses would be taught. These schools would be "open to

qualified scholars at appropriate tuition fees as well as to the brightest graduates of the lower schools whose parents were too poor to give them additional education” (Cremin, 1970, p. 440). Finally, the bill provided for ten of the scholarship students from the grammar school to be selected to attend college at William and Mary in Virginia where their tuition and board would be paid at state expense.

Jefferson wrote in his “Notes on the State of Virginia” in 1785 that,

The ultimate result of the whole scheme of education would be the teaching of all the children of the state reading, writing and common arithmetic; turning out ten annually of superior genius, well taught in Greek, Latin, geography, of the higher branches of mathematics; turning out ten others annually, of still superior parts, who, to those branches of learning, shall have added such of the sciences as their genius shall have led them. (Cremin, 1970, p. 441)

Jefferson made clear through his writing that while these educational opportunities proposed by the bill certainly benefitted the individuals who received the schooling, the greater purpose was for the benefit of the Republic:

The general objects of this law are to provide an education adapted to the years, to the capacity and the condition of everyone, and directed to their freedom and happiness. . . . But of all views of this law none is more important, none more legitimate, than that of rendering the people safe, as they are the ultimate guardians of their own liberty. (Cremin, 1970, p. 441)

Jefferson’s Bill for the “More General Diffusion of Knowledge” was put before the Virginia Assembly three times between 1779 and 1817 and was defeated each time. In spite of the lack of legislative success, Jefferson had put forth an idea—that free public education was essential to democracy—and that would take root (Mondale, 2001, p. 25).

It would take a school administrator to cause Jefferson's dream of a statewide school system to come to fruition. Horace Mann was the Secretary of Education for the State of Massachusetts from 1837 to 1848; the first such official in the United States. Previously, a builder of railroads and canals, Mann discharged his duty as Secretary of Education by riding on horseback to inspect the physical facility of the state's schools. Inspecting over one thousand schools in six years, Mann found a system of inequity: "With no state supervision, schools varied widely from town to town" (as cited in Mondale, 2001, p. 27).

Not only did Secretary of Education Mann find a system of vast disparities among schools, and the education they provided to the children they served, but also a general state of poor conditions for learning. Children sat on hard, uncomfortable benches, schools had few, and those frequently outdated, resources and no standardized textbooks. To remedy this, Mann held a series of public meetings to propose a new system of "common schools" to serve *all* boys and girls and to teach a common body of knowledge in order to provide more equal life chances. Mann described these common schools as follows:

It is a free school system, it knows no distinction of rich and poor . . . it throws open its doors and spreads the table of its bounty for all the children of the state. . . . Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the equalizer of the conditions of men, the great balance wheel of the social machinery.  
(Mondale, 2001, p. 29)

Mann's influence on 19th century education included the idea of the common school: free, tax-supported education for many children, as well as state bureaus of education and teacher training.

Another important influence on what schooling would become was that of Catherine Beecher, daughter of a prominent New England family and sister of Harriett Beecher Stowe., the famous Abolitionist. Catherine Beecher, through her work of providing advanced education for women through teacher training, not only legitimized the common school movement, but also helped to create “a new vocation for American women” (as cited in Cremin, 1980, p. 145). During the same period of time as Horace Mann’s campaign of public education, Catherine Beecher was campaigning to save the West through schooling (Cremin, 1980).

As large numbers of settlers moved westward, the demand for schools intensified. In this vast new territory, with schools appearing everywhere, the question of who would teach the children of these settlers began to arise (Mondale, 2001). Beecher was convinced that it was “to mothers and teachers . . . that the great business of education is almost exclusively committed” (Cremin, 1980, p. 144). To that end, Beecher established “teacher-training seminaries” to prepare female teachers to go West and teach in the new common schools there (Cremin, 1980, p. 145). Historian, and Beecher biographer, Kathryn Kish Sklar, writes that Beecher “really made teaching respectable for middle-class women” (Mondale, 2001, p. 53); at the same time, the classroom provided a professional opportunity for women, the hiring of women to teach also “created a new ethic in schools . . . in which the teacher cared for the students—the teacher was not only a disciplinarian but also offered . . . a lot of the similar ingredients that had gone on in home schooling a century before that” (Mondale, 2001, pp. 54-55). Teaching, during the second half of the 19th century, shifted from being a largely male

to a greater female occupation, though it continued to be dominated by men (Cremin, 1980, p. 366).

There were several reasons for this shift, all of which played a role in the adoption of a model for teacher supervision and the role of the principal. First, as schooling became more popular and schools more populous, there was an expanded need for teachers. While teaching was the “only one of the professionalizing occupations genuinely open to women,” and thus appealing to women that wanted the opportunity to do meaningful work in the world, there were also reasons that the men in supervisory positions or on school committees found women suitable for the role of teacher (Cremin, 1980, p. 366).

First, women were considered “far more suited by temperament, disposition and purity of morals” to work with children, especially young children, and to bring the best qualities of the “domestic circle” to the mission of the school (Cremin, 1980, p. 398). Second, these female teachers were willing to work for half—and sometimes even one-third—the pay that male teachers would receive. In addition, the men in supervisory positions found them “more amenable to suggestions” (Cremin, 1980, p. 398).

At the same time that schools in the United States were expanding and women were increasingly becoming teachers, a concurrent movement to professionalize teaching was occurring. Among male high school teachers, teachers in the academy, and leaders in the newly developing city and state departments of education, teacher training was a primary focus and an activity primarily reserved for men. Intentional or not, the professionalization of teaching in the latter part of the 19th century served “to

create an almost exclusively male elite and thereby assured continuing male control of an increasingly female occupation” (Cremin, 1980, p. 398). As Tyack (1974) stated that it was possible “to import into the organization [the school] the subordination of women that characterized the outside society and to make that sexism work to strengthen the authority of the male managers” (p. 65).

The industrialization of the economy, the extension of schools, and the rise of school system brought increasing demands not only for teachers with more expertise in specific disciplines and pedagogy, but also for administrators who could assume a more complex supervisory role. Typically, one teacher within a building would be selected to assume this supervisory function and this “principal” teacher evolved into the role of the campus principal. With the factory as the primary organizational model for public schools, the principal functioned largely as a manager for most of the 20th century (Marzano, 2011).

These trends of industrialization and expansion of schools and school systems also ushered in an era of bureaucratization. The increasing division of labor within the schools, especially the presence of male principals to handle executive and disciplinary problems, brought an increase in the numbers of women to the teaching profession (Tyack, 1974, p. 61) *The Social Composition of the Teaching Population*, published in 1911, stated that the vast increase of women in the teaching force was due in part to “the changed character of the management of the public schools, to the specialization of labor within the school, to the narrowing of the intellectual range or versatility required of teachers and to the willingness of women to work for less than men” (Tyack, 1974, p.

61). John Philbrick, in his 1885 survey of *City School Systems in the United States*, wrote that the mission of the school manager was, in contrast with Jefferson's dream of universal education for full citizenship, the "perfecting of the system itself" (as cited in Tyack, 1974, p. 39). The superintendent of the Boston schools wrote that, "in organizing a system of popular education, the same practical judgment is to be exercised in making special adaptations of means to ends, as in any manufacturing or business enterprise" (Tyack, 1974, p. 41). The leading thinker on the organization of public schools, Ellwood Cubberly, wrote in his 1929 book *Public School Administration* that,

Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of twentieth century civilization and is the business of the schools to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down. (Marzano, 2011, p. 14)

This model ensured that the processes of education would be defined by school boards and upper-level school leaders that the administration of the processes would be overseen by principals and the act of teaching would be one of compliance. As "the uniformity, standardization, and bureaucracy of the factory model" became the ideal of the school system:

The key was to have the thinkers of the organization specify exactly what and how to teach at each grade level, and then to provide strict supervision to ensure teachers did as they were told. Decisions flowed down the educational hierarchy to teachers, who, like factory workers, were viewed as underlings responsible for carrying out the decisions of their bosses. The focus was on the process rather than the results. If teacher taught the right curriculum, utilized the correct textbooks, assigned students to the appropriate classes, and adhered to the correct schedule, the results would take care of themselves. (DuFour, 2008, p. 32)

Not only did these changes concretize and limit the roles and functions of principals and teachers, but they created a system for sorting or tracking students into inflexible pathways as well. Since students were the “raw products,” and curriculum and instruction were simply the “specifications for manufacturing,” the ideal for public schools was efficiency. These first school principals were managers of this bureaucratic system that took the best practices of the industrial age and applied them to the education of children.

A large portion of the students responsible for the growing school population between 1880 and 1920 were immigrants. This was especially true in the cities where the majority of children in school at the turn of the century were “either immigrants or the children of immigrants” (Mondale, 2001, p. 65). The cause of progressive social reformers of improving the living and working conditions of the urban poor dovetailed with the school reformers who were seeking greater efficiency in educating large numbers of students, many of whom had limited proficiency in English or who were “unsuited for traditional academic courses” (Mondale, 2001, p. 66). These efficiency-driven reformers, in partnership with business groups, strongly advocated for vocational and industrial education in the nation’s public schools. These courses would especially target the “hand-minded” immigrant children who, they believed, were “repelled” by the heavily intellectual, academic, and verbal nature of the traditional public school curriculum (Mondale, 2001, p. 66). Therefore, the school curriculum was “differentiated” into multiple tracks, offering “numerous specialized occupational



programs for children who were expected to become industrial and commercial workers, domestic workers and housewives” (Mondale, 2001, p. 66)

The system that made the American economy a world leader heavily influenced the nation’s public schools, as well:

If sorting and selecting students was the fundamental task of education, the factory model—the prevalent organizational model of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries—provided the ideal conceptual framework for completing that task. Frederick Winslow Taylor, the father of ‘scientific management,’ argued that ‘one best system’ could be identified to complete any task and solve any organizational problem. According to Taylor, management’s job was to identify the one best way, train workers accordingly, and provide the supervision and monitoring needed to ensure that workers would follow the prescribed methods without deviation. Taylor’s model demanded centralization, standardization, hierarchical top-down management, a rigid sense of time, and accountability based on adherence to the system.

And, just as different assembly lines were designed to produce finished products of differing quality, the educational assembly line was designed to turn out students of various levels. Curriculum and expectations varied significantly to reflect the quality of the raw material (that is, students) to be shaped by the schools. In 1910, the National Education Association called upon educators to ‘recognize differences among children as to aptitudes, interests, economic resources, and prospective careers’ and to sort and select them accordingly. Students were simply the passive raw material transported along the educational assembly line. (DuFour, 2008, p. 32)

This early 20th century trend toward school efficiency, or tracking, was also facilitated by the increase in the use of intelligence testing following World War I. First used by the military to identify candidates for officer training, the public schools embraced intelligence testing as a way to improve the accuracy of assigning children to different ability groups and to different curricula. The designers of the tests promoted them as “instruments that could correctly identify students’ innate, fixed intelligence”

that would offer a scientific rationale for assigning students to “various curricular tracks,” that were “in keeping with their ‘needs’” (Mondale, 2001, pp. 66-67).

At the same time that the nation’s schools were sorting students into different curricular tracks based on their innate abilities, the philosopher, John Dewey, at the University of Chicago, was known for promoting a progressive, child-centered view of education in which student interest would drive instruction (Mondale, 2001). Dewey’s desire for “differentiated learning” based on student needs and interests was soon incorporated into the tenor of public schooling in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. Unfortunately, any move away from an emphasis on academic studies for all but the college-bound student was considered progressive at this time and since part of the goal of education was to ensure that all students remained in school, the “life adjustment movement” influenced the curriculum so that students could be appropriately prepared for their pathway (Mondale, 2001, pp. 67-68). With 20% of students destined for college and 20% suited for skilled work, the remaining 60% of students would receive instruction in the basic skills of everyday living (Mondale, 2001).

The legacy of the American public school in the first half of the 20th century was “a system of mass education, but one that educated different groups differently” (Mondale, 2001, p. 119). The mission for schools in the 21st century is to ensure that all students have the right to not only attend school, but have “a genuine right to learn” (Darling Hammond, 1997, p. 5). The second half of the 20th century saw some movement toward that ideal.

### *2.1.2 From Sputnik and Brown to NCLB: The Changing Role of the Principal from Manager to Leader*

When the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik space satellite in 1957, the long-simmering reaction against the anti-intellectual nature of 20th century public schooling reached the boiling point. In 1958, the Congress passed the National Defense Education Act which provided funding for graduate study in math, science and foreign language, as well as for the construction of new schools (Mondale, 2001).

In addition to a movement to increase the academic rigor in the nation's public schools, a complementary movement was underway to make the schools more inclusive. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate schools were inherently unequal, and in 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act banning discrimination in schools and other federally funded entities. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 provided unprecedented sums of federal money to aid poor children in schools. During the 1970s, more groups were included under the umbrella of equality with the passage of Title IX in 1972 ensuring gender equality and the Supreme Court ruling in 1974 (*Lau v. Nichols*) that bilingual students would receive access to education (Mondale, 2001).

On the heels of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the subsequent integration of U.S. schools and the legislative agenda of the War on Poverty, the "Equal Educational Opportunity Survey" popularly known as the Coleman Report, was published in 1966, which concluded that that family background, not the school, was the major determinant of student achievement. The reaction against the notion that schools were not capable

of educating students in poverty was the “effective schools movement,” whose primary proponents—Lawrence Lezotte and Ron Edmonds—compiled research to demonstrate that all students are capable of learning and that the school controls the factors necessary to ensure student mastery of the curriculum. The researchers identified schools that were effectively teaching poor children and defined the attributes of the schools, the effective schools correlate. One key component of these schools was strong instructional leadership, which according to Lezotte means that,

The principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students. In addition, the principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program. Clearly, the role of the principal as the articulator of the mission of the school is crucial to the overall effectiveness of the school.  
(Revolutionary and Evolutionary: The Effective Schools Movement)

Through the 1980s, with the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* which posited that the “poor quality of schools posed a threat to the welfare of the country” and the subsequent “excellence movement” that sought to improve the schools with a series of measures such as requiring more credits for high school graduation, more hours in the school day and more days in the school year, the role of the principal as a strong instructional leader prevailed (DuFour, 2008, pp. 34-35). This model of instructional leadership emphasized one-on-one interactions between the principal and the teacher around such activities as monitoring lesson plans and supervising and evaluating classroom instruction. The limitations of the instructional leader model are that it may be perceived by some as undemocratic, it makes intense demands on the expertise of the

principal, and it creates a dependency and reliance on a single leader that makes sustainability difficult (Hallinger, 2007).

The reaction to the “top-down” approach of the excellence movement and to the role of the principal as instructional leader was “school restructuring,” a move to decentralize authority and decision making, placing them at the school site. This autonomy, it was believed, coupled with the ambitious Goals 2000 proposed by President George H.W. Bush, would produce powerful results in student achievement. The role of principal as strong instructional leader gave way to school-based management and an early version of transformational leadership where principals provided autonomy and empowerment to teachers and community members (DuFour, 2008).

The 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, designed to raise student achievement and eliminate the achievement gap, has created an environment of accountability where “explicit standards of learning, coupled with heavy pressure to provide tangible evidence of success has reaffirmed the importance of instructional leadership” (Lashway, 2003, p. 26). While the practice of instructional leadership in the 1980s tended to focus on the traditional tasks of setting clear goals, allocating resources to instruction, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers, the instructional leadership practices of today are more complex. The “learning leader” of the 21st century has a larger focus on teaching and learning, creates conditions for professional learning, uses data to inform decisions and develops leadership capacity in others (King, 2002). Ten years into the 21st century and the public school environment shaped by

NCLB, the contemporary principal combines the qualities of instructional and transformational leadership to ensure that all students learn.

School reform has been on-going since the beginning of the nation's schools. In their book, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, Tyack and Cuban (1995) defined reform as "planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems" and note that while sometimes reforms were triggered by external events, such as broad social crises like inequality or segregation, other reforms, such as the scientific management movement in schools, were internal and initiated by educational professionals (p. 4). Regardless of the stimulus for change, the leaders of change, especially during the first half of the 20th century, were the educational leaders or experts who set the template for schooling and school reform. This template prescribed commonalities in "the structure, rules and practices that organize the work of instruction," what Tyack and Cuban called the "grammar of schooling" (pp. 8-9). This "grammar" includes such familiar practices as age-graded classrooms, the division of knowledge into different subjects, the self-contained classroom with one teacher and the principal as manager and administrator.

The core of the school—teaching and learning—have historically been largely untouched by the reforms of the last century. Tyack and Cuban (1995) argued that, "Change where it counts most—in the daily interactions of teachers and students—is the hardest to achieve and the most important" (p. 10). How does the campus principal positively impact these complex and imminently significant interactions between students and teachers? The principal must combine the work of instructional and

transformational leadership and lead both first order (incremental) and second order (deep) change (Marzano & Waters, 2005), since the task now was "transforming the education system rather than merely getting schools to do better what they have always done" (Darling Hammond, 1997, p. 5).

Synthesizing and contrasting the mission of public schooling—and the role of the principal—in the 20th and 21st centuries, Darling Hammond (1997) stated the following:

If the challenge of the twentieth century was creating a system of schools that could provide minimal education and basic socialization for masses of previously uneducated citizens, the challenge of the twenty-first century is creating schools that ensure—for all students in all communities—a genuine right to learn. Meeting this new challenge is not an incremental undertaking. It requires a fundamentally different enterprise. (p. 5)

The principal of the 21<sup>st</sup> century school who leads this "fundamentally different enterprise" must move beyond functioning as an effective manager who "[gets] schools to do better what they've always done" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 5). To ensure that all children learn, the 21<sup>st</sup> century principal must lead the work, at the campus level, of "transforming the education system" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 5).

## 2.2 Leadership Matters: The Impact of the Principal on Student Achievement

Through all of the changes in U.S. public schools in the last two centuries, one certainty emerges—that effective schools make a difference in the lives of children (Marzano, 2003). Just as we know that schools make a difference, research has also demonstrated that school leadership, specifically, the principal, also matters.

Before discussing the types of preparation aspiring principals need to ensure that they are ready for the principalship and are able to positively impact student learning, it is important to examine the impact of the principal on student achievement. In a 2004 study, published by the Wallace Foundation, researchers investigated the correlation between leadership and student achievement and noted that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction to all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 3). In other words, leadership matters and in struggling schools, leadership effects are even stronger. After six additional years of research on school leadership and student achievement, the same researchers were “even more confident about this claim” that leadership matters (Seashore Louis, 2010, p. 9).

The follow-up comprehensive examination of educational leadership—*Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning*—was the broad focus of a 6-year study by the Wallace Foundation that sought to “identify the nature of successful educational leadership and to better understand how such leadership can improve educational practices and student learning” (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 7). The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data from nine states, 43 school districts, and 180 elementary and secondary schools and included interviews with state legislators, education agency officials, district leaders, school board members, as well as surveys, observations, and interviews with teachers and principals. Additionally, student performance data in literacy and



mathematics for tests used by the state to determine Adequate Yearly Progress were used.

One portion of the study focuses specifically on the principal behaviors that impact student learning. Four categories of core leadership practices have been identified by prior research:

**Setting Directions**

- Building a shared vision
- Fostering the acceptance of group goals
- Creating high performance expectations
- Communicating the direction

**Developing People**

- Providing individualized support and consideration
- Offering intellectual stimulation
- Modeling appropriate values and practices

**Redesigning the organization**

- Building collaborative cultures
- Modifying organizational structures to nurture collaboration
- Building productive relations with families and communities
- Connecting the school to the wider community

**Managing the Instructional Program**

- Staffing the instructional program
- Monitoring progress of students, teachers and the school
- Providing instructional support
- Aligning resources
- Buffering staff from distractions to their work

(Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 75)

In this component of the larger leadership study, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) intended to “ground, illustrate and elaborate our understanding” of the core leadership practices based on the experiences of teachers and principals (p. 71). Research was conducted with 12 principals and 65 teachers at 12 schools where six of the schools were classified as “high scoring” and six were “low scoring” based on the numbers of

teachers who scored high on quality of instruction based on classroom observations (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 71)

The practices identified by principals and teachers as helpful were compared with the core leadership practices as defined by previous research. Considering the general core practice of Setting Direction, two sets of identified practices—focusing the schools’ and teachers’ attention on goals and expectations for instruction and student achievement—were part of the core practice of building a shared vision, fostering acceptance of group goals and creating high performance expectations. Under the general core practice of Developing People, specifically the component of providing individualized support, four identified practices corresponded. These were keeping track of teachers’ professional development needs, being easily accessible, providing back-up for teachers for student discipline and with parents, and providing mentoring opportunities for new teachers.

One set of identified practices matched up with the core practice of Redesigning the Organization and this created structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate. One set of identified practice—monitoring teachers’ work—matched up with the core practice of Managing the Instructional Program (Wahlstrom, 2010 , pp. 73-74). A large proportion of both principals (92% to 100%) and teachers (67% to 84%) agreed on the importance of three specific practices:

- Focusing the school on goals and expectations for student achievement
  - Keeping track of teachers’ professional development needs
  - Creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate
- (Wahlstrom, 2010, p. 71)

From this particular part of the study, Wahlstrom et al. (2010) concluded that instructional improvement requires a school-wide focus on goals and expectations for student achievement. Second, they concluded that principals played a key role in supporting and encouraging teachers' professional development. Third, both practitioners and policymakers needed to adopt a wide view of instructional leadership noting that actions occur within the school—and the district—and not only within the classroom that support or hinder effective instructional practice. Finally, they noted that while principals must pay careful attention to classroom instructional practice, they must also pay careful attention to the health of the entire school (Wahlstrom, 2010, p. 76).

A previous large-scale quantitative study, a meta-analysis involving 69 studies from 1978 to 2001 and 2,802 schools, was published in *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results* and describes the specific leadership practices that impacted student learning, noting a .25 correlation between leadership effectiveness and student achievement. This study indicated that schools with principals in the top half of the distribution of effective leadership skills had 62.5% of their students passing a test (with a typical passing rate of 50%) versus principals in the bottom half of the distribution whose students passed at only a 37.5% rate. Thus, leadership matters and the “leadership behavior of the principal can have a profound effect on student achievement” (Marzano & Waters, 2005, p. 32).

What are the leadership skills that have such a profound impact on student achievement? Marzano's (2005) groundbreaking work—a meta-analysis of 69 studies

conducted between 1978 and 2001 involving 2,802 schools at various K-12 configurations—was in alignment with other research linking school leadership and student achievement. These research studies made the point that effective school leadership was vital for student achievement and they described the 21 leadership behaviors that were most strongly correlated with student academic achievement. These principal behaviors and their impact on student achievement, according to Marzano are shown in the following table:

Table 1.1 Marzano’s 21 Leadership Behaviors That Impact Student Achievement

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>The Extent to Which the Principal...</b>	<b>Average Correlation</b>
Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures	.19
Change Agent	Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo	.25
Contingent Rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments	.24
Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students	.23
Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	.25
Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus	.27
Flexibility	Adapts his/her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent	.28
Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention	.24
Ideals/Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling	.22
Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	.25

Table 1.1 continued

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>The Extent to Which the Principal...</b>	<b>Average Correlation</b>
Intellectual Stimulation	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	.24
Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment practices	.20
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices	.25
Monitoring/Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	.27
Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations	.20
Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines	.25
Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders	.27
Relationships	Develops an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff	.18
Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs	.25
Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems	.33
Visibility	Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students	.20

*Note.* Marzano, 2005, pp. 42-43.

While it is possible to rank order these principal behaviors in terms of their impact on student achievement, it is important to note that 20 of the 21 correlations were between the values of .18 and .28. In other words, they are all important and they

interact with one another causing a multiplier effect. Last, various principal behaviors assume greater or lesser significance depending on perspective, such as leading first order, incremental, or second order, radical, change (Marzano & Waters, 2005, pp. 62-63). The leadership behaviors varied in importance depending on whether a principal was leading an elementary or a secondary campus, for example, or whether the principal was leading a start-up, maintenance or turnaround campus. Ultimately, leadership influences “virtually every aspect” of the school and is a “necessary condition for effective reform” of school-level, teacher-level and student-level factors (Marzano, 2003, p. 172).

In discussing the Marzano (2003) study, schools matter. Effective schools can have a “profound impact on student achievement . . . regardless of the background of the students who attend the school” (Marzano, 2003, p. 8). Leadership matters; principals account for 25% of the school’s impact on achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2005, p. 26). While teacher quality was the single biggest factor impacting student achievement at 33%, the principal was also key to this important human capital issue—hiring, mentoring, developing and retaining effective teachers:

Put simply, the principal is the best-positioned person in every school to ensure successive years of quality teaching for each child. It is the combination of highly effective teaching with highly capable school leadership that will change outcomes for children in our schools—not one or the other, but both. (Cheney, 2010, p. 8)

### 2.3 Excellence and Equity: The 21st Century Principal

The role of the principal remained largely managerial through much of the 20th century, with the job description focused largely on maintaining a clean and orderly campus, managing staff, developing rules and procedures, and attending to the general operation of the building (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 78). The traditional bureaucratic, managerial principal relied on rules and procedures, hierarchy, and a clear division of labor to create an efficiently run school. The 1980s saw the emergence of the principal as instructional leader as a result of the effective schools movement and the excellence movement. The subsequent school restructuring movement of the 1990s encouraged the principal to function as a transformational leader in the sense of empowering teachers and community members to have a voice in school decisions.

The effective 21st century principal blends the best qualities of instructional leadership—a sharp focus on teaching and learning—and the most exciting qualities of transformational leadership—the capacity of the organization to innovate and to learn—into a powerful role for principals. These contemporary principals function as “leaders of learning” (DuFour, 2008, p. 321) whose dominant focus is improvement of student achievement by increasing the individual and collective capacity of teachers and staff within the school. In fact, the leader of learning acknowledges that for students to learn at high levels, mastering the knowledge and skills to enable them to succeed, the adults in the school must also be continually learning (DuFour, 2008, p. 19). These principals also function as “learning leaders” (Barth, 2001, p. 26) who are making their own learning visible to others and by so doing creating a culture and a system that

encourages and values adult learning in the service of school effectiveness and student success.

With learning as its focus—and the improvement of teaching and learning as its mission—a school’s capacity may be defined as “the knowledge, skill and material resources that are brought to bear on the interaction among students, teachers and content” (Elmore, 2008, pp. 118-119). The ability of a principal to guide and direct instructional improvement is the definition of principal leadership (Elmore, 2008, p. 57). Given that the goal of school leadership is increasing student achievement by improving the quality of teaching and learning, school leaders must develop three types of capacity: school or organizational capacity, instructional capacity, and developmental capacity (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 8).

School or organizational capacity is “the school’s collective ability as a working, functioning whole to increase achievement” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 8). A principal builds organizational capacity by creating the conditions through which teachers function as professional learning communities. Leadership effects on student achievement occur largely because effective leadership strengthens professional community—a special environment within which teachers work together to improve their practice and improve student learning. Professional learning, in turn, is a strong predictor of instructional practices that are strongly associated with student achievement (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 37). In fact, “professional community . . . is nothing more or less than a shorthand term for the kinds of adult relationships in schools that can support individual change in classrooms” (Spillane, 2002, p. 94).



In the previous section, the researcher discussed why leadership matters and the 21 principal behaviors and their correlation to student achievement. A recent revisiting of this research looks at principal behaviors in the context of school professional learning communities. Certainly, the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement is an indirect one since principals do not usually provide direct instruction to students (Marzano & Waters, 2005), rather, the principal's influence on student learning occurs through his/her influence on teachers. The collaborative team structure of professional learning communities "provides a vehicle for focused interactions between principals and teachers," thus establishing a system in which the principal directly influences the collaborative teams and the teams directly influence teacher actions in the classroom, resulting in an impact on student achievement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 51).

Considered in the context of the professional learning community, a school's collaborative teams provide a "focused venue" for addressing 19 of 21 principal behaviors that impact student learning (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 52). Only two—contingent rewards and discipline—focus on the principal's interaction with specific individuals. The rest naturally occur within the collaborative team (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 54). Principals who practice collective, rather than individual, leadership—such as the type of leadership that develops in professional learning communities—have a greater influence on student achievement by positively influencing teachers' motivation and working relationships (Seashore Louis et al., 2010,

p. 19). Through professional learning communities, schools develop organizational capacity.

In addition to being leaders of learning, the effective 21st century principal is also a leader of leaders. An additional component of organizational capacity is distributed leadership. Elmore (2008) described distributed leadership in the following manner:

In a knowledge-intensive enterprise like teaching and learning, there is no way to perform these complex tasks without widely distributing the responsibility for leadership among roles in the organization, and without working hard at creating a common culture, or set of values, symbols and rituals. Distributed leadership, then, means multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organization, made coherent through a common culture. It is the ‘glue’ of the common task or goal—improvement of instruction—and a common frame of values for how to approach that task—culture—that keeps distributed leadership from becoming another version of loose coupling. (p. 59)

In today’s complex educational environment, the principal, especially in a high school, will not have the content expertise in subjects such as chemistry, physics, Advanced Placement English or trigonometry that the teachers possess. By distributing leadership—in a context of shared vision and common goals and tasks, the principal builds organizational capacity. The five basic principles of distributive leadership are as follows:

1. The purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role.
2. Instructional improvement requires continuous learning and leadership must create conditions that value learning as both an individual and collective good.
3. Learning requires modeling and is the central responsibility of leaders.

4. The roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution.
5. The exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity. If the formal authority of my role requires that I hold you accountable for some action or outcome, then I have an equal and complementary responsibility to assure that you have the capacity to do what I am asking you to do. (Elmore, 2008, pp. 66-68)

Through ensuring that schools are learning organizations with distributed leadership, effective 21st century principals are developers of organizational or school capacity. This practice of school capacity promises the “synergistic power of leadership shared by individuals throughout the school organization” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 345). When teacher learning and leadership—and thus teacher effectiveness—increase, organizational learning and effectiveness also increase. Another important component of capacity is instructional capacity, that is, the teachers’ ability to provide effective student instruction (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 8).

Instructional leadership in the 21st century looks very different from instructional leadership in the 1980s. Originally, the term “principal” derived from the term “principal teacher” who had “more skill and knowledge than anyone in the building and would guide others on how to teach” (Hoerr, 2007, p. 84). Traditionally, school administrators met their instructional roles and responsibilities by assuming a top-down supervisory approach that focused on monitoring and evaluating teacher performance. Contemporary principals serve as instructional leaders by facilitating teacher learning and by creating the conditions by which teachers improve instructionally (Hoerr, 2007).

An additional factor in the principal’s instructional leadership involves his/her role as manager of “human capital.” Human capital is an economics term that refers to the “productive skills and technical knowledge of workers” and certainly public education is a “human capital intensive enterprise” with approximately 80% of most district budgets spent on staff salaries and benefits (Milanowski, 2010, p. 70). The principal’s roles as instructional leader and as human capital manager complement one another in multiple ways. For example, when principals evaluate teachers, give feedback on instruction and coach teachers on effective classroom strategies, they are acting both as instructional leaders and as human capital managers (Milanowski, 2010, p. 71). The following table furthers the connections between instructional leadership and human capital management.

Table 2.1 Comparison of Two Types of Principals

<b>Principals Who Are Instructional Leaders</b>	<b>Principals Who Have Strategically Managing Talent</b>
Build a shared instructional improvement vision	Recruit and select staff who share the vision
Allocate/reallocate resources	Induct and mentor new teachers to support implementation of vision
Develop active adult learners	Design, implement and evaluate school professional development
Monitor curriculum and instruction	Manage performance using teacher evaluation and student outcome data
Foster distributed leadership and collaborative work teams	Create leadership opportunities and change schedule to allow time for collaboration
Celebrate achievements	Compensate/recognize successes

To make these human capital actions strategic, principals must make the competencies and expectations for teaching effectiveness explicit and focus both on the instructional

leadership actions and human capital functions of recruitment, selection, induction, mentoring, professional development, performance management and compensation and recognition (Kimball, 2011).

In addition to organizational capacity and instructional capacity, the third type of capacity needed to improve student achievement is “developmental capacity.”

Developmental capacity is the “cognitive, affective (emotional), interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities to manage the complexities of our lives and work” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 309). Developmental capacity is key for the contemporary school leader—and educational organization—due to the constant and complex “change forces” that demand a “new mindset for change” (Fullan, 1993, p. 3). The challenge of change in education, Fullan proposed, was defining what is required to make the educational system a learning organization that is “expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy, but as a way of life” (p. 4). Therefore, in order to increase the school’s organizational capacity, schools must function as learning organizations.

A learning organization is one that is “continually expanding its capacity to create its future” by the convergence of five “disciplines” (Senge, 1990, p. 14). These organizational disciplines, which have influenced thinkers and practitioners of school reform, are as follows:

1. Personal Mastery: the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening one’s personal vision, seeing reality objectively and focusing one’s energies
2. Mental Models: the discipline of surfacing deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations or images in order to engage in continuous learning

3. Building Shared Vision: the discipline of creating a set of shared principles and practices that foster commitment rather than compliance
4. Team Learning: the discipline of team learning reflects the capacity of the team to genuinely “think together”
5. Systems Thinking: the discipline of seeing the deeper patterns of interrelationships and processes.

Senge described systems thinking as the “fifth discipline” because it “makes understandable the subtlest aspect of the learning organization—the new way individuals perceive themselves and their world” (Senge, 1990, p. 12).

Certainly, this is an essential truth and required skill for the 21st century principal as the school has changed from being a bureaucratic, hierarchical organization with the principal as manager to the instructional leader, and now, the leader of learning. How do leaders create systems that learn? By focusing on the development of many leaders, rather than the actions of one leader, schools can become learning organizations (Fullan, 2008). Where the simpler school system of the past could rely on the management or leadership of the principal, the 21st century school, because of the complexity of today’s educational environment, requires many leaders engaged in systems thinking and “the organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels of the organization” (Senge, 1990, p. 4).

The leadership necessitated by the demands of the 21st century requires the principal to be the lead learner, a developer of other leaders, and the leader of a learning organization. Stein (2010) noted that, “this evolving definition of the principalship requires different knowledge and skills from those required in prior constructions of the

principal” such as the principal as manager—supervising the day-to-day functions of the organization—and the more recent interpretation of the principal as instructional leader—setting the instructional vision, observing teacher practice against a set of instructional expectations tied to specific teaching practices (p. 93).

This leadership stance—as the leader of learning—is a “fundamental shift” from the principal exercising authority through his/her position in an organization with teachers working in isolation toward an “orientation toward public learning that engages the principal in collaboration, exploration, experimentation and teacher empowerment” where the principal is aligned with the teachers “in pursuit of solutions” to achieve student success (Stein, 2010, pp. 94-95). Indeed, if learning is one of the master skills of leadership, then “the best leaders are the best learners” (Kouzes, 2010, p. 5page).

#### 2.4 Transformational Learning for Transformational Leaders: Best Practices in Preparing Principals for 21st Century Schools

The 21st century principal must be a leader with the courage and capacity to lead teachers, students, and all stakeholders into a vision of schooling that is qualitatively different from much of U.S. public education in the 20th century. As part of an educational landscape that has been “transformed by extraordinary economic, demographic, technological and global change,” today’s principals are “called upon to lead in the redesign of their schools and school systems” (Levine, 2005, pp. 11-12).

The demands on school principals are profound:

In an outcome-based and accountability-driven era, administrators have to lead their schools in the rethinking of goals, priorities, finances, staffing, curriculum, pedagogies, learning resources, assessment methods, technology and use of time and space. They have to recruit and retain top staff members and educate

newcomers and veterans alike to understand and become comfortable with an education system undergoing dramatic and continual change. They have to ensure the professional development that teachers and administrators need to be effective. They have to prepare parents and students for the new realities and provide them with the support necessary to succeed. They have to engage in continuous evaluation and school improvement, create a sense of community and build morale in a time of transformation. (Levine, 2005, pp. 11-12)

Few principals have been formally prepared to lead this radical systems change. In fact, most principals “were prepared for and appointed to jobs that do not exist any longer” (Levine, 2005, p. 12). If today’s principal is charged with radically transforming the school, what leadership preparation ensures that aspiring principals are receiving the most effective training to tackle today’s complex challenges? The demands of the 21st century principalship necessitate that training programs provide transformational learning to aspiring and current campus leaders so that they may provide transformational leadership.

The complex problems school leaders face demand more than the knowledge and solutions that is at hand. No longer is there a discrete body of knowledge and skills to prepare the contemporary school leader, though this was once the case:

Historically, initial preparation programs for principals in the United States have been a collection of courses treating general management principles, school laws, administrative requirements, and procedures—with little emphasis on knowledge about student learning, effective teaching, professional development, curriculum and organizational change. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, pp. 9-10)

Prior to the 21st century, this type of preparation was adequate because most of the challenges principals faced were largely technical ones. Contemporary challenges



tend to be of the more complex adaptive type. Leadership scholar, Ron Heifetz, offered these distinctions among leadership challenges. To quote,

Technical challenges are those for which we have clearly defined problems and solutions and these known solutions can be implemented with current knowledge and understanding. In an educational context, technical challenges might be managing a budget, creating a master schedule, hiring and firing personnel, managing the facility, etc.

Adaptive challenge are those for which neither the solution nor the problem is clearly known or identified and can only be addressed through changes in people's beliefs and behaviors. To manage and meet these kinds of problems often requires greater cognitive complexity and new approaches since these challenges are often solved while we are working on them. In an educational context, increasing accountability, achieving standards-based reform, developing teacher and organizational capacity and eliminating the achievement gap are most certainly complex adaptive challenges. (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 19)

These different types of leadership challenges—technical and adaptive— require different types of skillsets and mindsets in order to be resolved and the capacity for them comes from different sorts of learning. Technical knowledge comes from informational learning—typically the goal of traditional professional development—which focuses on increasing the amount of knowledge and skills a person possesses. The mindset and skillset required for adaptive leadership, however, demands a different type of learning—transformational learning—which “relates to the development of increased cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities that enable a leader to more effectively manage the complexities of the work and life” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 11).

The ability to learn, both individually and collectively, may be called “developmental capacity” and refers to the “cognitive, affective, interpersonal and

intrapersonal capacities that enable us to manage better the demands of leadership, teaching, learning and life” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 8). To lead in a rapidly changing, knowledge-based global economy with the increasingly complex demands of public education, principals must serve as leaders of continuous learning in school communities.

While technical competence is expected, adaptive leadership is required to transform schools into 21st century organizations that meet the needs of all students and to educate the way to a prosperous economy. In defining the difference between technical and adaptive challenges, “the most common cause of failure in leadership is produced by treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems” (Heifetz et al., 2009p. 19 ). The contemporary principalship is not simply a technical job. School leaders are “no longer primarily responsible for running the school” but they are “now responsible for transforming the school” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 11). The expectation that schools engage all students in learning at high levels means that, “schools must typically be redesigned rather than merely administered” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 6).

These adaptive challenges of the contemporary principalship must be addressed through preparation that develops the adaptive mindset and skillset through transformational learning causing “a qualitative shift . . . in how a person actively interprets, organizes, understands and makes sense of his/her experiences” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 11). As the demands of the principalship increase and the job becomes more complex, principal preparation programs are increasingly expected to

provide learning experiences that participants are able to transfer to the real work of the principal.

In a study funded by the Wallace Foundation, Darling-Hammond (2010) examined eight exemplary principal development programs—of which the New York City Leadership Academy was one—and identified these common components:

- Research-based content, aligned with professional standards and focused on instruction, organizational development and change management
- Curricular coherence linking goals, learning activities, and assessments around a set of shared values, beliefs and knowledge about effective organizational practices
- Field-based internships that enable the application of leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner
- Problem-based learning strategies, such as case methods, action research and projects that link theory and practice and support reflection
- Cohort structures that enable collaboration, teamwork and mutual support
- Mentoring or coaching that supports modeling, questioning, observations of practice and feedback
- Collaboration between universities and school districts to create coherence between training and practice. (p. 142)

Other practices that contributed to program effectiveness were as follows:

- Vigorous recruitment of high-ability candidates with experience as expert, dynamic teachers and a commitment to instructional improvement
- Financial support for pre-service candidates to enable them to undertake an intensive program with a full-time internship
- District and / or state infrastructures supporting specific program elements and often embedding programs within a focus school reform agenda. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, pp. 42-43)

In a study of exemplary programs, the first key to success was “outreach to talented potential principals” and programs did not “passively” admit whoever decided to apply, but rather sought out “excellent teachers with leadership potential who are committed to educational change” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 51). In addition to

focusing on candidates who would expand the diversity pool of the candidates, the exemplary programs also sought aspiring principals who had some experience with coaching adults or who had worked in high-poverty settings and thus exemplified both the skillset and the mindset for the contemporary principalship (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 52).

Not only was the recruitment of potential candidates targeted, but the selection process for candidates for the aspiring principal programs that were studied was also rigorous. The selection process for the exemplary programs included leadership essays, multiple reference letters, evaluation of the application using the criteria of writing skills, teaching and leadership experience, work with children and adults and academics. Candidates who passed the initial application round would be asked to complete tasks in which principals regularly engaged such as group problem-solving activities, data analysis, and panel presentations (Darling-Hammond, 2010, pp. 52-53).

In addition to strategic recruitment and selection of candidates, a second characteristic that distinguishes the exemplary programs is “the tight focus on instructional improvement and transformational leadership guiding high-quality coursework and fieldwork” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 54). Whereas traditional programs have developed principals to administer schools as they are, “these programs seek to develop principals’ abilities to build a shared vision for instructional improvement and to lead a team to implement that vision, both by supporting teachers individually and by developing a more productive organization” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 54).

The exemplary programs also link theory and practice through “well-designed, tightly integrated coursework and fieldwork” and are “problem-oriented rather than subject-centered” and allow adult learners to link theories and concepts with experiences through reflection and construction of knowledge and understanding (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 57). In addition to the linking of theory and practice through coursework and learning activities, the exemplary programs provided their aspiring principals with “robust internships” that involved “authentic, active learning experiences in school settings” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 65). One critical aspect of the internship is “the opportunity to understand the analytic process used by leaders in making decisions” so that by engaging in conversations with supervising principals in which they deconstruct their thinking and decision-making, aspiring principals are able to transform their approach to school issues—both operational and instructional—from that of a teacher (or an assistant principal) to that of a principal (Darling-Hammond, 2010, pp. 67-68).

All of the exemplary programs used the cohort structure. Not only do cohort groups develop skills around group problem-solving and collaborative work, but the cohort also provides a learning network for aspiring principals as they move into the residency and future leadership positions. Even more importantly, the cohort experience emulates the work of the principal as the principal leads educators at the school level and these exemplary program graduates appear to have an expanded view of leadership in schools. They understand that leadership is not just vested in the office

of the principal but that everyone in the school has a leadership role (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Darling-Hammond (2010) identified an additional benefit, noting that graduates of highly effective principal preparation programs are “significantly more likely than comparison to principals to hold positive beliefs about and feel strongly committed to the principalship” (p. 180). Despite serving schools with more low-income students than principals in the national sample, these principals planned to stay in their jobs. Compared with other principals, the program graduate principals also reported spending more time on instructionally-focused tasks and teachers in schools led by program graduates that confirmed stronger leadership for instructional improvement and collaborative organizations than did other teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The 2010 report from the Rainwater Leadership Alliance (RLA) examined nine principal preparation programs (two district-based, three university-based, and four nonprofit providers) and while all of the programs varied in their design specifics and their approach to implementation, many common design elements existed. The RLA believed that “school leadership is an essential lever for affecting student achievement and for ensuring that all children have access to the highest quality education” and that highly effective school leaders who are “capable of changing outcomes for children” are the principals that U.S. schools need (p. 5). In order to prepare these school leaders, effective preparation programs have the following attributes:

- They start by designing a competency framework—the set of knowledge, skills and dispositions that a principal must have in order to drive high levels of student achievement for all children.

- They utilize strategic, proactive and targeted recruitment strategies to ensure strong candidate pools and pipeline programs from which to select candidates most likely to thrive in the program and grow into effective principals.
- They implement highly selective, rigorous processes with clear criteria to evaluate applicants' knowledge, disposition and skills. Candidates are required to demonstrate their skills and dispositions through experiential events in order to evaluate whether candidates behaviors and actions match their stated beliefs.
- The training and development need to be experiential, giving trainees authentic opportunities to lead adults, make mistakes and grow. The developmental sequences are intentionally coordinated and integrated and include coursework, school-based residencies that take into account trainees strengths and weaknesses, and ongoing coaching and feedback.
- There is ongoing support for graduates
- They are committed to the notion of continuous improvement and using data to assess the effectiveness of their principals and their programs. (Cheney, 2010, pp. 9-10)

As both Darling-Hammond and the Rainwater Leadership Alliance found, effective principal preparation is based on sound principles of adult learning, emphasizing rigorous problem-based learning experiences that mirror the actual work of the principalship. The foundational model for adult growth and learning is informed by constructivist-developmental theory which posits that “differences in our behaviors, feelings and thinking are often related to differences in how we construct, or make meaning of, our experience” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 24). The four “pillars” that are the essential components of this model are as follows:

*Teaming:* Engaging in teams provides adults with opportunities to question their own and other people’s philosophies and assumptions about leadership, teaching and learning.

*Providing Adults with Leadership Roles:* In assuming leadership roles, adults are invited to share power and decision-making authority. As adults, we grow from being responsible for an idea’s development or implementation, as well as from different opportunities to assume leadership.

*Engaging in Collegial Inquiry:* Engaging in reflective practice with partners, a shared dialogue that involves reflecting on one’s assumptions, values, commitments, and convictions with others as part of the learning process.

*Mentoring:* Creates an opportunity for adults to broaden perspectives, examine assumptions and beliefs and share expertise toward supporting growth. (Drago-Severson, 2009, pp. 25-26)

Learning Forward, formerly the National Staff Development Council, has updated the professional learning standards that “lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership and improved student results” and “make explicit” that the purpose of all professional learning for educators is to “develop the knowledge, skills, practices and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels” (Standards for Professional Learning, Learning Forward).

The seven standards for professional learning are as follows:

1. **Learning Communities:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
2. **Leadership:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate and create support for professional learning.
3. **Resources:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
4. **Data:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
5. **Learning Designs:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
6. **Implementation:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.



7. Outcomes: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards. (Standards for Professional Learning, Learning Forward, 2011)

As these standards for professional learning make clear,

Effective professional development for school leaders takes place over the long term, is carefully planned, is embedded in the job, and focuses on student achievement and how it can be reached...and should include opportunities to develop positive norms, examine assumptions and engage in reflective practice with peers about issues related to work. (Drago-Severson, 2009, pp. 17-18)

Given that the primary constant in public education in the United States today is complex challenging with constant change, effective principal preparation must develop both individual and collective capacity. While principal preparation and professional development programs should “continue to emphasize both the harder (behavioral) and softer (emotional) aspects of leadership,” programs must also differentiate preparation and support depending on the school level (elementary or secondary) as well as the type of school (start-up, turnaround, or status quo), noting that a significant need is to support instructional leadership in secondary schools and to address the specific leadership needs of large, high-poverty schools (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, pp. 104-105). In order to achieve these measures of success, preparation programs must build on the foundations of adult learning: promoting the making of meaning in a dynamic environment through the assumption of leadership roles, collaborative inquiry, mentoring, and teamwork. In addition, current principal preparation is offered in several venues, including universities, school districts, and non-profit providers. Multiple pipelines to and through the principalship should enable educators and

policymakers “to avoid ‘one size fits all’ leadership development programs” (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, pp. 104-105).

Public schools in the United States are in the midst of radical transformation and principals are called upon to be transformational leaders who engage in and lead transformational learning. The programs that are responsible for preparing these principals must also be transformational.

### 2.5 The New York City Leadership Academy: An Exemplar for Effective School Leadership

The New York City Leadership Academy is mentioned in both studies (Darling-Hammond and the Rainwater Leadership Alliance) on effective principal preparation. Since 2003, the New York City Leadership Academy’s Aspiring Principals Program (APP) has recruited, prepared, and supported aspiring New York City public school leaders. APP is a standards-based, 14-month leadership development program that uses problem-based and action-learning methodologies to prepare participants to lead instructional improvement efforts in the city’s high-need public schools—those marked by high poverty and low student achievement. Through its rigorous application process, a diverse and talented group of educators (including former assistant principals, teachers, coaches and counselors) are selected who are deeply committed to closing the achievement gap. APP graduates commit to serve the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) for 5 years.

The New York City Leadership Academy’s Aspiring Principals Program has three distinct phases. These are summer intensive that engage participants in a

problem-based, action-learning curriculum that simulates the actual challenges of a New York City principalship; a 10-month, school-based residency under the mentorship of an experienced principal; and a planning summer that enables participants to transition successfully into school leadership positions. All participants are evaluated on a pass-fail basis and must meet rigorous performance standards to progress to each successive program phase and to graduate. The program is led by the APP faculty, which is comprised of former New York City principals and principal supervisors.

APP participants' salaries and benefits are paid by the NYC DOE while in the program. In addition, participants who have not yet earned their New York State administrative certification will need to complete the necessary credits needed to qualify for certification.

In 2009-2010, APP participants represented 17% of New York City public school principals and served more than 100,000 students. Since 2004, 21% of APP graduates have opened new, small New York City public schools (Cheney, 2010, pp. 133-134).

The New York City Leadership Academy's (NYCLA) Leadership Performance Standards Matrix identifies a set of behaviorally-based performance standards organized into 12 dimensions that reflect the attributes of transformational and instructional leaders. The NYCLA uses the matrix to guide the selection and comprehensive evaluation of participants in its aspiring principals program and to guide its curricular scope, assignments, and interventions. In order to graduate from APP, participants must demonstrate competency in all 12 dimensions (Cheney, 2010)..

One attribute of effective programs that the RLA identified was that the programs established an identity as part of the recruitment process in order to “attract candidates with the right fit to the program” (Cheney, 2010, p. 30). The NYCLA asks potential candidates to seriously consider whether the rigor and demands of their aspiring principals program is a good fit for them and program staff are very clear that, “the goal is to identify candidates passionately committed to the hard work of improving student outcomes in high-need schools and to discourage those merely looking for a job or a next step in their careers” (Cheney, 2010, p. 30).

In addition to establishing a program identity, the successful programs also utilized targeted strategies for attracting and identifying candidates. The NYCLA, in order to recruit a diverse pool of candidates, uses a targeted strategy of asking members of their network—which includes APP graduates and other campus and district leaders—to nominate high-quality candidates (Cheney, 2010).

In terms of the selection process, NYCLA seeks applicants with a commitment to continuous and public learning, competence in communication and problem-solving, a commitment to closing the achievement gap, and the ability to work collaboratively with others. When applicants possess these “baseline skills and dispositions” (Cheney, 2010, p. 50), the NYCLA is able to develop other school leadership skillsets such as instructional supervision, data analysis, strategic planning, enhanced communication and problem-solving capacity, and community engagement. The NYCLA utilizes a group interview process lasting approximately an hour in which applicants review a

school leadership scenario that “engages them in real-time problem-solving in a fluid context” (Cheney, 2010, p. 56).

The RLA programs that were studied used information gathered about candidates during the selection process to generate their individual learning plan. The NYCLA creates a learning plan known as “the Compact,” which has two elements: First, are general expectations for program participants—engaging in learning walks, designing, and delivering professional development, for example. Second, are “targeted practice areas” that address individual areas for growth with specific assignments to enhance skills that need development (Cheney, 2010, pp. 68-69).

The first part of the NYCLA’s 14-month program is the 6-week summer intensive program which, though grounded in theory and aligned to the performance standards, is “action-based,” using a “workshop model” that causes the participants to “live the lesson” through simulations, role-plays, and team activities (Cheney, 2010, p. 72). The summer intensive helps the fellows to “make the transition in perspective from ‘teacher’ to ‘leader’ and provides a foundation of understanding” from which to start the residency (Cheney, 2010, p. 73). Certainly, the summer intensive experience also builds a strong, unified, and interdependent cohort (Cheney, 2010, p. 73).

At the heart of NYCLA’s summer intensive is the simulated school. The simulated school, also known as the “problem scenario,” is comprehensive—addressing operations, student performance, and school climate and culture—and provides the participants a “safe, yet rigorous context” in which to “experiment with strategically addressing complex leadership challenges” (New York City Leadership Academy,

2009, p. 4). The simulated school includes written documents such as master schedules, floor plans, budget and student performance data, artifacts—samples of student work, teacher files, letters from community members—videos of classroom teaching and role-plays, such as a supervisor coming to visit, an angry parent demanding a meeting, a teacher protesting a performance rating. The learning involving the simulated school is experiential and “provides participants with opportunities to analyze multiple sources of information, try various approaches to improving school quality, analyze the consequences of their decisions, figure out what to do next, all while completing assignments based on the realities of the simulated school” (New York City Leadership Academy, 2009, p. 4).

The summer intensive, like the residency, is based on five essential beliefs about adult learning:

1. Adults learn most deeply from experience and reflection. While adults learn from traditional modes of instruction such as reading, writing, observing and discussing, these result in thinking. By contrast, active, hands-on learning-by-doing causes learners to own the learning, to “know” rather than “think.”
2. Learning is a social process and more complex and powerful insight is collaboratively created than can be generated on one’s own. Additionally, adults are “more likely to understand their own meaning-making processes when asked to articulate them and thus make them transparent in the course of collaboration around a task.”
3. Adults have a high capacity to learn from the discomfort inherent in moving from the known to the unknown and in taking risks. The NYCLA belief is that “adults learn from drama, from the creative tensions, problems, ambiguities and multiple realities that reflect the complexity of real life” and with appropriate supports and the understanding that “mistakes” are opportunities for learning, adults are willing to take risks in pursuit of authentic growth and learning.”

4. Adults learn by creating and revising stories in order to make meaning. Through a largely unconscious process, people make observations, take pieces of data and process experiences into stories based on mental models and life experience. Asking adult learners to examine these stories and imagine other possible meanings is a way to deepen one's learning and one's relationship with other perspectives.
5. Adults learn best in an environment of structured freedom. Adults learn best from activities, experiences and questions that are "structured enough to provide an edge against which to define ideas, but that capture the complexity of real life" and that contain "a multiplicity of answers and solutions." (New York City Leadership Academy, 2008)

The residency portion of the NYCLA's aspiring principals program, as in all effective programs, causes the participant to take learning from the coursework and apply it appropriately. The residency is a full school year (10 months) and also includes a 6-week opportunity at a different school site. By spending 10 months at one school site, with the exception of the 6-week switch, participants are able to experience the opening of school at the beginning of the year and observe and participate in other experiences that occur over the course of the year. The length of the residency permits the participants to take on authentic leadership roles, to make decisions, and then to "deal with the consequences of those decisions" (Cheney, 2010, p. 80). The six weeks at another school site is a strategic decision to allow the participant to experience a different leadership style or a program (such as bilingual education) that the principal is not experiencing at the home site. Additionally, by having a "second-entry experience," participants are able to apply their learning from the primary residency to this short-term experience which assists them in preparing for their job placement upon graduation (Cheney, 2010, p. 80)

Since the New York City Leadership Academy postulates that participants learn from engaging in the work, reflecting on one's actions and learning from mistakes and/or building on successes, on-going feedback from a mentor-principal, a coach, a cohort peer or others can accelerate this learning process (Cheney, 2010, p. 80). The school selected for the residency and the mentor-principal are targeted to the fellows' learning needs. To assist the aspiring principals to be reflective about their practice and to grow, the mentor-principals will require to act as follows:

- Demonstrate high capacity to help to train the fellow in his/her growth area
- Be able to give the fellow space/opportunity to practice and make mistakes
- Invest in the fellow's progress and be willing to guide his/her development
- Have leadership skills that align with program goals
- Demonstrate openness to sharing their reasoning for decision-making, including a willingness to share mistakes
- Be able to commit the time needed for regular debriefing and planning sessions.(Cheney, 2010, p. 81)

In terms of coaches, the NYCLA looks for effective practitioners who have or who can develop a "facilitative stance" that assists participants to "make meaning of the work through facilitation that is inquiry-based and aimed at building participants' leadership capacities" (Cheney, 2010, p. 85). The three-way partnership between participants, mentor principals, and program staff is facilitated in order to provide a "rich feedback loop" that benefits both the aspiring and the mentor principal (Cheney, 2010, p. 85).

The stance employed by NYCLA program facilitators, both classroom instructors and coaches, is based on essential beliefs about the facilitator's role. These seven beliefs are as follows:



1. The facilitator creates the conditions for learning by attending to all aspects of the learning environment—emotional, structural and pedagogical. By setting an emotional tone of honesty, trust, and regard for all participants and by modeling transparency and courage, the facilitator shapes a culture of learning. Structures—such as attention to time boundaries and to where to position him/herself in the room—serve to convey expectations and encourage and support independent and collaborative risk-taking. Selecting the appropriate teaching strategy and deciding when and how much to push participants’ thinking are pedagogical decisions that promote learning.
2. The facilitator cultivates independence and interdependence by “viewing him/herself as a coach, rather than an expert and by positioning him/herself alongside, rather than above, the learner.” This stance reinforces the learner, rather than the teacher, as the “owner” of the work. The facilitator cultivates independence and interdependence, rather than dependence, by supporting participants as “critical thinkers who can work independently and collaboratively to frame questions, develop strategies, make choices, construct meaning and provide feedback for each other.”
3. The facilitator’s interventions are strategic. By listening carefully to what is stated and unstated and by reading the room, the skilled facilitator can “hone improvisational skills” in order to expertly select “the right intervention at the right moment in time” in order to “maximize, deepen and personalize learning” for the participants.
4. The facilitator pushes the thinking, not the thought by challenging participants to think differently about what they already know, or think they know. The skilled facilitator “makes the familiar strange” by pushing participants’ thinking to deeper levels and by “unearth[ing] and expos[ing] the multiple layers of complexity and ambiguity that characterize real life” and the principalship. (New York City Leadership Academy, 2007, p. 1) The facilitator’s task is “to problematize rather than to simplify” and to help participants tolerate complexity and ambiguity and make decisions based on their most deeply held beliefs and in support of student learning “even in the face of competing and conflicting desires and/or inadequate or contradictory information.”
5. The facilitator attends to the competing needs and interrelationships of different levels of the system: the individual, the small group and the group as a whole and “understands the interrelatedness of individual and group learning” knowing that the group “creates learning that builds on but is greater than the sum of its parts” and that each individual takes from an

effective collaboration “greater knowledge than s/he could have constructed alone.”

6. The facilitator provokes and contains anxiety since “authentic learning involves moving from the known to the unknown,” The expert facilitator both creates a safe and supportive container within which participants can take risks and an environment of discomfort and challenge where participants are learning. The “tension” between “containment” and “pushing” is at the heart of the NYCLA’s facilitative stance. )
7. The facilitator maintains purpose and focus on the bottom line of preparing strong principals with the capacity to improve instructional outcomes. Given that goal, the facilitator gives timely, honest and targeted feedback to participants regarding their performance. (New York City Leadership Academy, 2007, pp. 1-2)

Support for the aspiring principal fellows after graduation from the program can take several forms. One element of support is helping them to identify and secure job placements. Another form of support for program graduates involves those who are leading schools and who need continuing professional development and coaching. This can take the form of individual support and/or support for the entire school. Last, support may also involve work at the district and state levels to “influence policies and practices that can either help or hinder principals in their efforts to build and sustain successful schools” (Cheney, 2010, p. 94).

First, in terms of placement, the New York City Leadership Academy, like other organizations profiled in the Rainwater document, involves four components:

- Assessing strengths and skills of the graduates
- Understanding school needs
- Working with districts and charter organizations
- Preparing fellows for hire. (pp. 98-101)

Through the process of recruitment, selection, training, development, the New York City Leadership Academy program staff comes to know other fellows quite well. While the expectation is proficiency in all leadership competencies, individual fellows will have greater strengths in some areas and this knowledge can be used to make placement recommendations. Additionally, the NYCLA staff completes a “readiness inventory” relative to the competencies which is used to determine optimal school placement. Program fellows also self-assess and define placement preferences relative to school type, size, culture, and location. There is transparency and honest conversation throughout the process regarding areas of strength and weakness and how to identify and attain the best school placement (Cheney, 2010, pp. 98-99).

In addition to understanding the specific skillsets of each of the participants, the New York City Leadership Academy considers the characteristics and needs of different types of schools. For example, a turnaround school, with a history of ineffective adult practices, needs a leader that can manage significant change and who can handle challenging hiring and firing decisions. Additionally, a start-up school requires a leader with a clear, well-articulated vision that can also handle all of the project-management details of a new school. Moreover, a “status quo” school demands a leader that can move the school from “good to great” by using data to create a sense of urgency, to diagnose what is working and what is not and to coach staff on more effective practices (citation)\_. (Cheney, 2010, p. 99)

When possible, and depending on projected openings, the fellows may be placed in a residency situation that is similar to their likely placement. Of course, this requires

strong planning and communication between the principal preparation program and the school district or charter organization. An additional factor is that while the NYCLA is a 9-year old program that has a lengthy partnership with the New York City schools, a challenge for new principal preparation programs may be that their viewpoint on what constitutes effective school leadership may be out of alignment with school districts that have a more traditional principal profile. In this case, the program takes an active role in changing the perception of what a principal looks like so that district leaders are confident in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the program graduates bring to the job (Cheney, 2010, p. 100).

The last component in placement is preparing the fellows for hire. In addition to maintaining a close and deep relationship with the district or charter organization, the exemplary principal preparation programs do the following:

- Resume and cover letter models and writing support
- Timeline of hiring and key activities
- Mock interviews and debrief with feedback
- Visits to the schools with anticipated vacancies
- “Meet and greet” sessions with hiring managers
- Connections with sitting principals or teachers to get inside perspective, (Cheney, 2010, p. 101).

At the end of the interview process, partner districts provided feedback on how candidates fared during the process so that both the candidate and the program could improve (Cheney, 2010).

Support during the first year of the principalship is essential as “the job of the principal is complex and the first year is especially challenging” (Cheney, 2010, p. 102). The exemplary programs provide multiple types of support, including support

for the individual leader, support for the whole school and strengthening conditions at a district level that support the work of principals.

Individual leader support such as individual coaching by trained coaches, peer cohort coaching, on-going professional development and access to experts are ways that new principals can deepen their skills through feedback and reflection. Coaches typically join principals as they enter their new schools and assist them in diagnosing school needs and developing an action plan. Coaching helps school leaders do “the kind of systemic and strategic thinking that creates real change” (Cheney, 2010, p. 103). The New York City Leadership Academy provides coaching to all first-year principals, paid for by the New York City Department of Education, and makes coaching available to all principals, second-year and beyond, who want to fund it from their own budgets (Cheney, 2010, p. 103). NYCLA’s coaching model is competency-based and enables school leaders to strengthen their school leadership skills within the context of school improvement as measured against behaviorally-based performance standards. Coaches help principals to build their capacity to lead schools and may assist them with planning difficult conversations, design professional development, analyze student data, and make action plans. The primary job of the coach is “to ask the right questions to help the principal be reflective and keep the important school issues front and center” (Cheney, 2010, p. 106). While coaches are typically a “behind-the-scenes” facilitator, if needed, a coach may occasionally be directive. For example, if a principal is about to make a “job-risking decision,” the coach might intervene in order to help the principal

to make an appropriate decision or at least be aware of the decision they are making (Cheney, 2010, p. 103).

In addition to providing coaching support to first-year principals, the NYCLA also affords these new principals access to experts and ongoing professional development. The NYCLA has a vast network of specialists with expertise on various issues—some technical challenges, like high school master scheduling or teacher appraisals, and some adaptive challenges, such as school culture and climate—that can be called on for feedback and advice (Cheney, 2010, p. 107).

The NYCLA also offers as-needed professional learning to new principals. One consistently offered workshop involves a data expert working with the principal's coach to gather relevant data and plan the learning for the principal and the school team to explore state assessment data, student work and interim assessment in order to generate an action plan which is reviewed at subsequent sessions.

The researcher already discussed best practices in principal preparation: research-based content, curricular coherence, problem-based learning, field-based internships or coaching, cohort groups, and close collaboration between the program and the district. In addition, to ensure that programs are most effective, they must also adhere to the following principles:

- Alignment to principal competencies
- Responsiveness to district initiatives
- Rigorous simulations of real practice
- Flexibility and responsiveness in the recruitment of candidates
- Accommodations of various adult learning styles
- Ongoing support after graduation. (Stein, 2010, pp. 101-102)

Incorporating these best practices is “challenging, but not impossible and the investment in robust preparation avoids principals having to learn everything they need to lead while on the job” (Stein, 2010, p. 103).

Before moving on to the discussion of why effective school leadership matters, it is important to put the NYCLA into context. As previously discussed, NYCLA is a non-profit entity that serves the New York City Department of Education. This model is one of three basic models for effective principal preparation; in addition to the non-profit model, there are also district-based and university-based programs (Cheney, 2010, p. 7).

New Leaders for New Schools is also a non-profit organization. Founded in 2000 to train aspiring principals, New Leaders has enlarged the scope of its work to include principal development in general and policies that impact school leadership. Like NYCLA, New Leaders has a strong focus on equity; the New Leaders’ mission is “to ensure high academic achievement for all children, especially students in poverty and children of color, by developing transformational school leaders and advancing the policies and practices that allow great leaders to succeed” (New Leaders website). Also, like NYCLA and Dallas’ APP, the participants take part in a rigorous (4-week) summer training session, then begin a year-long, full-time paid residency in an urban public school, working alongside a mentor principal.

Gwinnett County Public Schools’ Quality-Plus Leader Academy, like Dallas’ APP, is a district-based program. Part of an umbrella of leadership programs, the aspiring principals program was established in 2007 and is described as a “customized

leadership development program” in which participants work collaboratively in performance-based teams to develop school improvement plans and staffing plans, to respond to crisis situations and complete budget-simulation activities. Participants, who are all assistant principals with administrative certification, also complete a 90-day residency with a mentor principal and a coach. It is important to note that the current superintendent has served in the position since 1996. Gwinnet County won the prestigious Broad Prize in 2010 for its work to increase student achievement and to close the achievement gap (<http://www.gwinnett.K12.ga.us>).

Ritchie Program for School Leaders at the University of Denver is a university-based program that was founded in 2003 in concert with the Denver Public Schools. Participants in the year-long program attend class one day per week and complete projects in their internship that allows them to apply their learning to real leadership situations. Sustained through three superintendents, the Ritchie Program has over 70 graduates serving in the Denver Public Schools as principals, assistant principals or in a central office leadership role. The program recently was awarded 3.7 million dollars from the Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement of School Leadership (<http://www.du.edu/education/profiles/ritchieLeadersProgram>).

All of these programs have been innovative in finding ways to prepare principals for the world of 21st century school leadership. They seem to be based on the idea that school leadership matters and that effective principal preparation programs develop the sorts of leaders who positively impact the lives of teachers and students. These programs seem to operate by the following theory of action: “By increasing the number



of effective principals, they will, in turn, ensure successive years of quality teaching for students, and, as a result, will improve and sustain student achievement” (Cheney, 2010, p. 129).

### 2.6 Why It Matters: Through the Lens of Critical Theory

Thomas Jefferson’s dream of “universal education,” though limited in scope by contemporary standards, was revolutionary for its time. Jefferson believed that the “power of education is required if the virtue that makes men choose public over private interest is to be sustained” (Cremin, 1970, p. 439). Contemporary thinkers agree that education is in the national interest, stating that education is “associated with practically every economic, social, public health and civic strength, and its absence of failure is associated with nearly every economic, social, health and civic problem” (Begala, 2002, pp. 36-37).

By many measures, K-16 public education in the United States is at a significant crossroads, embroiled in the perfect storm of widening income disparity and a seemingly intractable achievement gap between poor and/or minority students and others, a technology-defined economy demanding workers with higher levels of skills, and a “flat” world of global competition with an educational system producing mediocre results compared with other industrialized countries. These are excellence and equity issues and the lens of critical theory provides a way to discuss the historical inequality and the current achievement gap at the heart of K-16 public education in the United States.

The vestiges of history—the 20th-century high school, initially conceived as an institution of mass socialization and basic skill development and later redesigned as a “giant sorting machine” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 16) along with segregation, integration, and the persistent income and achievement gaps, the hierarchy of the school and the feminization and devaluing of the teaching profession—continue to echo in public education in the 21st century. Critical theory allows close examination of these “compounded inequalities, reinforced over generations” that have been an essential part of schooling in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 28). Using the lens of critical theory allows one to question “the assumption that societies such as the U.S . . . are unproblematically democratic and free” (Kinchloe & MacLaren, 2005, p. 303).

Historically, public schools have been institutions of “social reproduction” where children have been educated to “replace their parents and/or family members in the social and economic life of the society” (Eubanks, Parish, & Smith, 1994, p. 1). Though never designed to educate all children at high cognitive levels, through most of the 20th century, American schools educated all students for a solid place in the American economy.

As the United States moved from a largely agrarian to a predominantly manufacturing economy at the end of the 19th century, the country required citizens with increased knowledge and skills. To meet the needs of the changing economy, educational standards were raised and years of schooling beyond eighth grade were added, increasing the number of public high schools. In 1900, only 10% of American

14 to 17 year olds attended high school; by 1930, 31% were enrolled (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 8).

While only 6% of teenagers graduated from high school in 1900, and only 3% graduated from college, the comparable figures in 1975 were 75 and 23%, respectively. From an economics perspective, this “increase in the rate of growth of the relative supply of skills associated with the high school movement starting around 1910 played a key role in narrowing educational wage differentials from 1915 to 1980” (Goldin, 2009, p. 2). The rapid increase in educational attainment and the enhanced skills of the increasing numbers of high school and college graduates “constituted the human capital that fueled productivity gains and wage growth” for the first three-quarters of the 20th century. This educational and economic growth was “a rising tide that lifted the boats of the rich and poor alike” (Duncan & Murnane, 2011, p. 3).

The early 20th-century high school movement created more educated American workers. After World War II, with the assistance of the G.I. Bill, these high school graduates became college graduates and America prospered. By 1950, more than half of young adult men and women had completed more years of formal education than their parents had, a percentage that would continue to climb for the next two decades. The college graduation rates of children whose parents had never attended college exceeded 20% between 1950 and 1970. The skills and credentials resulting from these educational investments allowed many Americans who had grown up poor to join the middle class (Duncan & Murnane, 2011, pp. 3-5).

U.S. educational institutions served the country well for the first three-quarters of the 20th century and although the nation never completely fulfilled the promise of equality of educational opportunity, the openness of the American educational system made it possible for hardworking children from low-income families to graduate not only from high school but also from college (Duncan & Murnane, 2011, pp. 3-5).

Between 1947 and 1977, the gross national product (GDP) per capita doubled and the incomes of the poorest American families nearly doubled as well. Though there was income inequality—income for those at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile was three times that of those at the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile—most Americans accepted this for three reasons: First, incomes for families at the bottom of the distribution were growing quickly. Second, inequality remained relatively stable for the first three decades after World War II. Third and most importantly, was a relatively high rate of intergenerational economic mobility. In other words, in the years after World War II, “growing up in a poor family did not have to mean that one’s children would repeat that experience” (Duncan & Murnane, 2011, p. 5).

Education kept pace with technology throughout most of the 20th century until about 1980 when it stopped keeping up and “income inequality began widening as job opportunities for high school dropouts shrunk while employers bid for a too-small pool of highly-skilled workers” (Friedman, 2011, p. 102). Over the last three decades, the labor market has “polarized” into high-wage and low-wage work, at the expense of middle-wage work. While computers “complement” the cognitive tasks of high-wage jobs and have little impact on the non-routine manual tasks of low-wage jobs (janitorial,

security, and service industries), technology has “substituted” for the moderate skills of middle-wage jobs, thus, effectively eliminating the blue collar and clerical jobs that were once the mainstay of the middle-class (Autor, Katz, & Kearney, 2006, p. 23). However, since 1980, the changing economy and failure of the American educational system to keep pace with the skill demands of the information age, has created a widening income gap. This means that it is becoming “increasingly more difficult for individuals with only a high school diploma to find stable, well-paying employment” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 11).

Between 1977 and 2007, America’s GDP per capita nearly doubled again, just as it had between the end of World War II and 1977. This time, however, economic growth benefitted a smaller proportion of the population. In 2007, family income at the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile was only 7% higher than the comparable figure for 1977, after adjusting for inflation. On the other hand, the incomes of families at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile had grown by 34%—nearly five times as much. During the same period, 1977 to 2007, when the inflation-adjusted wages of college graduates grew by 25%, the wages of high school graduates increased by only 1%, and those of high school dropouts fell by 13%. Much of this disparity can be explained by changes in the U.S. economy, such as advancing technology and the outsourcing of jobs to lower-wage countries, both of which significantly reduced the demand for U.S. workers with relatively little formal education. However, the dramatic increase in inequality of the U.S. earnings distribution has not been found in other industrialized countries in Europe and Asia that have experienced similar technological changes (Duncan & Murnane, 2011, p. 5). This

“slowdown” in education, and its profound impact on earning power, is “robbing Americans of the ability to grow together” (Goldin, 2009, p. 23).

The income gap in the United States is reflected in and exacerbated by the achievement gap within the public school system at a time when educated citizens are desperately needed. With a high school diploma as a baseline requirement in today’s economy, only approximately one-third of all students who enter the ninth grade each year graduate in four years with the required knowledge and skills for a post-secondary education or the 21st century workplace. Another one-third of high school students also graduate, but lack the knowledge and skills for success in college or the modern workplace; the final one-third drop out of school before graduation (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008).

About half of the dropouts in the United States attend one of the nearly 2000 high schools that have been identified as “dropout factories”—meaning that the freshman class has shrunk to about 60% of the original number of ninth graders by the time students reach their senior year—and, not surprisingly, these schools are populated mostly by low-income and minority students and have less qualified teachers and fewer resources than other high schools (Balfanz, 2004, pp. 5-6). A majority of minority attended high schools are five times more likely to have “weak promoting power,” meaning they promote 50% or fewer of the ninth-grade class to senior status on time than predominantly Anglo high schools. Poverty is also a key correlate with weak promoting power (Balfanz, 2004, pp. 5-6). Sixty-nine percent of all African-American dropouts and 63% of all Hispanic dropouts are produced by these schools, while half of

all African-American and 40% of Hispanic students attend these high schools where graduation is not the norm. Only 11% of Anglo students attend such schools (Balfanz, 2004, pp. 5-6).

Five Southern states, including Texas, lead the nation in both the total number of high schools with weak promoting power. Texas has 185 high schools identified as dropout factories, and Hispanics had the highest percentage of dropouts with 45%. Dallas ISD, where 88% of the students are African-American or Hispanic, leads the state in the number of high schools with weak promoting power, with 21 high schools, or 81%, so classified (Balfanz, 2004, pp. 5-6).

If well-paying jobs for high school graduates are increasingly difficult to find, the situation for high school drop-outs is even grimmer. In 2005, high school graduates earned almost \$10,000 a year more than high school drop-outs and the difference between lifetime earnings of a college graduate versus a high school dropout is more than \$1 million (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 11). High school dropouts tend to be less healthy and to die younger. They are more likely to become parents at an early age, to need social welfare assistance, and to become involved with the criminal justice system (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 11).

The implications of large numbers of high school dropouts are “borne not just by individuals, but also by the communities in which they live and by society as a whole” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 12). Each class of high school dropouts costs the U.S. economy more than \$319 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity, and about \$17 billion in Medicaid and uninsured medical costs over these

students' lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 12). The costs, both to individuals and to society, of high school dropouts led Alliance for Excellent Education President Bob Wise to state that, "the best economic stimulus package is a high school diploma" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 14).

When the McKinsey & Company study, "The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools," was released, newspaper headlines noted that the "persistence of the achievement gap" in U.S. public schools imposed on the nation's economy the impact of a "permanent national recession" (McKinsey & Company, Social Sector Office, 2009). Closing the achievement gap between African-American and Latino students and Anglo students would have increased the nation's GDP by 2-4% (figures are for 2008, the last year prior to the publication of the McKinsey study). The significance of this economic impact will become increasingly important as African-Americans and Latinos become a larger proportion of the U.S. population and workforce. By narrowing the gap between low-income and middle-income and upper-income students, the GDP would increase another 3-5%. Finally, closing the gap between America's low-performing and higher-performing school systems would increase the GDP by 3-5% (McKinsey & Company, Social Sector Office, 2009).

The researcher has discussed the achievement gap in U.S. schools, which is both a cause and an effect of the income gap. In addition to the income gap that has resulted from a changing economy and the failure of U.S. schools to keep pace, American students also experience an "opportunity gap—the accumulated differences in access to key educational resources—expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality



curriculum opportunities, good educational materials and plentiful information resources—that support learning at home and at school” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 28). These “inequities” are due in large part to how public education in the United States is funded—by local property taxes (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 29) .

Five factors create the unequal and inadequate educational outcomes that one sees in the United States:

1. High levels of poverty and low levels of social supports for low-income children
2. Unequal allocation of school resources, which is made politically easier by the increasing resegregation of schools
3. Inadequate system for providing high-quality teachers and teaching to all children in all communities
4. Rationing of high quality curriculum through tracking and interschool disparities
5. Factory-model school designs that have created dysfunctional learning environment for students and unsupportive settings for strong teaching. (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 30)

In terms of poverty, the United States has the highest child poverty rates and provides fewer social and school supports than any other industrialized nation (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 33). American children living in poverty experience risk factors that more affluent children do not. These include emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags and health and safety issues.

The families of poor children experience a multitude of stressors, both acute and chronic, such as overcrowded or substandard housing, unsafe and crime-ridden neighborhoods, financial strain, material deprivation, inadequate day-care and loss of family members due to incarceration, divorce, separation, deportation, and death. These stressors may also be both cause and effect for higher incidences of drug and alcohol

abuse among families living in poverty. The impact of these stressors on the child's school life may show up in high rates of absences, impaired attention and concentration, reduced motivation and effort, depression, diminished social skills and judgment and overall reduced memory, cognition, and creativity (Jensen, 2009, pp. 25-26).

Children living in poverty face greater emotional and social instability than affluent children. Caregivers are frequently overworked and overstressed and therefore less able to form secure attachments with their children. Poor families also more often have adverse factors such as teen parenthood, depression, and inadequate health care. All of these factors impact the child at school and may inhibit the child's ability to form appropriate relationships with both teachers and peers (Jensen, 2009, p. 19).

Poor children are subject to many more health and safety challenges than more financially comfortable children. Generally speaking, the lower a child's socioeconomic status, the lower is the child's health. Poor pre-natal care, poor nutrition, environmental hazards and inadequate healthcare lead to premature births, low body weight, and depressed growth, obesity, respiratory distress, injuries and undiagnosed and untreated vision and dental problems.

For the aforementioned reasons, poor children frequently enter school already significantly behind and the "gulf" in cognitive development between poor children and affluent children is "quite significant" and "persists from infancy through adolescence into adulthood" (Jensen, 2009, pp. 31-32). In addition to impacting children's social, emotional, and physical well-being, poverty also impacts basic cognitive skills, such as processing and memory, and has a tremendous impact on children's language skills.

The well-known Hart and Risly (1995) study involved 42 “well-functioning” families of three types: professional, working class, and welfare. The children were observed for one hour per month for two and one-half years, from age 10 months to age 3. The findings were that children from all three groups of families started to speak at around the same time and all had good use of language. Children from professional families heard more words per hour and this ultimately resulted in larger vocabularies. In professional families, children heard an average of 2, 153 words per hour while children in working-class families heard approximately 1,251 words per hour. Children in Welfare families heard 616 words per hour, less than a third the amount heard by children growing up in professional families. When extrapolated over a year’s time, children growing up in a family with professional parents heard 11 million words while children with working-class parents heard 6 million words, and children in families on welfare heard 3 million words. By kindergarten, the children growing up in the family on welfare would have heard 32 million fewer words than a child growing up with parents who are professionals. By age 3, the observed cumulative vocabulary for children with professional parents was 1100 words, for children with working class parents the cumulative vocabulary was 750 words, and for children in welfare families, 500 words, less than half the number of the children with parents who were professionals (Hart & Risly, 1995).

Certainly, the profound gap in vocabulary between poor and more affluent children has a profound impact on these children’s varying capacities for reading—the gateway to learning. In addition to the huge difference in vocabulary, children in

poverty are less likely than more financially stable children to be taken to museums or to have other educational experiences. They have less access to computers, own fewer books, and have less access to organized activities involving art, athletics, music, dance and drama (Jensen, 2009).

Poor children in the United States enter school severely behind. The positive news is that despite the impact of poverty on children's school readiness, the human brain is "plastic" since "a brain that is susceptible to adverse environmental effects is equally susceptible to positive, enriching effects" (Jensen, 2009, p. 45). Effective schools and teachers can make a huge difference. Unfortunately, far too often, these children enter schools which reinforce and compound, rather than diminish their lags.

Following progress in desegregating U.S. schools after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, schools had steadily re-segregated since 1989. In 2000, 72% of African-American students attended a majority of minority schools after reaching a historical low of 63% in 1980. Nearly 40% of African-American and Hispanic students attended "intensely segregated" schools, with minority enrollments of 90 to 100%. This type of "concentrated poverty is shorthand for a constellation of inequalities that shape schooling," such as building maintenance, overcrowding, safety, quality of libraries, availability of textbooks and learning resources, and the all-important quality of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 37).

Even more important than the paucity of educational resources surrounding students who attend segregated schools is their lack of access to quality teachers. Since the 1980s, when teacher demand increased and funding decreased, the practice of

waiving or lowering credential requirements in order to fill classrooms in high-minority, low-income schools became the national norm. In fact, a nationwide study conducted in 1990 revealed that students attending a high-minority school had less than a 50% chance of being taught by a math or science teacher with a degree and a license for the field (as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2010). A subsequent study conducted in 2002 found that, “by every measure of qualifications,” be that certification, subject-matter background, years of teaching experience, pedagogical training, selectivity of college attended, test scores, the “less-qualified teachers are found in schools serving greater numbers of low-income students” (as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 43).

This practice, far from the norm in high-achieving countries, was especially common in states, including Texas, with high numbers of immigrant and minority students (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teacher quality matters and research indicates that the achievement gap would be significantly reduced if low-income, minority students were routinely taught by highly-qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The fourth practice that causes unequal educational outcomes in students in the United States is the “rationing of high-quality curriculum” through intra-school and inter-school “disparities” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 30). Differences in courses and programs begin early in a child’s school career as “sorting and tracking” into “gifted” or remedial courses occur in kindergarten and first grade. This trend continues into secondary education where in racially-mixed schools “curriculum tracks are generally color-coded” and Honors, Advanced Placement, and college preparatory classes are

reserved for white students and basic, vocational, and remedial are “disproportionately filled with students of color” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 52).

Schools and districts that serve more affluent students frequently offer foreign languages earlier and provide rich art and music programs, as well as technological support while poorer schools and districts offer “stripped down” approaches to reading and math utilizing “drill and practice” rather than applications for higher order critical thinking (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 52). Schools that serve African-American, Hispanic, and Native-American students are “bottom-heavy;” they offer more remedial and vocational courses and fewer academic and college-preparatory courses (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 52).

The fifth and final component that leads to unequal educational outcomes is factory model schools. Modern schools, developed at the beginning of the 20th century, were “highly bureaucratic organizations—divided into grade levels and subject matter departments, separate tracks, programs and auxiliary services—each managed separately and run by carefully specified procedures engineered to yield standard products” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 62). With the governing idea of teaching and learning as “the transmission of predetermined bits of information,” this school structure was “designed to be impersonal” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 62).

Most high school teachers see 150 or more students for 45 minutes each day and most high school students move through the day from class to overcrowded class, and teacher to overloaded teacher. The personal connections and sense of community that students—and teachers—need in order to thrive are markedly absent, especially in the

large urban schools where many low-income students of color attend. Darling-Hammond (2010) noted that, “when teachers have little opportunity to come to know their students well, and students have little opportunity to relate to any adult in the school on an extended personal level, it should not be surprising that factory model high schools create virtual chasms of the cracks into which students can fall” (p. 64).

Not only is the factory-model school unhealthy for students, but the structure promotes teacher isolation as well. With the goal of standardization and making teaching practices routine, there is little need for teachers to develop their professional expertise or collaborate to solve problems of practice. The learning environment that students and teachers both need is one of high expectations and high support and the factory model school makes this a challenge (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p.65).

The American school system’s historical march—from the common schools through most of the 20th century—was toward greater excellence and equity. Though far from perfect, this inclusive movement has sharply reversed course over the last three decades. While research has produced new insights about effective teaching, learning, and leadership, the achievement gap in American schools has widened. In addition to the achievement gap between African-American and Latino students and Anglo students as well as between students of different income levels and between demographically similar students who are schooled in different systems or regions, there is also an achievement gap between the students in the United States and other nations. As the United States makes “the transition from an industrial to a global information-based economy . . . education is called upon to become one of the most

powerful engines driving the economy” (Levine, 2005, p. 12). Unfortunately, almost three decades after *A Nation at Risk* was published, the country’s educational system has become less competitive in an economy that has become more global.

The 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results for U.S. students show “educational stagnation at a time of fast-rising demand for highly-educated workers” (Duncan, 2010). PISA is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and assesses 15-year old students, nearing the end of their compulsory schooling, in 65 participating countries and entities, including the 34 industrialized democracies that are member nations. PISA assesses applied knowledge and literacy in math, reading, and science and is considered “an invaluable measure of students’ preparation for the 21st century economy” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 14).

This international assessment, which gauges “how well our students are prepared to do the sorts of Reading, Math and Science that will be demanded of them in post-secondary education, on the job market and as young adults in modern society” posts disappointing results (Duncan, 2010, press release). In reading, U.S. students’ results were average, ranking 14<sup>th</sup> out of the 34 OECD nations; six nations, including Korea, Finland, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and Australia, scored significantly higher than the U.S. In math, the U.S. was below average, ranking 25<sup>th</sup> out of 34, and in science, the U.S. “improved to average” (Duncan, 2010).

Other sources signal similar indicators. The 2008 report on global competitiveness by the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranks the United States first of



131 nations in its Global Competitiveness Index due to the strength of its markets, the sophistication of the business community, and capacity for technological innovation. There were troubling signs of potential areas of weakness, though, and the WEF ranked the U.S. 34th in health and education, noting that, “an inadequately educated workforce” is a problematic factor for doing business with the U.S. (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, p. 15).

A group of prominent economists have found a clear link between cognitive skills—measured by students’ performance on math and science tests—and a nation’s economic growth. Using PISA scores since 1964 and examining how human capital, as defined by cognitive skills, relates to economic growth for 50 countries between 1960 and 2000, the economists found that “a highly skilled workforce can raise economic growth by about two-thirds of a percentage point every year” (Hanushek, 2008, pp. 5-6). In fact, the McKinsey (2009) study suggests that the U.S. GDP would increase significantly—from between 9 and 16%—if the United States were able to increase its average PISA performance to score at levels similar to the highest-scoring nations.

Concerned by the United States’ poor academic showing, Secretary of Education Duncan pointed to the OECD to provide a report on lessons from high-achieving nations. The message was that the U.S. has “low educational productivity” and is doing less than other countries to close the achievement gap. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) noted a “higher-than-average performance gaps between socioeconomic groups, between schools, as well as high proportions of low-performing students” (p. 15). By contrast, in high-performing (PISA) countries, “success is

systemic” and there is a small variation—only 5%—between schools (Schleicher, 2012).

Former Washington, D.C. Chancellor of Schools, Michelle Rhee, says this about the economics of education:

This country is in a significant crisis in education, and we don’t know it. If you look at other countries, like Singapore—Singapore’s knocking it out of the box. Why? Because the number one strategy in their economic plan is education. We treat education as a social issue. And I’ll tell you what happens happens with social issues: When the budget crunch comes, they get swept under the rug, they get pushed aside. We have to start treating education as an economic issue. (Washingtonian, 2010, p. 4)

Certainly, an educational system that produces graduates with the cognitive skills to succeed in higher education and the workforce is in the national interest. It has also historically been true that education has been an essential component ensuring that citizens “choose public over private interest” (Cremin, 1970, p. 439). The achievement gap in U.S. schools coupled with the income gap in American society join with a confluence of other social and economic factors—globalization and information technology—and have created an educational flashpoint that touches both excellence and equity.

Another component of schooling in the U.S. that requires an examination through the lens of critical theory concerns the historical structure of schools. As Elmore (2008) stated in *School Reform from the Inside Out*, schools have traditionally been governed by locally elected school boards and schools have been populated by “relatively low status (mostly female) teachers working in relative isolation from each other under the supervision of (mostly male) administrators, whose expertise was

thought to lie mainly in their mastery of administrative rather than pedagogical skills” (p. 45). One of the key skillsets for contemporary school leaders is the ability to develop the leadership capacity of teachers and school staff so that they may engage in continuous professional learning in a collaborative school culture. The mindset and the skillset necessary to facilitate this type of distributed and collaborative leadership, as is true for the equity-focused mission to ensure learning at high levels for all students has to do with issues of equality and independence. For these reasons, critical theory provided the lens through which to view this case study on leadership development.

First, just as in the 1970s Ron Edmonds, then the Director of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University and the developer of the effective schools movement, lifted up the idea that schools make a significant difference in children’s learning—overriding the negative effects of poverty—transformational leaders also promote schools as agents for equity by enlisting the collective will of the school community to ensure that all students learn at high levels. In addition, transformational leaders seek to transform the school itself. Fullan (2003) stated in *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership* that,

Let’s be explicit. The only goal worth talking about is transforming the current school system so that large-scale, sustainable, continuous reform becomes built in. Moral purpose of the highest order is having a system where all students learn, the gap between high and low performance becomes greatly reduced and what people learn enables them to be successful citizens and workers in a morally based knowledge society. The role strategically placed to best accomplish this is the principal. (p. 29)

The leaders who emerge from the Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principal Program must be able to lead the work of ensuring equity and access for all of the students, regardless

of race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or English language proficiency as they go about the work of transformational leadership.

As schools face a widening achievement gap, mirroring the increasing income gap in society, the need for educated citizens is vital. To be competitive in the global marketplace, the United States requires a more educated population. To be employable in an information society, graduates need more advanced skills and knowledge than they have had in the past. Just as the role of public schooling has an increasingly vital role to play to prepare students for the global information economy, the intensity of the challenges has increased as the nation's educational system needs to address these excellence and equity challenges, as Levine (2005) has reminded in the following statement:

The job of school leader has been transformed by extraordinary economic, demographic, technological and global change. The federal government—and the states—have responded to these realities by raising standards for school promotion and graduation, mandating student testing and school accountability. These changes represent a fundamental reversal of existing school policy, shifting the focus from ensuring that all schools educate students in the same way—five major subjects, 12 years of schooling and 180-day school years—to requiring that all children achieve the same outcomes from their education. This turns the world of schooling upside down: universal standards replace universal processes; learning becomes more important than teaching and the student takes center stage from the teacher. Meanwhile, demographics are reshaping both the student body and the corps of teachers and school leaders. Schools have the job of educating a population that is experiencing dramatic demographic changes, growing increasingly diverse and becoming more and more segregated by race and income to meet increasingly rigorous standards. And they must do this with a shrinking number of experienced administrators and teachers due to retirements and departures from the profession. (p. 12)

## 2.7 Summary

Having discussed a history of U.S. public education from the Common Schools of Thomas Jefferson to the educational bureaucracy of Frederick Taylor, the American school system has seen the development of a system of mass education by the early 20th century. In the last half of the 20th century, from Brown versus the Board of Education and Sputnik to No Child Left Behind, the school system has witnessed greater demands for equity and excellence in public schools and for the principal to move from functioning as a manager to serving as a leader.

Deep into the era of contemporary educational reform and ten years in the NCLB era, a deep understanding exists that leadership matters, in terms of both teacher effectiveness and student achievement, and principals are called upon to be instructional and transformational leaders.

How does the American school system best prepare effective school leaders? The answer, of course, is through effective principal preparation programs. Common elements of effective models and programs for principal preparation were discussed and a sharp focus was placed on the New York City Leadership Academy, Dallas ISD's partner organization in developing and implementing Dallas' Aspiring Principals Program.

Finally, this chapter includes a discussion of critical theory, the framework for this study. Through a discussion of the achievement and

opportunity gaps in U.S. public schools, the necessity of strong instructional and transformational leaders is underscored.

CHAPTER 3  
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research illuminates the state of the U.S. school principal pipeline, a national issue, with a significant impact on K-16 education. Situated at the crux of this issue, this case study of principal preparation sought to find answers to three research questions regarding the Dallas Independent School District's Aspiring Principals Program. RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed? RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these? RQ3: What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?

The three research questions involved the following: First, this study includes the description of the conditions and motivations for developing a principal preparation program in the Dallas Independent School District. Second, the study includes the philosophical foundations for and the development of the curricular and instructional components of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP), and third, the impact of the program on Dallas ISD, especially on the principal pipeline. .

### 3.2 Research Design

To answer the three research questions, a case study was conducted in order to understand from what context and motivations Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program was created, to examine the type of program that was developed and implemented, and to comprehend how the program impacted the larger organization—the school district.

Why qualitative research? Because the purpose of this study was to bring a deep understanding of the creation, implementation, and impact of Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program, a qualitative approach which permits an emphasis on the “qualities” of the program and its “processes and meanings” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 13). Through an “interpretive, naturalistic” stance, the program may be studied in its natural setting—in this case, the central offices, the classrooms, and the campuses where the APP was created and implemented—and meaning is created as people interpret phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 5). Qualitative research stresses “the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 13). This emphasis on how the APP was developed, implemented and experienced from multiple perspectives ensures a rich understanding of this case.

Qualitative research—and this exploration—involves the “studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 5) such as artifacts, archival documents, personal experience, and interviews to bring the richest meaning to the exploration and illuminate the case. The concept of montage, a



cinematic editing method, is also illustrative of the nature of qualitative research because “several different images are superimposed onto one another to create a picture” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 6): Montage, like qualitative research, “invites viewers to construct interpretations that build on one another as the scene unfolds” putting the sequences “together into a meaningful emotional whole” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 7). Last, texts based on the metaphor of montage are “dialogical texts” that presume an active audience and create space for “give-and-take between the reader and the writer” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 7).

The case study design was appropriate for examining the Dallas ISD Aspiring Principal Program because the case was “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries,” such as a program (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). By focusing on a “single phenomenon or entity (the case),” the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” may be uncovered, described, and analyzed (Merriam, 1998, p. 27).

Merriam (1998) indicated that, “qualitative case studies can be described as being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic” (p. 29). The case study is “particularistic,” focusing on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon, and is valuable because it can suggest to the reader what to do or not do in a similar situation, can examine a specific instance but illuminate a general problem and may or may not be limited by the author’s bias (Merriam, 1998, p. 30).

The case study is highly descriptive and the end product of a case study is a rich, “thick” description of the phenomenon under study. “Thick,” in this instance, is an anthropological term meaning a “complete, literal” description of the event being

described (Merriam, 1998, pp. 29-30). The case study is “descriptive” because it can illustrate the complexities of a situation and include the reality that not one but many factors contribute to it (Merriam, 1998, p. 30).

The case study has the advantage of hindsight—describing how the preceding years led to a situation—yet can be relevant in the present. The case study can show the influence of personalities and the passage of time on the issue—deadlines, change of superintendents and senior staff, cessation or addition of funding, for example, on the issue. A case study can obtain and use information from a wide variety of sources and can use descriptive material such as quotations, interviews, newspaper articles, and so on. Last, the case study can present information in a wide variety of ways and from the viewpoints of different groups, spelling out differences of opinion on the issue and suggest how these differences have influenced the result (Merriam, 1998).

In addition to having the strengths of being particularistic and descriptive, the case study is also heuristic, meaning that case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study. The case study is heuristic because it can explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened and why. The case study can explain why an innovation worked or failed to work, discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen and evaluate, summarize, and conclude, thus increasing its potential applicability (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 13).

This strategy for inquiry—the case study—also influences what questions will be asked, the form of data collection, the steps of data analysis and how meaning will be made in the final narrative (Creswell, 2009). Within this context, the researcher’s role is to “explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture and socioeconomic status that may shape interpretation” (Creswell, 2009, p. 177).

In terms of disciplinary orientation, the Aspiring Principals Program case study uses a historical orientation to describe how the program “evolved” over time (Merriam, 1998, p. 35). To fully apprehend the case of Dallas’ Aspiring Principals Program means “knowing the context of the event, the assumptions behind it and . . . the event’s impact on the institution or participants” (Merriam, 1998, p. 35).

This research is presented as a case study in order to first describe the thoughts and actions of the group of Dallas ISD senior leaders who developed and implemented the aspiring principals program. Second, to describe the learning experiences of the APP Fellows as they participated in the program to bring insight to best practices in principal preparation. Third, to focus on APP Fellows, who were sitting principals as well as teacher leaders at their campuses, and help to define the impact of Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principals Program. In this montage, the images of the Aspiring Principals Program were supplied by the senior leaders who envisioned and developed it, the aspiring—and current—principals who engaged with and participated in it and the teacher leaders who experienced these principals’ leadership at the campus.

Since one of the primary purposes of this study was to richly describe the creation, implementation, and impact of the Dallas ISD Aspiring Principals Program, the strategy of inquiry that was used was the case study. According to Creswell (2008), “a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection” (p. 476). The Aspiring Principals Program is “bounded” since it is a “case” that is “separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (Creswell, 2008, p. 476). The types of case studies that researchers study all apply to the Aspiring Principal Program.

First, the APP Fellows, both Cohorts 1 (2010-11) and 2 (2011-12) formed a collective group and distinctive group as both participated in a program, events, or activities. Second, the case represented a process consisting of a series of steps that formed a sequence of activities, including the identification, recruitment, selection, development, and support of the APP Fellows. Last, the Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principals Program was located within a larger geographical, political, social or economic context, such as the national principal shortage, especially critical in urban districts, the changing demands on public education and public educators, especially principals and the most effective ways to identify, select, train and support urban principals (Creswell, 2008).

### 3.3 Sample

In addition to analyzing archival documents to understand the APP case, three groups of people were surveyed and interviewed during this research process and each group illuminated different research questions. To address the first research question—

RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed?—a district senior leader completed a written questionnaire and was interviewed. Campus leaders, the three APP graduates and current principals, also completed written questionnaires and were interviewed to address the second research question—RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these? The senior leader also augmented understanding of the second research question. The third research question—RQ3: What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District—the voices of teacher leaders, three from each campus and all members of each principal’s Campus Instructional Leadership Team (CILT), were heard through questionnaires and interviews. The principals and the senior leader also discussed the third research question.

Table 3.1 Demographic Description of Senior Leader

Role Group	Race	Gender	Years in Education	Years in Senior Leadership Role—Dallas ISD
Senior Leader No. 1	AA	F	25	4

Of the three principals selected to participate in this research, all were elementary school principals. It is typical in Dallas ISD for a principal’s first assignment to be at the elementary level. At the time of the interviews, all three had served at least one full academic year in the principalship at the time of the interview.

Table 3.2 Demographic Description of Principal Leaders

Role Group	Race	Gender	School Demographics 2010-11	Years in Education	Years as an Assistant Principal	Years as a Principal
P1	AA	F	484 students 78% H 14% AA 7% W 91% ED (Economically Disadvantaged)	16	4	1
P2	H	M	913 students 98% H 94% ED	14	4	2
P3	AA	F	618 students 59% H 27% AA 10% W 2% Asian	16	3	1

Note. P = Principal.

Table 3.3 Demographic Description of Teacher Leaders

Role Group	Race	Gender	Years in Education	Years at This School
Teacher Leader 1	H	F	28	2
Teacher Leader 2	AA	F	15	1
Teacher Leader 3	H	F	15	5
Teacher Leader 4	H	F	12	6
Teacher Leader 5	H	F	16	6
Teacher Leader 6	AA	F	7	4
Teacher Leader 7	W	F	20	1
Teacher Leader 8	AA	F	5	1
Teacher Leader 9	H	M	6	1

### 3.4 Data Collection Process

For this case study, the research site was the campuses and central offices of Dallas Independent School District and data were “purposefully selected” (Creswell, 2009, p. 178) for collection and review.

To illuminate RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed?—the researcher examined the following documents:

- The National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) Audits for 2005-2009
- Team One Dallas data from 2005-2009
- Agendas and notes from the Aspiring Principal Task Group (APTG) meetings from January 2010 to June 2010
- Assessment Center materials from UT-CULP and APP
- Data on Principal Selection, 2010 to 2012

Additionally, a one-on-one, face-to-face interview with a Dallas ISD senior leader, also a member of the APTG, was conducted.

To explore RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these?—the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with three graduates of APP, cohort one, who were principals. The Dallas ISD senior leader also addressed this research question through a questionnaire and an interview. These three principals and the senior leader also had the opportunity to review the research and respond via a member check, a process that involves taking the

findings back to the participants in the study to afford them the opportunity to provide feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the description.(Creswell, 2009).

To augment understanding of RQ2, the following archival documents were used:

- NYCLA Summer Intensive and Residency Curriculum Materials
- NYCLA Facilitator-in-Residence Training Materials
- Personal Journal
- DLA Summer Intensive and Residency Curriculum Materials
- Mentor Principal Survey Results

RQ3—“What is the impact of Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principals Program?”—was addressed by conducting individual questionnaires and interviews with the senior leader and the campus principals. Additionally, a questionnaire and a group interview were conducted with three teacher leaders, all Campus Improvement Leadership Teams (CILT) members, from each of the three campuses. Archival documents regarding this question included the following:

- NCEA Benchmark Report, 2010
- Independent Evaluation of the Aspiring Principals Program, Cohort One
- Principal Selection Data

In summary, the three research questions were addressed in the following ways:



Table 3.4 Research Questions, Archival Materials, and Surveys/Interviews

Research Question	Archival Materials	Surveys and Interviews
RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCEA Audit and Benchmarks, 2005 to 2009</li> <li>• Team One Dallas Data 2005-2009</li> <li>• APTG Meeting Agendas and Meeting Notes</li> <li>• Assessment Center Materials</li> </ul>	Senior Leader
RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYCLA Curriculum and Training Materials</li> <li>• DLA Curriculum and Training Materials</li> <li>• Personal Journal</li> <li>• Mentor Principal Survey Results</li> </ul>	Senior Leader Principal Leaders
RQ3: What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCEA Benchmark Report 2010</li> <li>• APP Program Evaluation</li> <li>• Principal Selection Data</li> </ul>	Senior Leader Principal Leaders Teacher Leaders

### 3.5 Reliability and Validity

In a quantitative study, reliability means that “scores from an instrument are stable and consistent” and are “nearly the same when researchers administer the instrument multiple times” (Creswell, 2009, p. 169). By contrast, in a qualitative study, particularly in a case study, the “constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology” in which there are “multiple realities” and there is a “subjectivist epistemology” where “knower and respondent co-create understandings” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b, p. 35).

In other words, all of the respondents who were surveyed and interviewed saw Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program from a different perspective and their insights illuminated different aspects of the research.

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, findings were validated by using strategies such as member checking, which has been previously discussed, and triangulation. By triangulating different data sources, the findings were validated. For example, a district senior leader was interviewed relative to all three research questions. Three principals, graduates of APP, were interviewed regarding their experience of the program (RQ2) and these same principals, as well as nine teacher leaders, three at each principal's campus, were interviewed regarding the impact of the program (RQ3).

Additionally, different methods of data collection were used, including archival data, such as meeting notes, curricular materials and a personal journal, as well as an independent evaluation of the program. Following the data analysis, a member check was conducted in which the findings were shared with the senior leader and the three principals; feedback was requested and received.

Data were "triangulated" when evidence was corroborated by different individuals (in this case, senior leaders, principals, and teachers), types of data (written and oral interview responses), and methods of data collection (documents and interviews; Creswell, 2009, p. 266). Using the aforementioned strategies, the description of the development, philosophy and components, as well as the impact of Dallas ISD's aspiring principals program were both accurate and comprehensive.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Since a qualitative design was “emergent” (Merriam, 1998, p. 155), with collection and analysis occurring simultaneously, the research began with documents (APTG meeting agendas and notes, curriculum materials, assessment center materials, the evaluation) and proceeded to interviews. The researcher followed the traditional process of qualitative data analysis which entailed collecting the data, preparing the data for analysis, reading through the data, and coding the data. This process is an iterative one and moves back and forth between collection and analysis. Since this case study could be considered an “educational ethnography” (Merriam, 1998, p. 157), the category themes came from both the data itself and the educational culture. This culture, or community of practice, became clear during the literature review where some initial themes emerged.

The primary data sets were the meeting agendas and notes from the 14 Aspiring Principal Task Group sessions, the curriculum materials, the 13 interviews—of three APP graduates, at the time, principals, the three teacher leaders from each of their three campuses, and the senior leader—and the independent evaluation of the Aspiring Principals Program. The researcher began with the documents relating to the group charged with designing and implementing a process for building the principal pipeline in Dallas ISD, the Aspiring Principals Task Group. These documents were used to address RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed?

By analyzing meeting agendas and meeting notes from the 14 APTG meetings between January and June 2010, as well as ancillary documents from the task group, and the interview of the senior leader, 17 themes were identified. The initial 17 themes were identified following the initial analysis of the 14 sets of meeting agendas and notes from the Aspiring Principals Task Group, and these themes influenced the formulation of the interview questions. Of course, the literature review was the genesis for initial themes regarding best practices in current principal preparation which emerged as themes, such as the sharp focus on equity and excellence and the importance of both instructional and transformational leadership. These initial 17 themes were as follows:

1. Importance of Program
2. Standards-based/Competencies
3. New York City Leadership Academy
4. Selection Process (for Program)
5. Training—Authentic and Rigorous
6. Training—Problem-based
7. Training—Team-based
8. Reflective Learning
9. Equity Mindset
10. Relationship Skills
11. Learning Organization
12. Capacity-building
13. Mentoring
14. Support for New Principals
15. Dedicated Staff
16. Selection for Principalship
17. Impact of Program

These themes informed the interview questions for the three principals and the nine teacher leaders with regard to RQ2 and RQ3: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these? and What has

been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?

.After the 13 interviews were completed and transcribed, a cursory review of this data suggested a revision of the themes and seven more were added for a total of

These were as follows:

1. Importance of Program
2. Standards-based/Competencies
3. New York City Leadership Academy
4. Selection Process (for Program)
5. Training—Authentic
6. Training--Rigorous
7. Training—Role-Play
8. Training—Hands-On
9. Training—Problem-based
10. Training—Team-based
11. Training—Reflective
12. Training—Cohort
13. Network
14. Equity Mindset
15. Excellence
16. Leadership
17. Relationship Skills
18. Learning Organization
19. Capacity-building
20. Mentoring
21. Support for New Principals
22. Dedicated Staff
23. Selection for Principalship
24. Impact of Program

In addition to the interviews with the senior leader, principals, and teacher leaders, an independent evaluation of the aspiring principals program was conducted by a researcher from Dallas ISD's evaluation and accountability department. The evaluation took place over the 14 months of the aspiring principals program from June

2010 to July 2011 and involved observations at school sites and interviews with 17 APP Fellows and 13 APP mentor principals. In addition, the DISD researcher conducted debriefing sessions with the group of APP Fellows following 11 classroom sessions and two debriefing sessions with the mentor principals.

At this point, a comprehensive data analysis of the three primary data sets—the APTG meeting agendas and notes, the interviews and the evaluation—was conducted using the qualitative data analysis software program NVIVO. The themes ultimately organized in this way:

### 3.7 Management and Ethical Considerations

Using the standard documents provided by the Institutional Review Boards of both the University of Texas at Arlington and the Dallas Independent School District, the researcher informed participants that their responses would be used in the dissertation and explained how their confidentiality would be protected. Sample documents are included in the appendix.

Table 3.5 Research Questions and Related Themes

Research Question	Themes
1. Why was Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principals Program created?	Importance of Program Equity Excellence Standards-based Competencies New York City Leadership Academy Dedicated Staff Facilitation Selection Process Summer Intensive and Residency Mentor Principals
2. What is the philosophy and what are the components of the Dallas ISD aspiring principals program?	New York City Leadership Academy Summer Intensive Residency Standards-based Competencies Mentoring Authentic and Experiential Rigorous Problem-Based Team-Based Reflective Cohort-Based Facilitation
3. What is the impact of Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principals Program?	Equity Excellence Leadership Network Professional Learning Selection into Principalship

### 3.8 Researcher’s Role

The researcher, a Dallas ISD principal from 2003 to 2010, served as a member of the Aspiring Principals Task Group from January to May 2010 during a doctoral internship. She facilitated the APP Summer Intensive in 2010 and became Director of the Dallas Leadership Academy in August 2010 where she served until June 2012.

The relationship between the observer and the observed has been described as occupying four basic “stances” (Merriam, 1998, p. 100). These are as follows:

1. Complete participant: The researcher is a part of the group being studied and her/his identity is concealed from the other group members.
2. Participant as observer: The researcher’s role as a participant is weighted more heavily than her/his role as a researcher. The researcher’s observational activities are known to the group.
3. Observer as participant: The researcher’s observation activities are known to the group and information-gathering activities are primary. The researcher interacts “closely enough with members to establish an insider’s identity without participating in the activities constituting the core of group membership.
4. Complete observer: The researcher is either hidden from the group or is in a completely public setting, thus the observation is not apparent to those being observed. (Merriam, 1998, p. 100-101)

In the case of the Aspiring Principals Program research, when the researcher was a member of the Aspiring Principals Task Group (APTG), she functioned in the complete participant role as a task force member with no research being conducted. Approximately half-way through participation in the APTG, the observer/researcher role became a factor when this dissertation topic was selected. While facilitating the first summer intensive in June 2010 and then serving as the Director of the Dallas Leadership Academy (DAL), the researcher shifted more significantly to the participant as observer role. The researcher functioned as facilitator and leader of the program; however, the participants, both members of the DLA team and APP Fellows, knew that research on the program was being conducted. Finally, during the interviews with the senior leader, principals, and teachers, the researcher’s role shifted to observer as participant, with the information-gathering activities taking a primary focus.



### 3.9 Summary

The case study seemed the most appropriate research design to answer the three research questions: “Why was Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principals Program created?” “What is its philosophy and what are its components?” and “What has been its impact?” In order to investigate the phenomenon of Dallas ISD’s APP, the case study promised a “rich and holistic account” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41) by utilizing archival documents and interviews with people who had experienced the APP in unique ways being situated at different positions within the larger system.

The historical orientation of this case study has provided the reader with more than a chronology of the Aspiring Principals Program as it has described the impact of the program both on the participants as well as on the larger system. Last, Merriam (1998) noted that case study is an “appealing design for applied fields of study such as education” and one hopes that this case study might achieve the goal of being used to both “improve practice” and “inform policy” (p. 41)

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT OF THE DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ASPIRING PRINCIPALS PROGRAM

In this chapter, the researcher reconstructs and illuminates the creation, implementation and impact of the Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program through an exploration and analysis of documents and interviews. The three research questions are explored, which are as follows: RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed? RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these? RQ3: What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?

The first research question—Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed? is discussed through a review of 14 sets of agendas and meeting notes, as well as supporting data and documents from the Aspiring Principals Task Group (APTG). The APTG was a group of eight senior Dallas ISD leaders who met bi-weekly from January to June 2010 to plan the implementation of the Aspiring Principals Program. In addition to these archival documents, interviews were conducted with one senior Dallas ISD leader, a key member of the APTG who was also closely involved with the implementation of the Aspiring Principals Program. This

senior leader is referred to as Senior Leader No. 1. Additional members of the APTG who are cited from the APTG meeting notes are referred to as Senior Leaders No. 2 through No. 8.

Since candidate selection into Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program was one of the critical issues that the APTG considered, documents from the University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project (UT-CULP) March 2010 assessment center, on which the APTG subsequently relied, were examined. Documentation from the APTG-led May 2010 assessment center assessment center--through which the first Cohort of APP was selected—was also analyzed.

To answer the second question—What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these?—the researcher examined the training and curriculum documents from the New York City Leadership Academy, Dallas ISD's partner organization in developing the APP, and the Dallas Leadership Academy's curriculum materials. These curriculum materials include the summer intensive and the residency components of APP, as well as training materials used in the mentor principal training. Written evaluations completed by mentor principals at the conclusion of their training are also included. In addition to these curriculum materials, training materials from the NYCLA's facilitator-in-residence program, which the DLA team attended, have been used, and personal journal entries written during the training and consultations with NYCLA have also been included.

The third research question—What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?—is addressed in three ways.

First, to address the issue of program effectiveness, two evaluation documents, one external and one internal, are also included. The National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) 2010 Progress Report includes several comments on the Aspiring Principals Program. A more comprehensive evaluation, conducted by Dallas ISD’s Evaluation and Accountability Department, has also been included. This program evaluation, conducted between June 2010 and June 2011, involved written surveys, as well as numerous focus groups with both APP participants and mentor principals, and individual campus visits, observations, and interviews.

Second, to address the issue of the impact of the Aspiring Principals Program on those most closely involved, written questionnaires and live interviews were conducted with three graduates of the Aspiring Principals Program, who are now principals in Dallas ISD. Three teacher leaders from each of their campuses were also interviewed. Additionally, to address this question, a written questionnaire as well as an interview was conducted with a senior Dallas ISD leader.

Finally, as another measure of program effectiveness, current data on the number of APP Fellows selected for the principalship—one of the program’s key goals—is reported.

#### 4.1 Research Question One

*RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed?*

In the Dallas Independent School District, the Aspiring Principal Task Group (APTG) began meeting in January of 2010 to assess the needs of the Dallas Independent School District with regard to principal preparation and to generate plans for developing an internal principal pipeline. The district's previous program for preparing principal candidates, the 4-year old Team One Dallas, had been suspended for the 2009-2010 school year due to concerns about the effectiveness of the program, specifically that insufficient numbers of program participants were being selected as principals. In an interview on this topic, Senior Leader No. 1 noted that,

While Team One Dallas had yielded some great principals, it seemed to have reached the saturation point and was not attracting or admitting the most effective people for the job. It became apparent that the program needed to be revamped if it was going to indeed prepare prospective principals for the challenges and opportunities with which they would be faced in the principalship.

In 2005, then Superintendent Michael Hinojosa's first full year as Dallas ISD superintendent, the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) conducted, at district request, a curriculum audit to examine core practices. The NCEA audit process consisted of interviews and focus groups conducted with key district staff members, learning community senior executive directors, principals and teachers, as well as a review of pertinent documents submitted by the district. The NCEA's initial set of findings were presented to the Board of Trustees in December 2005.

Seventeen recommendations in five core practices were made with ratings from 1 to 4 (the highest) for each area. These five core practices involved Student Learning, Leadership and Capacity Building, Instructional Tools, Use of Data, and Instructional

Intervention and Adjustment. One area of focus concerned the Dallas ISD's practices regarding "Staff Selection, Leadership and Capacity Building," specifically, the ability of the district "to develop internal principal candidates to maintain program consistency" (NCEA Core Practices Audit, 2005).

In the follow-up 2006 progress report, the auditors gave Dallas ISD a score of 3 ("activities taking shape; likely to lead to high-functioning system as described") and noted that two of the prescribed action steps had occurred. Team One Dallas had completed training with the first cadre and the second cadre was being developed. Findings in 2006, relative to the district's ability to develop internal principal candidates, included the fact that 19 of the 36 members of the first cadre had received promotions to associate principal or principal. Additionally, the "sponsorship" aspect of Team One Dallas allowed current leaders to identify potential leaders in their schools or areas. Last, content has "reportedly shifted . . . to include greater emphasis specifically on Dallas ISD initiatives" in an effort to be responsive to specific Dallas ISD needs.

In the 2007 progress report, Dallas ISD again scored a "3" on this component with progress being noted. At the time of the 2007 report, eight of 31 Team One participants in the second cadre had received principal positions. However, in the 2008 report, the district regressed to a score of "2" with the auditors noting that "Team One Dallas continues to show mixed effectiveness at placing graduates in district principal positions." At the time of the report, only two of the 39 members of cadre three had been selected for a principal position.

Dallas ISD again received a “2” rating in October of 2009 with regard to its ability to develop internal principal candidates; Team One Dallas was suspended at the end of 2009 as the fourth cadre completed the program. In their report, the NCEA auditors noted that, “Team One Dallas showed very mixed effectiveness at placing program graduates in principal positions within the district.” The report states that “based on these results, district leaders decided to suspend the program for at least a year,” and one Dallas administrator explained that “the RFP process was actually more rigorous than Team One Dallas in terms of identifying and selecting the best new principal applicants.” The NCEA team commended district leadership for “recognizing that the program was not meeting its stated objective and making the decision to change course.”

Table 4.1 Statistics on the Four Cadres of Team One Dallas

Team One Dallas	Participants	Participants Receiving Principal Assignments (As of June 2008)	Percentage of Participants in Principal Assignments
Cadre One 2005-2006	36	19	52%
Cadre Two 2006-2007	31	8	26%
Cadre Three 2007-2008	39	2	5%
Cadre Four 2008-2009	24	*5 (*As of August 2009 when Team One was suspended)	21%

*Note.* Flores, 2008 .

#### *4.1.1 The Aspiring Principals Task Group Forms*

With the charge to design an effective system for developing internal candidates for the principalship, the Aspiring Principals Task Group (APTG) began meeting in January 2010. The APTG included senior leaders from the school leadership division and the professional development department. The group met 14 times, approximately every other week, between January and May 2010, including a trip to New York City to visit the New York City Leadership Academy. Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program was launched in early June 2010 with a 21 member Cohort.

Among the topics that the APTG considered during the 6 months of meetings were as follows:

- Principal Preparation Programs: A National Perspective
- Principal Competencies/Leadership Standards
- Candidate Selection Process
- Program Structure: Summer Intensive and Residency
- Need for Dedicated Staff with Effective Content and Facilitation Skills

#### *4.1.2 Principal Preparation Programs: A National Perspective*

To begin, the APTG looked at programs across the state—Austin and Houston ISDs—and the nation—Boston and New York City, visiting an NYCLA session in early March. Senior Leader No. 1 stated the following:

I think that any time you're developing a program that has this level of importance it is incumbent upon you to look beyond what's in front of you...I knew about the New York City Leadership Academy from previous experience...I knew about the great work that was going on there. I knew that



their philosophy of academically rigorous teaching and learning and instructional leadership was aligned with our thinking in the district... There were just some things about that program that I knew would work for us and so I thought it was important to explore that. But we also looked at other programs. We looked at the work that was being done in Houston and the work that was being done in Austin. However, after our visit to New York City, it became crystal clear that NYCLA was the model that we wanted to work off of. They were the people that we wanted to partner with to help us develop our own program.

#### *4.1.3 Principal Competencies/Leadership Standards*

One of the striking elements of the NYCLA is the degree to which all learning maps to the performance standards and leadership performance standards were one of the first issues that the APTG considered. New York's performance matrix for aspiring principals was based on the Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards; Dallas ISD's principal competencies were based on the Texas principal standards, with some adaptations. The Dallas ISD had revised the principal evaluation prior to the 2009-10 school year and the new evaluation, with a stronger focus on instructional leadership, reflecting the influence of Dallas' partnership with the Institute for Learning. The new principal evaluation had six areas of performance: (a) Setting High Priority Goals for Professional Growth and Continuous Improvement, (b) Leading Learning, (c) Building Capacity, (d) Monitoring Teaching and Learning, (e) Developing Systems to Support High Standards of Student Achievement and Managing Operations and (f) Resources to Support Teaching and Learning.

The initial set of standards, as developed by the APTG, reflected some of the older leadership competencies with a focus on management and operations:

1. Instructional Leadership
2. Management Leadership
3. Functional/Technical Skills
4. Managing and Measuring Work
5. Interpersonal Skills
6. Personal Skills
7. Personnel Management
8. Student Guidance
9. Public Relations/Involvement
10. Climate

Ultimately, however, the performance standards adopted by the APTG for Dallas ISD’s aspiring principals program aligned closely with the New York City Leadership Academy’s performance standards. The essential components of are as follows:

Table 4.2 New York City Leadership Academy Leadership Performance Standards

Standard	Content
1	Personal Behavior
2	Resilience
3	Communication
4	Focus on Student Performance
5	Situational Problem-Solving
6	Learning
7	Accountability for Professional Practice
8	Supervision of Instructional and Non-Instructional Staff
9	Leadership Development
10	Climate and Culture
11	Time, Task & Project Management
12	Technology

*Note.* New York City Leadership Academy, 2007.

At the March 10, 2010 APTG meeting, Senior Leader No. 1 stated that a “big rock” would be determining how to use a set of performance standards effectively and reflected that NYCLA “uses the performance standards in debriefing and dialogue with the participants” about their performance and future growth areas. In a subsequent interview, Senior Leader No. 1 stated that,

A major component of the New York City Leadership Academy program that resonated with me was the emphasis on self-reflection against a set of standards. Here’s our best thinking, based on research, around what constitutes effective leadership and where am I on those standards? If I, as an aspiring principal, were to assess my work, where would I fall and based on that what would I need to do to improve in those areas?

#### *4.1.4 Candidate Selection Process*

Another issue that the APTG addressed early on was that of candidate selection into the program. This had been an issue for Team One Dallas and was reflected in the low numbers of graduates who were selected for the principalship. Senior Leader No. 1 noted several concerns with Team One Dallas. The first was that to be a part of Team One “there was not a sufficiently rigorous selection process and so it was rather more a matter of if you’re interested in being a part of this then you can participate.” Additionally, Team One Dallas did not require an interest in or commitment to being a campus principal and this also impacted the numbers of participants who were selected for the principalship.

APTG members looked closely at how the New York City Leadership Academy conducted their selection of candidates for the program and one APTG member reported that she had attended an information session with about 50 potential candidates

and noted that those who were interested applied for the NYCLA's aspiring principals program on-line. On-line applicants submitted a written application and an essay that were screened by NYCLA staff members. Candidates who made it through the pre-screening were selected for a group interview, and, ultimately, an individual interview (APTG, 2010, March 10. Meeting. Senior Leader No. 3).

In addition to exploring the NYCLA selection process, the APTG borrowed some components from the University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project (UT-CULP), which had just entered into a contract with Dallas ISD to identify and train teacher leaders to lead secondary campuses, granting them a Master of Education degree and principal certification. In order to gather information that might be applicable, four members of the APTG observed or participated in the UT-CULP March 2010 assessment center which was comprised of the following three 30-minute activities:

- Interview with supporting leadership artifact
- Learning observation
- Leadership presentation

The interview and leadership artifact portion of the assessment center was “designed to uncover information about the candidate related to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards and these standards were referenced by each of the six questions in the interview. The questions, and the relevant standard, are as follows:

1. Tell us why you are interested in becoming a secondary principal in Dallas ISD (Standards 1-6)

2. Dallas ISD has made the following commitment: *We believe that educational equity and excellence will eliminate the achievement gap.* What does this Dallas ISD commitment mean to you? How do you enact this commitment in your own practice?
3. Describe for us your leadership experiences. Include an explanation of the artifact you brought and how this artifact represents a specific, tangible contribution to student achievement or capacity building at the campus or district level (Standard 2)
4. Envision an ideal secondary school. Tell us three characteristics that would be evident in that setting (Standards 1-6)
5. What are some structures or strategies that would need to be in place for these ideal characteristics to evolve? (Standard 2)
6. You are the new principal of a school where there are significant student achievement gaps. In your first few weeks on campus, you notice that the teachers are working in complete isolation and that there is no collaboration occurring. Given that collaboration among teachers is supported by research to increase student achievement, describe for us the process you would use to address this (Standard 2, 3, 5).  
(UT-CULP Assessment Center Training, 2010)

The second component of the UT-CULP assessment center was the leadership presentation. Candidates had previously (about 2 weeks in advance of the assessment center) received state performance data and district parent/teacher survey results for an anonymous school and the following instructions:

You have recently been appointed as the principal of Anywhere (Middle or High) School located in Dallas ISD and have received the attached Anywhere School data set. As the incoming principal, you will have 10 minutes to make a presentation to district leaders outlining what you noticed in the data and your approach for the first 10, 30 and 90 days. Following your presentation, the assessment team will provide an opportunity to engage in further dialogue about your ideas and processes.

If not addressed during the presentation, these questions were asked:

1. What did you notice when you first saw the data?
2. What are your thoughts about the root causes of the achievement gaps in the data?
3. Describe the processes you would use to address the achievement gaps.

4. If you had the opportunity to speak to the superintendent, what would be the top three things you would want to discuss?

The leadership presentation was evaluated by the team utilizing a rubric that included indicators addressing such items as presentation skills, awareness of social justice issues, and root causes of the achievement gap, the extent to which the candidate appeared to be a collaborative and/or transformative leader and the candidate's ability to develop trust and buy-in with stakeholders as seen in the 30-60-90 day plans(UT-CULP Assessment Center Training, 2010).

The third component of the UT-CULP assessment center was the learning observation in which candidates had 10 minutes to view a video clip of a classroom observation and 20 minutes to respond to questions and role-play a conversation with the teacher. The questions were as follows:

1. What did you notice about the lesson?
2. What else would you like to know about what you have observed?
3. Assume that I am the teacher. Role-play the conversation you would have with me following your observation.
4. What might be your next steps?
5. Reflect on your performance in the role of an observer giving feedback in this activity.

This component addresses standards two and three, and the rubric included such items as the candidate's ability to identify strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, deep understanding of learning objectives, ability to engage in reflection about his/her approach.

During the UT-CULP assessment center, for each of the three activities, each candidate was evaluated by three pairs of assessors, one for each activity, with each pair

consisting of one member from UT and one from Dallas ISD. After each candidate participated in all three activities, the assessment team, consisting of the three pairs of assessors, met to discuss their assigned candidates to aggregate the evaluation scores and to make selection recommendations. For the March 2010 assessment center, there were three assessment teams, each led by a UT faculty member (UT-CULP Assessment Center Training).

At the March 10, 2010 APTG meeting, the proposed components for the APP assessment center were an essay, an in-basket activity, and a powerpoint—to be developed by the candidates on-site—and a presentation. Influenced by the March 27, 2010 UT-CULP assessment center, APTG members at the March 31, 2010 meeting decided to drop the in-basket activity and add the teacher observation and the interview with a leadership artifact. The four components for the finalized May 2010 APP assessment center were an interview, a teacher observation, an essay written on-site, and powerpoint presentation. Unlike the UT-CULP data presentation for which participants received the data two weeks in advance and were able to create a Powerpoint prior to the assessment center, participants at the May 2010 APP assessment center created the Powerpoint on-site based on data provided at the time of the assessment activity.

In addition to differences with the UT-CULP assessment center, Dallas proceeded in a different way than New York as well. Like NYCLA and UT-CULP, the Dallas process involved pre-screening of candidates based on the strength of the application, which included an essay. The NYCLA selection process, though, also

involved group and individual interviews on selected topics. One issue of keen interest in the APTG discussions around this issue was the rigor of the selection process versus the need to dismiss candidates during the program. Following the APP 2010 assessment center, Senior Leader No. 2 communicated that though NYCLA “initially accepted most candidates” Dallas would not and “projected that dismissals with Dallas ISD would not occur due to the rigorous selection process.” Senior Leader No. 1 stated that “it was well worth investing in a rigorous selection process up front instead of vetting candidates later during the program.”

Members of the New York City Leadership Academy also addressed this issue with Dallas Leadership Academy team members at the May 2010 facilitator mini-training, sharing that aspiring principal programs must have a “gate” either at the entrance or as a defined dismissal process (Parvin, May 2010, Personal Journal). The NYCLA team member elaborated that there can be a strong gate at the entrance, in terms of a rigorous selection process, or there can be a flexible entrance gate with a rigorous and responsive dismissal process. She stated that in the first year of a program having a strong entrance gate is probably preferable since the dismissal process requires additional attention from the facilitators (Parvin, May 2010, Personal Journal)

Applications for Cohort one of the Dallas aspiring principals program, which included leadership artifacts and letters of recommendation, were pre-screened and 23 of 29 applicants were selected to participate in the May 2010 APP assessment center. Of these 23, 17 were African-American, 4 were Hispanic, 1 was Asian, and 1 was Anglo.



In addition to the content differences between the UT-CULP assessment center and Dallas', the on-site development of the data powerpoint and the on-demand essay, there were several structural differences as well. The primary difference involved the recommendations of candidates. In the UT-CULP process, following scoring, each assessment team—consisting of the three pairs of assessors—met on the day of the assessment center to discuss, evaluate, and make recommendations for all of the candidates they had evaluated. With the 2010 APP assessment center, as each pair completed the evaluation of a candidate, the scoring documents were picked up and taken to a central location for tabulating. The two APTG members (Senior Leaders No. 6 and No. 8) who were primarily responsible for putting together and running the assessment center were also primarily responsible for compiling the scores for all APP candidates who participated in the assessment center (APTG. Assessment Center Materials. May 2010).

At the May 26, 2010 APTG meeting, following the May 15 2010 APP assessment center, 14 names were put forth for selection into Cohort one of the aspiring principals program. These included 11 African-Americans, 2 Hispanics, and 1 Anglo. One APTG member (Senior Leader No. 1) expressed concern that even though a “multicultural group” had been recruited, the final group was not as diverse. Senior Leader No. 8 said that, “APTG made a good faith effort to recruit diverse candidates and that the program selected the strongest candidates.” Senior Leader No. 8 then stated that she thought it was important to speak to SEDs (Senior Executive Directors,

Dallas ISD’s principal supervisors) about the need to work with principals to identify more teachers on campus for leadership development opportunities.

To address the immediate issue, Senior Leader No. 1 stated that additional funds could be used to support inclusion of three to five bilingual teacher leaders with administrative certification in order “to ensure that the group was more diverse.” Six bilingual teacher leaders were selected for inclusion into this first cohort, which ultimately was comprised of 11 African-Americans, 5 Hispanics, and 4 Anglos. Seven of the 20 Cohort 1 members were male. One member of the first cohort, an African American male, became a principal after the second week of the summer intensive and a new member of the cohort, an African-American female, joined in September 2010.

Several changes were made for the 2011 APP assessment center. The pre-screening components, involving a leadership portfolio, written responses to questions and letters of recommendation, remained in place. In 2011, 163 people (up from 29 applicants in 2010) submitted applications to be members of APP Cohort 2 and Cohort 50 were selected to participate in the assessment center. For the 2011 assessment center, the requirement that the powerpoint be created on-site was eliminated. The powerpoint presentation—prepared in advance—and the interview remained part of the assessment center, as did the written essay and the teacher observation. In 2011, an in-basket activity was added and a group problem-solving activity involving data was included for the first time.

The group problem-solving activity put candidates in the role of feeder principals who were to analyze and discuss data from schools in their feeder. Six to

eight candidates at a time participated in the group problem-solving activity while assessors rated them against eight performance standards, including personal behavior, resilience, communication, focus on student performance, situational problem-solving, learning, supervision of staff and climate and culture (of the 50 candidates who participated in the 2011 assessment center, 23 were selected for Cohort 2.

Demographics for Cohort 2 were 12 African-American members, 9 Hispanic, and 2 Anglo members; 7 were male and 16 were female. The program for Cohort 2 began in June 2011.

#### *4.1.5 Program Structure: Summer Intensive and Residency*

For Cohort 1, the APTG still needed a curriculum and facilitators for the summer intensive, scheduled to begin the first week in June 2010, having defined the leadership performance standards, conducted the assessment center and selected the members of the APP. In early May of 2010, the Dallas ISD contracted with the NYCLA for assistance with the following:

- Summer Intensive Curriculum
  - School Scenario Challenge
  - School Scenario Data—Dallas specific
  - School Scenario Teacher Profiles
  - School Scenario Teacher Videos
- Facilitator Training (a 2-day training in May and a 4-day facilitator-in-residence training in July)
- Mentor Principal Training

Structurally, the NYCLA's aspiring principals program is a 14-month program that includes a 6-week summer intensive, the residency—an internship and classroom

sessions during the school year—and the planning summer. The Dallas version was also a 14-month program with the same components; however, the Dallas aspiring principals’ program summer intensive was 3 weeks rather than 6 weeks. An essential feature of both summer intensives is the experiential nature of the learning which is built around a scenario school. Dallas’ summer intensive was structured around three strands of learning with regard to the simulated school: getting to know the school; getting to know the people; and establishing vision, mission, and goals. The leadership performance standards to be intensively developed during the summer were personal behavior, communication, focus on student performance, and situational problem-solving (APTG. May 28, 2010, Meeting with NYCLA).

#### *4.1.6 Need for Dedicated Staff with Effective Content and Facilitation*

The facilitator is key in “orchestrating” the learning around the simulated school where the authentic work of the principalship “comes to life” (New York City Leadership Academy, 2009). Though there is some direct teaching, much of the facilitator’s function is to assess the participants’ work against the performance standards, to push participants out of their comfort zones as they “experiment with strategically addressing complex leadership challenges,” and to provide coaching to individuals and groups, guide leadership development for individuals and groups and keep the schedule moving forward (New York City Leadership Academy, 2009).

Given the robust nature of the facilitator’s work within this construct of authentic learning, a key point that emerged from the APTG meetings was the need for a facilitator with the appropriate skillset to move the work of the aspiring principals

program forward. Having seen the New York City Leadership Academy facilitators in action during the March 2010 visit, APTG members identified this as a critical skillset for program staff:

Another lesson learned from the NYCLA that I think really helped us with our program was to make sure that we had dedicated staff whose sole responsibility was to develop and lead the program. It's real easy to just tack this work on to somebody else's list of responsibilities, to tack this work on as another thing that you have to do as part of your job. And it would never, in my opinion, have had the success it has had in this short period of time without dedicated staff. The NYCLA senior staff cautioned us not to simply add on to someone's responsibilities because the program would suffer if we chose that route. That was part of the problem with Team One Dallas, it was just one other peg on a person's roles and responsibilities and in that instance, not the most important one. (Senior Leader No. 1)

At the April 28, 2010 meeting in Dallas, members of the NYCLA suggested spending two days on intense facilitator training with the DLA staff who would be leading the summer intensive. They suggested that these facilitators could visit New York and receive in developing and refining their facilitation skills. Two members of the team attended a 2-day training session in late May 2010 to prepare for the upcoming summer intensive beginning in June 2010.

The most significant part of the 2-day training involved preparing the DLA team members to facilitate for the constructivist, experiential learning that occurs in the "safe, yet rigorous context" of the school scenario (New York City Leadership Academy, 2009). The simulated school, the core of the summer intensive, causes the participants to learn and "build muscle memory" for problem-solving as they anticipate stepping into the principalship (Parvin, J., May 2010, Personal Journal). In this setting of

experiential learning, the facilitator maintains a “neutral stance” in order to ensure that “the learners, not the teachers, own the work” (Parvin, J., May 2010, Personal Journal). Upon returning from New York, it was time for the DLA team to begin the summer intensive with 21 aspiring principals.

#### 4.2 Research Question Two

*RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these?*

The current philosophy and components of effective principal preparation programs have been discussed in chapter 2 and these include a clear definition and description of effective principal leadership based on performance standards, recruitment into the program of individuals who are—or who have the potential to be—strong instructional and transformational leaders, a rigorous selection process into the program, authentic, experiential, team-based learning mapped to the standards, strong mentoring, support as participants seek principal positions and in their first year(s) of the principalship. Beginning with a comprehensive description of Dallas ISD’s Aspiring Principals Program summer intensive and followed by a description of the residency, this section addresses the ways in which Dallas’ APP embodies best practices of principal preparation.

##### *4.2.1 Aspiring Principals Program: The Summer Intensive*

The school scenario is the linchpin for the summer intensive and much of the learning during the summer intensive is generated from the simulated school which is

“comprehensive in scope” and includes written documents (master schedule, floor plan, budget, student performance data); video (classroom teaching); artifacts (samples of student work, teacher files); and involves role-play (a supervisor coming to visit, an angry parent demanding a meeting, a teacher protesting an unsatisfactory appraisal) (New York City Leadership Academy, 2009)

Prior to beginning the summer intensive, the Fellows were grouped into approximately six-member teams. These teams, diverse in terms of background and experience, remained intact throughout the summer and functioned as the principal of the simulated school. In Dallas, the simulated school was Change Middle School. The Dallas APP summer intensive was organized into three weekly themes: Getting to Know the School, Getting to Know the People, and Moving into Action with Vision, Mission and Goals (Dallas Leadership Academy. June 2010, Summer Intensive Curriculum Documents).

On the first day, the Fellows received a binder containing information about the school—student performance data, budget and operational information, such as master schedules and floor plans, teacher data and profiles, as well as the school challenge which provides historical and contemporary context of the school—that a principal would have access to as the new leader of a school. Though the data provided is extremely comprehensive, some of it is incorrect and/or incomplete; this is intended to replicate the ways in which principals typically receive information about their schools, in waves, with partial and sometimes contradictory, data.

The first assignment was to explore the school scenario binder and to answer some questions about the school:

- What ideas and values govern this school?
- What other information would you need to confirm some of the ideas and beliefs you have begun to identify about the school?
- What information is most critical about the school? Why?

In addition, the Fellows, in anticipation of meeting some members of the school staff, began to generate questions for them.

During the Meet-the-School-Staff activity, the Fellows asked questions and engaged in dialogue with, several members of the staff of the scenario school. The de-brief of the activity provided the opportunity for a discussion about strategies for obtaining data about a school. Facilitators asked questions, such as the following, to generate a discussion about the strategies the Fellows used to gain information from the school staff:

- What kinds of questions gave you the most information?
- What types of questions did you ask?
- Did your questions raise additional questions?
- Did they challenge or confirm your initial ideas about the school?
- How do you interpret the information you have received about the school? What does this information mean to you?
- How many of you took notes during this activity? If not, what was your strategy for capturing information?



The Meet-the-School-Staff activity provided Fellows with the chance to talk with their school staff who presented as typical, though not stereotypical, members of a school community: the union representative, the confident new teacher, the effective, but non-collaborative veteran, the long-time school secretary, etc.

This activity laid the foundation for the mental models/low inference data frame that provides a vital perspective on the learning and leading work throughout the summer intensive, into the residency and beyond. Working with mental models, previously discussed in chapter 2, involves “surfacing deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations or images in order to engage in continuous learning” (Senge, 1990, p. 12). Fellows were challenged continually during the summer to focus on low-inference data—what one actually sees and hears—as opposed to high-inference data—data to which one has added judgments or assumptions.

The Fellows used the skill of capturing low-inference data during the teacher observations that they conducted during the summer intensive. Video recordings of classroom teaching, some satisfactory and some not, were observed by the Fellows who analyzed classroom instruction and classroom management, identified the lesson’s purpose and alignment to standards, identified strengths and weaknesses of the lesson and made recommendations for growth. The Fellows’ written analyses and recommendations were also assessed for written communication competency.

Another activity that anchored the first week was the activity known as the “Angry Parent Scenario.” The in-basket activity is a simulation in which each APP Fellow was given a finite time period (2 hours) to individually address a variety of

in-basket items—emails, parent concerns, operational tasks, etc.—and to conduct a classroom observation (via a video recording). There are also several interruptions—an unscheduled fire drill and an angry parent—that afford the Fellow the opportunity to experience a typical day-in-the-life of a campus principal.

As they addressed their in-basket items, the Fellows were unaware that they were going to be called upon to meet with an angry parent, to de-fuse the situation and to assist the parent in solving the problem. After dealing with their angry parent and returning to the classroom, the Fellows were asked not to share with their classmates who had not yet met with their parent, so that the simulation could remain realistic. The angry parent scenarios are designed to provide robust learning with intense situations involving such topics as the school's failure to appropriately deal with parent custody issues, a teacher who is behaving in a sexually provocative manner and a teacher who the parent believes does not like her child. The discussion following this activity caused the Fellows to reflect both on the time/task management aspect of this activity, as well as the mental models they might have uncovered as a result of the emotionally-charged interaction with the angry parent.

A consistent thread during the DLA's 3-week summer intensive were activities designed to build the capacity of both individuals and teams for self-reflection and effective action. Three activities—Core Values, Journey Lines and Teachable Point of View—were adapted from the work of Noel Tichy, business teacher and writer.

A side note here is the discussion that the Aspiring Principals Task Group had regarding the New York City Leadership Academy's perspective on leadership

development. At one time, the NYCLA had focused on generic leadership skill development—and utilized more business-oriented approaches, such as Tichy’s—however, recently the NYCLA had begun to focus more on leadership skills that were specific to education. As of the summer of 2011, the TPOV remained a vital part of the NYCLA’s, the DLA’s, aspiring principals program. At the April 21, 2010 APTG meeting, senior leaders had discussed the merits of an executive leadership versus an instructional leadership focus:

Senior Leader No. 1 wondered about the balance between having an instructional focus versus an executive business focus and referenced the work of Noel Tichy. She observed that the current leadership of NYCLA focused more on instruction. She wondered what percentage would be best in balancing the instructional and management focus and said that Tichy suggested that first year principals needed more of a management than an instructional focus. He said that aspiring principals needed a 50/50 balance. Senior Leader No. 8 recommended that first year principals initially focus on management then gradually focus on instruction. She said that basic management areas like budget and maintenance can often tie new principals down.

Senior Leader No. 2 also noted that some of the charters use a more business-oriented approach to principal development and those programs focus on leadership skills including “interaction, self-awareness versus how others view one’s leadership style, and charting progress through goal-setting” (APTG, April 21, 2010). The three activities that follow—core values, journey lines, and teachable point of view—all fall into this general executive leadership category.

*Core Values:* This exercise is designed to help the Fellows discover and understand their core values and how these values guide their work. Fellows begin with a list of approximately 50 values, such as status, happiness, family, love, justice and

creativity. They are asked to review the values listed and to add any that they feel are missing. They are then asked to circle their top ten values and then to reduce that number to five values, discussing with the group how they decided on those five. Fellows are then asked to reduce their list from five to three then to two and finally to one core value. The de-brief of this activity involved a discussion of how Fellows made the decisions about which values to give up and which to keep as well as how this value influences their work.

*Journey Line:* Fellows develop a journey line, a timeline of some life experiences that they feel have shaped them as leaders. The facilitator's guide from this activity states:

Leadership is developed through life experiences and we think leadership is autobiographical and every success and failure is a source of wisdom, given powerful reflection. These experiences, coupled with reflection, shape us as leaders and shape our leadership styles. A good way to capture those lessons is to construct what we call a leadership journey line, a line that has its highs and its lows.

To begin, the facilitator of this activity shared his/her completed journey line with the Fellows. Then, to capture their experiences, Fellows charted their journey on chart paper where the horizontal axis represented time and the vertical axis represented emotional energy. Fellows engaged in the following actions:

- Examine your life for significant events.
- Include positive and negative events. Label the peaks and valleys with lessons learned.
- Describe the specific and concrete impact they had on you. Put the event in context.
- Include only those events that you can explain how they moved you forward.

Fellows shared and explained their individual journey lines with their team and the charts remained posted so that all cohort members could view and discuss all journey lines.

The journey line activity, which followed the core values activity, “shows the stories behind the values” (Parvin, J., July 2011, Personal Journal).. Both the core values activity and the journey lines activity culminated in the Teachable Point of View since “our stories brought us to where we are” (Parvin, J., July 2011, Personal Journal).

*Teachable Point of View (TPOV)*—The TPOV is a leader’s ideas, values, energy and edge that coupled with the storyline of where we are now—where are we going and how we are going to get there—create a compelling personal vision. During the 2010 summer intensive, APP Fellows first watched a video recording of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and identified King’s ideas, values, energy and edge. Here is King’s TPOV:

*Ideas*—Dr. King was driven by the belief that the United States would live out the founding principles: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

*Values*—Dr. King’s speech promoted the power of faith—and non-violent action—to advance justice and equality.

*Energy*—Dr. King stressed the life-or-death urgency of immediate action.

*Edge*—Dr. King said that, “there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights” (Tichy, 2007, p. 58).

Using Dr. King's speech as an example of a TPOV, Fellows created their own personal vision statements.

The curriculum document for the 2010 summer intensive stated the following:

A well-thought through personal vision statement can be used to motivate individuals and organize the organizations where they work. When shared with members of the school community, a vision statement serves to align the community around a central vision which supports and improves instruction. A leader's vision statement is dynamic, continually evolving and should be evidenced in the leader's behavior and decision-making. A personal vision statement is reflective of the leader's values and non-negotiables.

Fellows were asked to draw on activities from the previous week, especially the core values and journey lines exercises, to craft their TPOVs. The Fellows presented their personal vision statements to the cohort and received feedback. This personal vision statement or TPOV also showed up in subsequent assignments, such as the letter to the staff, the letter to the parents, and their 90-day plans.

As they completed their TPOVs, the Fellows had the chance to apply their personal vision statement through an in-basket activity:

The local neighborhood association has written a letter of concern about low test scores and a local business owner's group is inquiring about how they can help the school improve to positively impact the community. As the new principal, they want you to host a meeting to explain problems, hear your action plan and your commitment to the community.

Fellows were given 15 minutes to prepare for this meeting. Based on school data that they had previously reviewed and discussed as well as some initial thinking they had done about an appropriate direction for the school, Fellows were to explain the current state of the school, clearly articulate their personal vision for the school and set some guidelines for how the community might help.

Fellows received low-inference feedback from their cohort members and DLA staff at the conclusion of this in-basket exercise. In addition, to process the activity a whole-group discussion took place around these questions:

- What was difficult about that?
- What was it like getting feedback?
- How did you consider the audience in the communication of your personal vision statement?
- What was it like trying to get buy-in from your community?
- What additional information on the community members involved in your school did you receive? How will you use this information?

In addition to the individual activities, such as core values, journey line and TPOV, the Fellows also participated in several activities specifically focused on the interactions among team members. One of the activities designed to increase awareness about team performance and interactions was the Farmers' Activity. During this activity, the teams received randomly distributed pieces of information in order to complete a puzzle (task). The exercise was structured to evoke issues that may complicate or stress team learning and performance.

Each member of the team received a strip of paper with several pieces of information having to do with the school district. Examples of an information item that each of the six team members received was as follows:

- Israel Alonso is in Oak Cliff
- The person observing a lesson in north Dallas sits next to the person in a middle school.
- Only one person sits on the far left.
- The person observing the Math lesson is in Pleasant Grove.
- The person sitting next to your executive director recommends a Learning Walk.

Fellows were told that they had all of the information that they needed to complete the task which was to determine who recommends a workshop and who was in a middle school? The facilitators gave the Fellows 10 minutes to complete the task. Facilitators walked around the room observing the various processes that the teams used. At 10 minutes, the facilitator asked if the teams needed 8 more minutes to complete the task (and they did). After the additional 8 minutes, the team were stopped and asked to compare answers. Teams were asked to reflect on the strategies they used and their performance as a team. Questions asked during the debrief—first, for the teams to consider and then in a whole-group setting—which included the following:

- How did you go about the work?
- What was it like to work in your team?
- Did you set norms and, if not, what was it like working when there are no norms?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your team?

The facilitator noted that the task that the teams had just completed was “ambiguous and time-sensitive—conditions that mirror the principalship” (NYCLA Summer Intensive Curriculum Materials).

Following the debrief of the Farmer’s Task, the GRPI Model of Teamwork was introduced. The GRPI represents vital elements of teamwork; the words associated with GRPI are as follows:

- G Goals (what the team is trying to accomplish, performance objectives)
- R Roles (identification and clarity of work and role responsibilities, how the roles support team goals)
- P Processes and Procedures (team processes, decision-making, conflict management, problem-solving and communication)
- I Interpersonal Relationships (individual styles)



The facilitator noted that these elements are hierarchical; the team should clarify goals first, then identify roles and processes, while being aware of interpersonal relationships. The facilitator shared a team-planning tool that provided components and examples of GRPI and a space for team analysis:

Table 4.3 Group Processes Analysis Template

<b>GRPI Components and Examples</b>	<b>Team Analysis</b>
<p><b>G—Goals</b> Are the goals and priorities of the team clear and accepted by all members?</p>	
<p><b>R—Roles and Responsibilities</b> Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined, described and understood by all team members? Do the team members have the right resources to complete their responsibilities?</p>	
<p><b>P—Processes and Procedures</b> What processes and procedures (such as norms, protocols, problem-solving strategies, etc). are in place that are understood and accepted by team members?</p>	
<p><b>I—Interpersonal Relationships</b> How are the group dynamics? Are the relationships and interactions supportive of good teamwork?</p>	

Fellows were encouraged to use GRPI for planning their team projects, for identifying problem areas when their team process was not working well and for improving team performance in general.

For each of the three weeks of the summer intensive, one or two Fellows took a leadership role for their team. At the conclusion of that week, they had the opportunity to understand their effectiveness as a team leader as the team completed a 360 degree feedback matrix based on selected leadership performance dimensions. Team leaders were rated by their team members as meeting the standard progressing toward the standard or not meeting the standard and low-inference data to support the rating, as well as suggestions for improvement comprised the feedback. Some of the dimensions of the leadership performance matrix that were part of the 360 degree feedback tool were as follows:

- Personal Behavior—Reflects and appropriate response to situations
- Resilience—Reacts constructively to disappointments, admits error, and learns from mistakes and setbacks
- Communication—Communication reflects careful analysis and the ability to listen
- Situational Problem-Solving—Clearly identifies decision-making structure
- Time/Task/Project Management—Consistently manages time in relation to priorities

Definitely, an area of growth for the weekly team leaders, the 360 degree assessment also reflected “a clear investment of the team in each other’s performance” (Dallas Leadership Academy, Summer Intensive 2010, Curriculum Materials).

The second week of the Dallas summer intensive was built around “Getting to Know the People” and one important activity during this week was Boyle’s Matrix.

Boyle's Matrix is a tool designed to help school leaders map the teachers on the campus in terms of their capacity and willingness to change in order to improve student achievement. Teachers are placed in one of four quadrants—unwilling, but able, willing and able, willing but not yet able and unwilling and unable—and differentiated strategies (respectively, challenge, stimulate, coach and document) are used to work effectively with that teacher. The fictional staff members were classified using Boyle's Matrix and action plans for developing them were created.

The teacher observations continued during the second week of the summer intensive and based on these observations, as well as the Boyle's Matrix information and other school performance data, the teams developed a first-semester professional development plan for the school. The professional development plan had to include the following:

- Rationale for Topics: What is included and excluded? How did you make this decision?
- Calendar of PD Topics
- Intended Audience: How did you decide who would benefit from each PD session? How will you differentiate for the diverse needs of your audience?
- Resources: What articles, books, and other resources were used in the development of the PD? What resources will be assigned to the participants for additional study?
- Instructional Strategies: What specific structure and strategies, reflecting the principles of adult learning will you use?

Using the plan, the team designed, developed, and delivered one 20-minute session from this comprehensive plan to the school staff. Additionally, each team read a book related to educational leadership (summer 2010 intensive books were *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, *Learning by Doing* by Rick DuFour, and *Lincoln on Leadership* by Donald

Phillips) and presented a professional development session to the cohort based on their reading.

The teams also developed a written document and 45-minute presentation, including a question-and-answer session for parents based on the school's performance on the spring Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests. Fellows were evaluated based on the content and competency demonstrated during the presentation as well as their connection with the audience and their responses to questions. At the conclusion of each team presentation, cohort members and DLA staff provided warm (positive and affirming) and cool (questioning or challenging) feedback to the presenters.

For all of the activities engaged in, the more formal activity frequently led to spontaneous role-plays and fish bowls. For example, following the angry parent scenario, Fellows had the chance to meet and interact with the "actors" who had played the angry parents and engage in additional role plays with them in a fish-bowl setting, receiving feedback both from the angry parents and from cohort members on how they experienced the conversation with them. Those who played the part of school staff also returned and gave Fellows feedback and additional chances to engage in dialogue about the experience.

Fellows engaged in role plays related to Boyles Matrix with colleagues playing the role of teachers and staff of Change Middle School who had been placed in one of the four categories. Fellows were asked to coach, challenge, direct or support depending on the staff members' willingness and capacity for change. Role plays

generated from the teacher observations involved faculty who were not happy with their feedback and role plays from the professional development activity involved teachers who did not want to engage in professional development about particular topics (bilingual education, reader-writer workshop, professional learning communities, etc).

In addition to the team activities accomplished during the second week, the Fellows completed the following individual activities:

*Letter to Staff:* This is a one-page letter sent to the staff prior to the beginning of the school year. The principal introduces him/herself, welcomes the staff back from summer to a new school year. S/he provides some insight and understanding about the school that s/he has gained. The tone should be positive, informational, and inspirational and articulate a vision for the school community. The letter should outline an approach to improved practice and discuss expectations for how the school community will work together. The letter should include the core elements of the principal's teachable point of view (TPOV).

*Letter to Parents:* This is a one-page letter that welcomes parents to the school community and informs parents of school information, available resources, and contact people. The letter provides basic information on the school's most recent performance results and invites parents to the meeting where the progress report will be presented. The principal's TPOV should be apparent in the letter and there should be coherence and alignment between the letter to the parents and the letter to the staff.

The theme of the third, and final, week of the Dallas summer intensive was *Moving Into Action with Vision, Mission and Goals*. During this week, the Fellows

completed the school analysis, explored strategies for thinking systemically, presented their 90-day plans, and delivered their vision statements.

Fellows considered Change Middle School, their school simulation, through the lens of defining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Then they looked at the school from a systems thinking perspective. Fellows read an article entitled “Bridges, Tunnels and School Reform: It’s the System, Stupid!” which discusses the initiatives that the NYC traffic authority put in place to manage congestion at bridges and tunnels. Rather than engaging in linear thinking and quick fixes, the traffic authority employed systems thinking that led to an analysis of the underlying trends, patterns, and structures that redefined the problem. Fellows used systems thinking to consider the scenario school. Questions that assisted them in their analysis were as follows:

- What is the presenting event (student performance data)?
- What low-inference observations can you make?
- What are the patterns and trends you are seeing?
- What are all of the structures in place?
- What are some of the structures that might be contributing to the student performance issues?

Using the SWOT analysis, the systems analysis, the teacher studies, Boyle’s Matrix and the data analyses and other assignments completed during the summer intensive, the Fellows should have had “a clear sense of the direction in which you want to take the school” (Summer Intensive 2010 Curriculum). The 90-day plan was to include the following:

1. *Rationale for the Plan*: This should reflect careful analysis of data, analysis of the leverage points and be connected to the Fellow’s personal vision for the school.
  - a. What is the thinking behind this plan?
  - b. How did you decide where to intervene? What are your leverage points? Why?
  - c. What decisions and changes have you made? Why?
  - d. How will this impact student performance?
2. What are the implications for professional development for faculty and staff?
3. What ideas do you have for re-aligning resources (time, people, money) to impact student learning?
4. How will you monitor and assess success? What evidence will you use?

Fellows had 20 minutes to deliver the plan to their colleagues followed by 10 minutes for a question-and-answer period. The content and tone of the presentation should reflect a comprehensive understanding of the current state of the school and Fellows should be able to anticipate and respond to their colleagues’ questions.

Finally, Fellows also presented their personal vision statement—this time related to their personal identify as a leader rather than being linked to the scenario school—to the whole group. The personal vision statement integrated all of their learning from the summer intensive.

#### *4.2.2 Learning from New York City Leadership Academy: The Facilitator-in-Residence Program*

Because the learning engaged in during the summer intensive is experiential and constructivist, the skillset required for the facilitators was complex and sophisticated. In order to develop and sharpen their facilitation skills, the DLA team participated in

the NYCLA's Facilitator-in-Residence program in July 2010 (and again in July 2011). The Facilitator-in-Residence (F.I.R) program is part of NYCLA's national consulting work and occurs during the first week of their Aspiring Principals Program's 6-week summer intensive. Participants in F.I.R. are typically directors or facilitators from districts or universities that are partnering with NYCLA to develop or refine their own aspiring principal programs. The approaches used for the facilitator-in-residence training were:

- To model and make transparent the pedagogy and the process
- To facilitate participants' experience of the pedagogy and the process at multiple levels
- To highlight the interdependence between program pedagogy, organizational design and structure
- To use the NYCLA facilitator competencies as the organizing structure to anchor the learning

The general structure of the learning at F.I.R. is to observe the class sessions during the first week of the NYCLA's summer intensive and then to debrief those sessions, particularly focusing on the facilitation of the sessions, with the F.I.R. participants and NYCLA senior staff. The structure of observation of classroom sessions and debrief allowed the DLA team to clearly see NYCLA's approach to curriculum design and learning—standards-based, problem-based, and team-based—as well as the seven essential beliefs about effective facilitation that have been discussed extensively in chapter 2.

Following extensive classroom observations during NYCLA's summer intensive, questions posed to participants during the de-brief included the following:

- What were your observations?



- What do you think we want the participants to know and be able to do?
- What in the design allowed the participants to do this?
- What in the facilitation allowed the participants to do this?
- How have you seen the facilitators create the conditions for learning?
- How did the activities map back to the standards?

Just as the learning during the aspiring principals' sessions was constructed and problem-based, so was the learning for the facilitator-in-residence participants.

The summer intensive began with a welcome to the “six-headed principals” of the simulated school (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal). Training materials noted that since a significant part of the work in schools was done in a team context, aspiring principals must be effective learners in and leaders of teams. Therefore, many of the assignments were structured to create the conditions for collaborative learning and interdependence as the teams functioned as the principal of the school. Certainly, the first assignment involving the principal team was such an assignment (New York City Leadership Academy, 2009).

New York City's aspiring principals, following a brief orientation and connection activity, move quickly into the work and are asked to spend time examining their school scenario binder. The binder contains information—student performance data, teacher data, and profiles, master schedules and floor plans, operational and budget information, and the school challenge which provides a multiyear history of the school's performance and leadership—that a principal would have access to as the new leader of the school. The aspiring principals know that they will soon have the opportunity to meet some of the school staff described in the school binder and their first group assignment is to generate the questions that they want to ask to specific staff

members. Each group is assigned a different staff member to question and staff members that visit on day one to include several teachers, a parent coordinator, a school secretary, a network leader, and a representative from the teacher organization.

Following the activity, the facilitators ask the following questions:

“What did you learn about the school from this activity?”

“Look at your notes and find evidence for your assessment.”

After noting that the tendency of the group is to debrief what the staff said rather than to examine their questions, the facilitator asked, “What did you learn about your questions?”

“What questions led to a focus on operations?”

(Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal).

In the following year, 2011, the DLA team had the opportunity to observe a more experienced facilitator conduct this same activity and her questions included the following:

Let’s look at the questions you asked. Which ones get you mileage and which ones went flat?”

What did you notice about some of your word choices and the union representative’s reactions?

What did you notice about your response?

Did you get everything you wanted from the parent coordinator?

Let’s hit re-play. What would you do differently?

What kinds of probing questions might you ask now?

Given the data you had and the time that you had, what questions might you have asked to get deeper, richer information?

How did this interaction with the school staff confirm or disconfirm your beliefs about the values of the school? (Parvin, J., July 2011, Personal Journal). What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these? What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these? What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these? What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these?

One specific activity from the summer intensive—the in-basket—is emblematic of the experiential learning in which the NYCLA—and DLA— aspiring principals programs engage, bringing together beliefs about curriculum design, adult learning and effective facilitation. The DLA team observed the following learning experience in New York in the summer of 2010 during the first week of the NYCLA aspiring principals summer intensive. The assignment was that the aspiring principals were to function in the role of principal and work individually to address their in-basket items (emails, messages, reports, etc.). As they processed their in-basket items, they were interrupted by their school secretary on several occasions, once to conduct the previously scheduled (virtual) classroom observation and again to conduct an unscheduled fire drill that had been directed by the fire marshall, and finally to meet with an angry parent. The angry parent was quite upset and the situation was not easily resolved. What was striking about this experience was the “airtight” quality of the simulation (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, p. 158).

In addition to the experiential learning that occurred during the in-basket simulation, the de-briefing of the experience by the facilitators was a powerful reflective experience. The learning from this activity clearly has to do with time/task management and deciding what is important and what is urgent. Additionally, there is learning from this activity around mental models as the angry parents may be interracial or gay/lesbian couples who can evoke judgment or assumptions from the Fellows.

The DLA team observed a skillfully facilitated session that exemplified the NYCLA's essential beliefs about facilitation. Two of these beliefs, in particular, stood out. First, the notion that the facilitator pushes the thinking by “unearth[ing] and expos[ing] the multiple layers of complexity and ambiguity that characterize real life” and the principalship was evident during the debrief. Also clear was the belief that the facilitator's interventions can be strategic and that the skilled facilitator can be expected to “hone improvisational skills” in order to expertly select “the right intervention at the right moment in time” in order to “maximize, deepen and personalize learning” for the participants (New York City Leadership Academy, 2007, p. 5 ).

The following questions were asked by the facilitator to debrief the in-basket activity with the aspiring principals:

In a word, how are you feeling?

What was your biggest challenge?

How many of you went sequentially?

How did you process the tasks?

How were you able to group the tasks?

How did seeing the patterns influence your approach?

The facilitator stated that, “We’ve been talking about mental models and seeing a pattern in the problems/challenges that may influence how you make sense of the data.” She then asked the group what else was challenging and they began a discussion of the angry parent scenario. She asked the following questions:

What were the strategic moves that you made?

Did anyone feel that this process was not fair?

One Fellow had chosen to disregard her secretary’s request to meet with the angry parent, stating that she had work to do. This person thought that the process was not fair when the facilitator asked this question: “How did you get to that space and what do you think are the possible consequences?”

Within the context of the angry parent scenario, a NYCLA faculty member playing the role of a NYC Department of Education official, this principal’s supervisor, happened to come to the school during this scenario and strongly encouraged her to meet with the angry parent; she refused to do so. The facilitator said, “So, I’m going to take it on. Are you ready? What were the consequences within the simulation?” The APP Fellow described the situation with her supervisor and the facilitator said, “Your efforts to minimize the time it would take you to deal with the parent cost you more time to deal with the fallout. I want to call out that logic.” She then asked, “Is this strategic?” and concluded this section of the discussion with the following questions: “How much do your beliefs help or hinder you in solving the problem? “How many of you felt that you were able to adequately address the parent’s concern?”

The facilitator made this statement: “Often the situation cannot be immediately resolved. There is the presenting situation and there are often underlying issues. The best solution is to say this is what will happen now and I will get back to you at this time.”

The facilitator then moved the discussion to the operational aspects of the activity stating that, “the in-basket is a good diagnostic tool to surface systems that are needed or need improvement.” She then asked, “What systems or needs for systems came to light?” The NYCLA Fellows created this list:

- Visitors’ Policy
- Safety Procedures
- Secretary’s Role
- Written Procedures for Dealing with Parents
- Teacher/Parent Communication
- Student Health Issues
- Regular Meeting Times for Safety Team
- Entrance/Exit Procedures
- Coordinated Communication Between Nurse and Teacher
- Develop Procedures for Partnerships with External Organizations
- Designate a Contact Person for Outside Partners/Vendors
- Reporting Procedures for Child Abuse
- School-wide Behavior Management System

The facilitator concluded with this statement: “Think of two to three high-leverage learnings that surfaced as things you need to take care of before you become a principal” (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal). This two and one-half hour activity embodied NYCLA’s beliefs about adult learning, about the principalship, and about effective facilitation.

Participating in NYCLA’s scene study as part of the TPOV activity was the ultimate facilitation experience. Scene study is a theatrical technique used to teach

acting in which an actor performs a dramatic scene and is then offered feedback from teachers or classmates. DLA team members first observed scene study during the first Facilitator-in-Residence session in 2010 and had the chance to facilitate scene study in 2011.

The set up for the first scene study in 2010 was that the APP Fellow was conducting his/her first faculty meeting as a new principal. The Fellows were asked to enter the room where their classmates, teachers, and Facilitator in Residence (F-I-R) participants were sitting and, integrating their TPOV, give their inaugural speech to the faculty. The facilitator had instructed them, stating, “Let us know within the first few seconds that you know who you are speaking to” (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal). One Fellow came into the room and began talking about how the teachers and students were like flowers in a garden, diverse and beautiful, and with the proper care and nourishment, they would grow. The facilitator quickly said “Stop! Someone give me her core values.” None of the class members were able to do so. The facilitator asked the speaker: “What are your core values?” “What is your connection to this work?” and directed her to leave and re-enter the room, trying again (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal).

The Fellow entered the room again and gave her speech again, this time with a bit more authenticity. The facilitator continued to push, asking the following questions: What do you want your staff to know? Convince me—as a teacher—that I want to do this work with you. Why do I want to be invested in this work with you?

The Fellow left the room and entered again. Again, her speech had more authenticity than before, but she was still not presenting herself strongly or genuinely enough to connect with veteran New York City teachers (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal).

The facilitator challenged the Fellow to think of one student that meant something to her and said, “Now, give this speech as if you are thinking of your student.” The Fellow left again, came back in and gave a powerful speech. The room exploded with applause and the facilitator said: “You blew me away. What did you do differently?” The Fellow said that she had actually thought of her brother who was an undiagnosed special education student whom she described as being “smarter than I am,” but who had struggled in school. She said that she wanted to inspire the teachers to do their best for students like her brother and for all students (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal).

In the debrief with the facilitator-in-residence participants, the NYCLA team, of whom the facilitator of this activity was one, said that:

Scene study is about pushing. You have to help the person identify where they are stuck—in their throat, in their stomach, etc.—and move the tension down and out. You have to throw her or him off balance. This is about getting better. The work is the change and the improvement. (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal)

A member of the DLA team remarked that, “the wrap up of the activity is important and it’s important that their work is celebrated so that they want to come back and risk again” (Parvin, J., July 2010, Personal Journal).



At the facilitator-in-residence training the following year, 2011, as DLA members prepared to coach during scene study, the NYCLA team member gave the following suggestions:

- Capture the essence of their TPOV and build on that
- Ask them to think of or talk to a specific student
- Use the group—Ask them what is resonant or what is confusing about the speech
- Ask the five why's
- Talk to a specific person within the group
- Have them stand on a chair
- Have them yell
- Have them speak very slowly
- Have them use a particular gesture
- Have them stand completely still
- Have them keep their hands by their side
- Have them sing their speech
- Most importantly, give the Fellows the option of taking or not taking the feedback. (Parvin, J., July 2011, Personal Journal)

At the conclusion of the NYCLA's 2010 Facilitator-in-Residence training, the researcher wrote that,

I have gained a deeper understanding of what 'the learning is in the room' means. I understand how curriculum and facilitation combine to create the conditions for learning and I understand that facilitation is both an art and a science. Last, I understand how to structure and facilitate the giving and receiving of feedback. (Parvin, J., July 2010. Personal Journal)

As noted, the DLA team participated in NYCLA's facilitator-in-residence program after the conclusion of Dallas' APP first summer intensive in 2010. While APP Cohort 1 members engaged in authentic learning around teacher observations with feedback and various role-plays during the June 2010 summer intensive, the DLA team more deeply implemented, in a coherent, cohesive, and robust fashion, the simulated school experience for Cohort 2 in summer 2011.

#### *4.2.3 Aspiring Principals Program: The Residency*

Following the 2010 summer intensive, Dallas' APP Fellows engaged in the second part of their learning, the 9-month residency centered on actual, rather than simulated, work at their school in close cooperation with their mentor principal. The Fellows, while serving in their official roles as assistant or associate principals, also participated in structured learning and reflection activities on their campuses with their mentor principals. Additionally, the Fellows continued meeting as a cohort with the DLA team; these sessions were held every other Wednesday. :

The architecture of the residency, both their work at the campus and their class sessions, saw the Fellows engage in learning in five different ways: as individuals, as members of their summer one team, as an affinity group involving those working on similar projects, as a cohort involving all of the Fellows, and as part of the relationship between Fellow and mentor principal engaging in work on the campus. An overview of these five approaches, along with sample learning activities follows

The 360° Feedback Activity was an individual activity that afforded the Fellows an opportunity to receive confidential and anonymous feedback from their colleagues including their supervising principal, peers, and direct reports. Six to 12 people completed an anonymous online feedback form for each Fellow addressing a broad range of workplace competencies linked to the leadership performance standards. The Fellows also self-assessed using the same questions. Fellows reviewed their results, in many cases with their mentor principals, to identify strengths and challenges as leaders.

Table 4.4 Aspiring Principals Program Residency Groups and Activities

	<b>Individual Activities</b>	<b>Team Activities</b>	<b>Network Activities</b>	<b>Cohort Activities</b>	<b>Residency Activities</b>
<b>Who</b>	Fellow & Facilitator	Summer Intensive Team	Affinity Group	All Fellows	Fellow & Mentor
<b>What</b>	360 Degree Assessment Shadow-a-Leader Coaching Calls Site Visits	Literature Review Two 'How-to' Presentations	Implementation of District Initiative	Day of Data Book Study 90-Day Review Learning Walk	Leading and Learning Log Data Picture Learning Walk Boyle's Matrix

*Note.* DLA. Residency Curriculum Materials, August 2010.

During the Shadow-A-Leader Activities Fellows spent one day shadowing a Dallas ISD principal of their choosing. They were encouraged to select a leader of a campus that was very different from campuses where they had been assigned (secondary if they only had elementary experience, Title I if they had experience at non-Title I campuses, etc.). Fellows participated in this activity twice during their residency.

Both the Literature Review and the How-To Presentations were completed by the Fellows working in their summer teams. The Literature Review teams created and presented reviews of relevant educational or leadership literature related to a district initiative. The How-to Presentations were researched presentations describing technical (rather than adaptive) aspects of the principalship. Some of these presentations involved working with a school budget, ways to improve interviewing skills, and conducting teacher observations and appraisals. As with all presentations, the other members of the cohort were responsible for providing warm and cool feedback to the presenters.

The third piece of the learning architecture involved the Fellows working with an affinity group, based on the initiative that they were implementing on their campus. These initiatives were ones that were being implemented in Dallas ISD and examples were a campus-wide pyramid of interventions, a reader/writer workshop literacy project, targeted student achievement results for a grade level or a subject or a parent engagement project. This learning task had the Fellows, in collaboration with their mentor principal, identifying a district or campus initiative which the Fellow would lead

the implementation of during the course of the school year. The Fellows completed an implementation map describing the decisions and actions involved in their project.

Fellows were required to describe the needed change and give the background as to why it was needed, to describe what successful implementation would look like, identify what previously implemented initiatives or actions were currently in place that could link to the new change, delineate the benefits of the change for teachers and students, identify possible obstacles to successful implementation as well as potential unintended consequences of the change, determine which members of their staff would help lead the change, describe how the change would engage families and the community, decide what professional development needs would be required for successful implementation, and identify what systems and structures they would use to get feedback about implementation of the initiative. Fellows were required to identify the benchmarks they would use to measure success of the implementation at 30-day, 60-day, and 90-day periods.

Several of the residency projects involved the whole cohort. These included the Day of Data and the book study. In the Day of Data Activity, Fellows spent one day at a Dallas ISD high school campus gathering data, both quantitative—student performance results—and qualitative—class and school observations and created a feedback presentation for the campus leadership team.

In addition to the literature reviews that were completed by the teams, the entire cohort also engaged in a book study, reading *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn* by Richard DuFour. The book

was selected by the DLA team based on two Dallas ISD initiatives that were significant that school year—the pyramid of interventions for struggling learners and the on-going development and refinement of professional learning communities on the campuses.

Another cohort activity was the 90-Day Review which involved a series of structured interviews with Cohort 1 Fellows who had received principal positions and had been in the role for approximately 90 days. These new principals answered questions regarding what they were least prepared to deal with in their new position, what they did not know prior to beginning to serve as principals, how they got to know the school during the application process and after they were selected as principals, what kinds of things they learned about themselves during their transition, and what advice they would give a new principal.

Additionally, a Learning Walk was added to the cohort activities based on an identified need. The Fellows had the assignment to lead a Learning Walk on their campus. During the course of the residency, the DLA team became aware of challenges that some of the Fellows were having leading the Learning Walks according to the proper protocols and added a whole-cohort Learning Walk to serve as an instructional piece. During the Learning Walk, Fellows planned and conducted a Learning Walk, using the prescribed protocols, at a Dallas ISD elementary school and received feedback from the DLA team.

Finally, the APP Fellows, along with their mentor principals and members of the Cohort 1 of the UT-CULP class, participated in eight Cognitive Coaching training sessions over the course of the 9-month residency.

The fifth structure of the residency involved activities that were specifically designed to promote the APP Fellow to work in conjunction with his/her mentor principal. These activities were Boyle's Matrix, A Data Picture of My School, a Learning Walk, and a Leading and Learning Log.

Boyle's Matrix, first introduced during the summer intensive in conjunction with the school scenario was re-introduced during the residency. During the summer intensive, the Fellows completed this activity relative to the fictional teachers who were part of the simulated school. During the residency, Fellows, in collaboration with their mentor principal, used Boyle's Matrix to classify at least one teacher on their campus into each of the four quadrants—unwilling, but able, willing and able, willing but not yet able, and unwilling and unable— and to create and implement an action plan for each teacher. Fellows discussed universal aspects of their plans and progress with implementation during the Wednesday training sessions, limiting their discussion to aggregate information and keeping individual teacher information confidential.

The following questions were used as guiding questions for discussions between the APP Fellow and their mentor principal, as well as for group discussions during cohort class sessions:

- How are campus leaders using this information to effectively improve teacher performance?
- Based on this information, how might you change the formal observation schedule?
- Based on this information, how might you change how instructional coaches are deployed?
- How are teachers supported in trying new instructional approaches?
- How are expectations about performance communicated?

- What might this information suggest for the campus professional learning plan?
- What leadership opportunities exist for teachers?
- How are teachers recognized and celebrated?

Boyle’s Matrix provided a powerful learning, and campus improvement, tool for both the Fellows and their mentor principals.

Another project that Fellows completed on their campuses was the Data Picture of My School. Fellows worked with their mentor principals to create a basic demographic and student performance “picture” of their school. Fellows used quantitative data from the district-generated Campus Data Packet and the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The AEIS report includes comprehensive student performance data over a 3-year period as well as demographic information about school staff and budget information on the school. Some of the required information was qualitative and required the Fellows to conduct observations and interviews with teachers, parents, and students. The summary included descriptions of eight components: community surrounding school, school district, school, students over time and by grade level, staff over time, parents and families, student performance on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)* and *Logramos* test over three years, and student performance on the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)* test over three years.

The Leading and Learning Log utilized the 12 leadership performance standards and asked the Fellow to characterize their work—as not experienced, observed, participated in or led—around multiple indicators for each standard. Using the Leading



and Learning Log, Fellows described the activities in which they engaged during their residency experience and rated their field experience with each of the standards. Each performance standard was grouped with specific activities, tasks, or behaviors in which the Fellows should have developed competency. For example, the first Leadership Standard is Personal Behavior and under this standard the form states that, “The APP Fellows’ Field Experiences Require” and the first statement is, “Making an appropriate response to situations by understanding and managing emotions and anticipating possible responses, reactions and consequences to his/her actions and adjusting behavior accordingly.” The Fellows then rated their level of exposure to the item (no experience, observed, participated, led) and gave a description of the activity that allowed them to practice that skill.

The Fellows engaged in a variety of learning activities during their residency. From individual tasks to those completed with their teams, networks or the entire cohort, the residency learning activities were designed to move from the simulated activities of the summer and to put the aspiring principal in authentic leadership roles. A key part of their success was their interactions with their mentor principals.

#### *4.2.4 Aspiring Principals Program: The Mentor Principals*

The residency component of the 14-month aspiring principals program depended heavily on the capacity of mentor principals to coach, an awareness of which APTG members were keenly aware and communicated during the planning meetings in the spring of 2010. Senior Leader No. 8 shared the notion that while all good principals are not effective mentors, effective mentors must be successful principals and suggested

using the idea as a guiding principle for developing the mentor-principal characteristics (APTG, March 24, 2010, Meeting).

Senior Leader No. 1 agreed that the mentor role was key, and recalled that, “the NYC mentors agree to communicate with the facilitator to measure the progress of Fellows.” Additionally, she noted that the program facilitator and mentors use performance standards as a basis for their work with the Fellows and that “mentors commit to organizing the growth of Fellows around the established performance standards” and the performance standards are “an integral part of the mentor training” (APTG, March 24, 2010, Meeting). An interesting point was shared by Senior Leader No. 2 who believed that it was important to communicate “during the onset of mentor training the benefits of mutual growth for both the mentor and the mentee” (APTG, March 24, 2010, Meeting).

At the April 28, 2010 APTG meeting in Dallas, the NYCLA proposed a pair of 2-day sessions with mentor principals focusing on how to help design learning experiences aligned to standards. The first 2-day session occurred on September 10 and 11, 2010—two days after the residency orientation session for the APP Fellows on September 8—and the second happened on January 7 and 8, 2011.

While the learning goals—and the targeted performance standards—for the summer intensive involved general leadership skills, such as personal behavior, resilience, communication and situation problem-solving, the targeted learning goals during the residency were more comprehensive. The leadership performance standards that were targeted during the residency clustered around three additional broad areas:

Curriculum and Instruction, Supervision of Instruction, and Administration. The learning goals for the residency were as follows:

The September training focused on identifying the conditions for a strong mentoring relationship, using the 12 leadership performance standards to guide the mentoring work, assessing the Fellows’ performance relative to the leadership standards, and structuring learning opportunities to align with the leadership standards.

Table 4.5 Residency Leadership Performance Standards Focus

<b>Area</b>		<b>Performance Standard</b>
Leadership	1	Personal Behavior
	2	Resilience
	3	Communication
	5	Situational Problem-Solving
	10	School Climate and Culture
Curriculum and Instruction	4	Focus on Student Performance
	6	Learning
Supervision of Instruction	7	Accountability for Instructional Practice
	8	Supervision of Instructional and Non-Instructional Staff
	9	Leadership Development
Administration	11	Time/Task/Project Management
	12	Technology

The agenda for the September 10, 2010 training began with a discussion on the role of the mentor and essential beliefs about adult learning. As defined by the Dallas Leadership Academy’s Aspiring Principals Program Mentor Residency Compact, the mentor principal is expected to “share, think through and provide opportunities for the aspiring principal to practice the skills necessary to be effective instructional and transformational leaders.” In order to accomplish these expectations, the mentor

principals would need to coach and develop their aspiring principals and utilize the best practices of adult learning. Discussed more extensively in chapter II, these best practices of adult learning as described by the New York City Leadership Academy include the following:

- Adults learn most deeply from experience and reflection
- Learning is a social process
- Adults have a high capacity to learn from the discomfort inherent in moving from the known to the unknown.
- Adults learn by creating and revising stories in order to make meaning.
- Adults learn best in an environment of structured freedom.(New York City Leadership Academy, 2007)

The Mentor Residency Compact set forth the expectation that mentor principals would engage in these learning activities with their APP Fellows:

- Participate in regular reflective de-briefs with the aspiring principal
- Develop and support the aspiring principal in his/her individual growth activities, as determined by the 360 degree assessment
- Collaborate with and coach the aspiring principal as s/he leads a district initiative on the campus
- Coach and develop the aspiring principal through all residency activities, including the leading and learning log, the learning walk, the data picture and Boyle's matrix.

The mentor principals reflected on their mentees who had completed a final reflection/self-assessment at the conclusion of the summer intensive. APP Fellows had been asked to list their three greatest strengths, three areas in which they thought they needed to grow and two areas in which they believed they had grown over the course of the summer intensive. As part of their reflection on their work with their APP Fellow, the mentor principals were also asked to list their mentee's three greatest strengths and three areas in which the mentee needed to grow.

The mentor principals were given a homework assignment to complete for the next mentor training session in January 2011. The homework included the following:

1. Description of Activity

Option A: Thinking about your mentee's strengths and learning needs, craft an activity for your mentee's learning. Map the activity to the standards and describe how you are assessing the mentee's performance.

Option B: Deconstruct an activity your mentee is currently engaged in. Map the activity to the standards and describe how you are assessing your mentee's performance.

2. Describe why you chose this activity for your aspiring principal. Describe your mentee's strengths and learning needs, mapped to the standards.
3. Describe and document the evidence you collected over time to assess whether or not your mentee is meeting the standards.
4. Describe the feedback you have provided by answering the following questions:
  - At what points was feedback offered?
  - How did you use feedback to leverage your mentee's growth?
  - What impact did it have on the work?
  - How did your mentee incorporate the feedback?

The homework assignment offered guiding questions to consider when designing or deconstructing learning activities for the aspiring principal:

- What conditions need to be established before the mentee engages in the activity?
- How does the activity represent meaningful school-based work?
- How has the learning been scaffolded?
- How are the activities robust and how do they incorporate complex tasks?
- How does the activity enable your mentee to try varying approaches to complex tasks?
- How does the activity allow your mentee to take risks and participate in high-stakes decision-making while maintaining the integrity of your school?
- How will you manage your mentee's mistakes?

At the conclusion of the 2-day mentor training in September, the Dallas Leadership Academy team received evaluations from 14 of the 16 mentor principals who attended the training. The evaluation questions and responses are presented in the following table:

Table 4.6 Mentor Principals Survey

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1. As a result of this mentor professional development session, I have a clearer understanding of Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program.	Strongly Agree—13 Agree—1
2. As a result of this mentor professional development session, I have a deeper understanding of my role as a mentor principal.	Strongly Agree—12 Agree—2
3. Describe at least one big idea about mentoring that you will take from this session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Need to emphasize, depend on, learn from and become an expert on the standards”</li> <li>• “The importance of scheduling conversations”</li> <li>• “Leadership can be developed”</li> <li>• “I will make sure that I am affording quality experiences to my mentee as well as learning from her.”</li> <li>• “Assessing growth according to the standards”</li> </ul>
4. What additional support would you like from the Dallas Leadership Academy as you work with your APP Fellow this year?	“More coaching techniques” “Coaching practice” “How to have crucial conversations” “Occasional meetings for support”

Table 4.6 continued

<p>5. How will you implement and sustain what you have learned during these two days?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Use the standards”</li> <li>• “I will begin having the ‘growing’ conversations based on the standards with my mentee.”</li> <li>• “Adult learning activities for campus”</li> <li>• “I will follow the matrix as I plan activities for my mentee and for myself.”</li> <li>• “I will revisit the standards often.”</li> <li>• “Review with my mentee what I have learned here.”</li> <li>• “Review goals with mentee.”</li> <li>• “I will utilize the performance matrix as a reflective tool for myself as well as for my APP Fellow.”</li> <li>• “I need to familiarize myself with the standards.”</li> </ul>
<p>6. What did you enjoy most about this learning experience?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Table talk and group discussion”</li> <li>• “Great learning format, pacing and relevance”</li> <li>• “Role playing”</li> <li>• “Chance for dialogue and reflection”</li> <li>• “The opportunity to have hands-on learning in a non-threatening environment.”</li> <li>• “All of it! A good two days! And I always value the affective aspect of adult learning.”</li> <li>• “I enjoyed the deep explanation of the performance standards matrix.”</li> </ul>

The second 2-day mentor training occurred in January 2011 and focused strongly on giving and receiving feedback. The New York team taught the Dallas mentor principals that effective feedback begins with the standards, progresses to a low-inference observation, moves to an assessment that maps back to the standards and ends with the

feedback that addresses specific behaviors. Some of the discussion and reflection

questions posed to the mentor principals were as follows:

- Have you ever received feedback that did not match your perception of who you are and/or how you see your work?
- How did you react?
- What did you decide to do with it?
- What are some of the things that made that difficult?
- Has this ever played out in giving feedback to your mentee?
- What challenges have you encountered in giving feedback to your mentee?
- Has it been difficult for your mentee to receive feedback?
- Has it been difficult for you to give feedback?
- What might be getting in the way?

Dallas mentor principals practiced in pairs and triads, as well as fishbowls and role plays, to gain authentic experience with giving and receiving feedback.

At the conclusion of the second mentor training session, principals were asked: “Is your mentee ready to be a principal in five months? If not, what needs to happen between now and then to ensure that they are ready?” In contemplating that question, the mentor principals came to the sharp realization of the importance and urgency of their work as developers of new leaders.

The Dallas Leadership Academy’s Aspiring Principals Program was designed to simulate the work of the principalship and to use best practices of adult learning to create a strong alignment between the principal preparation and the principal position. How effectively this was done is discussed in the next section.



### 4.3 Research Question Three

*RQ3: What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?*

Having explored the philosophy and components of the Dallas Leadership Academy's Aspiring Principals Program, a program based on best practices of principal preparation, the final question involves the impact the APP had on Dallas ISD. An essential component in answering this research question involves addressing the effectiveness of the program and this has been done in several ways.

First, two evaluative documents—the 2010 NCEA Progress Report and the Dallas ISD's Evaluation and Accountability department's comprehensive program evaluation—are included and address program effectiveness. Second, another measure of effectiveness is the rate at which APP graduates are selected for principal positions in Dallas ISD and current data on this measure has been included.

In addition to the quantitative data of numbers of APP Fellows selected for the principalship and the comprehensive evaluations, the impact of the Aspiring Principals Program may also be gauged by the words of the program graduates, APP Fellows who are now sitting principals, and the teachers they lead. These principal leaders discuss their experience of the program and the impact on their leadership. Teacher leaders discuss, from their unique perspective, the ways they perceive the program has influenced these principals and the ways they lead. Finally, a Dallas ISD senior leader, intensely involved in the development and implementation of APP, reflects on the impact of the program.

#### 4.3.1 Formal Evaluations of Dallas Independent School District's Aspiring Principals Program

First, in examining the findings of the two evaluations, the NCEA Progress Report and the Aspiring Principals Program evaluation, the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) whose 2009 report had noted the limited effectiveness of the leadership program in place at the time—Team One Dallas—and had urged its suspension and replacement presented the results of their 2010 audit to the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees in January 2011, six months after the beginning of the Aspiring Principals Program Summer Intensive. The report stated that,

The first cadre of 20 *Aspiring Principal* participants was selected through a rigorous interview process that included several performance-based measures of, for example, applicants' ability to analyze school data and present improvement suggestions, and their ability to offer constructive feedback on a teacher's classroom performance. Applicants also submitted a portfolio with a resume, letters of recommendation, and leadership artifacts. Applicants had to receive approval from the principal at their current school in order to be considered. (National Center for Educational Achievement, Dallas Independent School District Core Practices Audit Report, 2011, p. 22)

District leaders' work in the area of leadership development represents stronger progress than past efforts to "grow their own" principals. If the quality of the work is sustained in the years to come, these programs will help the district place skilled instructional leaders in all schools and keep talented staff from seeking employment in neighboring districts. One current *Aspiring Principal* participant noted: "I live in the suburbs, and I drive through lots of other school districts every day to get to Dallas ISD. But after joining this program, I know that I am committed to working in this district for the long-term. (National Center for Educational Achievement, Dallas Independent School District Core Practices Audit Report, 2011, p. 10)

The NCEA progress report noted that the district's Aspiring Principals Program is "already very strong" and stated that senior leaders should be "highly commended" for putting the program in place:

After studying best practices nationwide, district leaders introduced the *Aspiring Principals Program* in the summer of 2010. Aimed at current assistant or associate principals, the new 14-month program includes two intensive sessions in the summer and a year-long residency. District administrators explained that the program focuses on offering participants experiential learning. One administrator explained, “In the first summer intensive program, aspiring principals work in a simulated school environment, designed to help create the muscle memory needed for future school leadership.” In the subsequent school year, participants will attend twice-monthly professional development sessions and complete a residency where they work with a mentor principal. Mentor principals are selected by the Learning Community Executive Directors and receive four days of summer training. During the second summer intensive program, participants will receive support and coaching to help them successfully apply for district principal positions. In a focus group, *Aspiring Principal* participants shared with the audit review team again and again that the program’s coursework was the most valuable training that they had ever received because it was immediately applicable to the needs of district campuses. District leaders are to be highly commended for this programming. (National Center for Educational Achievement, Dallas Independent School District Core Practices Audit Report, p. 21)

While the NCEA progress report was conducted by an external organization, the Dallas Leadership Academy funded a comprehensive evaluation of the Dallas ISD *Aspiring Principals Program* by the district’s Department of Evaluation and Accountability. The scope of the evaluation included the following actions:

1. Examine Fellows’ perceptions of the *Aspiring Principals Summer Intensive training program*.
2. Summarize program characteristics of the *Aspiring Principals Program*.
3. Describe characteristics of the Fellows and mentor principals participating in the *Aspiring Principals program*.
4. Measure Fellows’ and mentor principals’ perceptions of the residency mentorship portion of the *Aspiring Principals Program*.
5. Measure management team’s experiences and perceptions with regards to implementing the first year of the residency component of the *Aspiring Principals Program* (both training and mentorship).
6. Examine Fellow residency training and principal mentorship training characteristics.
7. Examine Fellows’ (Cohort 2) perceptions of the *Summer Intensive training program*.

8. Describe the Aspiring Principals summer planning session.(Douglas, 2010, p. 4)

This evaluation included the following:

- Analyzing quantitative employment data for mentor principals and Fellows participating in the program
- Conducting interviews with Fellows and mentor principals,
- Holding regular meetings with program management staff,
- Conducting debriefing sessions after Fellow and mentor principal training sessions
- Conducting observations at some of the mentor principal's campuses

The evaluator stated that the “qualitative data provided . . . a better understanding of the internal dynamics of the program” (Douglas, 2010, p. 4).

The evaluation included a survey administered to the APP Fellows, Cohort 1, at the conclusion of the 2010 summer intensive, then focused on the residency portion of the program and concluded with a survey of Cohort 1 members regarding their second summer activities, as well as a survey of Cohort 2 members at the end of the 2011 summer intensive.

The survey of APP Fellows, Cohort 1, at the conclusion of the 2010 summer intensive included 16 items soliciting responses on a 5-point scale (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*) and found the following:

- Survey results indicated that Fellows were very satisfied with the Summer Intensive. Out of the 16 items on the survey, 13 had 100 percent agreement.
- All Fellows strongly agreed with two items: *Summer Intensive facilitators presented training material in a way that allowed me to translate knowledge to practice* (100%) and *the Summer Intensive activities/topics prepared me to develop a plan for human capacity development* (100%). (Douglas, 2010, p. 53)

In addition to the two items strongly discussed, all Fellows *agreed* or *strongly agreed*

with these 11 items:

- The Summer Intensive clearly articulated the expectations of the Dallas ISD Aspiring Principals Program.
- Summer Intensive resources were relevant in preparing me to be an effective principal/leader.
- Summer Intensive facilitators presented training material in a way that was relevant to the way I learn.
- Summer Intensive topics deepened my understanding of leadership performance standards related to becoming an effective school leader.
- Summer Intensive topics prepared me to use teamwork skills to accomplish school-related tasks that will result in optimal learning experiences for teachers.
- Summer Intensive topics prepared me to use teamwork skills to accomplish school-related tasks that will result in optimal learning experiences for students.
- Summer Intensive topics helped me to develop a plan for human capacity development.
- As a result of participating in the Summer Intensive, I have discovered my professional leadership strengths and weaknesses.
- As a result of participating in the Summer Intensive, I have deepened my understanding of how my professional leadership skills impact others.
- As a result of participating in the Summer Intensive, I am adequately prepared to implement strategies that will improve student achievement.
- Summer Intensive increased my knowledge of how to move data analysis to action. (Douglas, 2010, p. 53)

The report continues with additional results from the 16 survey questions:

- Fellows were less likely to strongly agree with the two items related to data analysis: *the Summer Intensive activities/topics helped me better understand the connection between data and student achievement* (78%) and *the Summer Intensive increased my knowledge of how to move data analysis to action* (79%) than for the other items. One Fellow indicated that they disagreed that the Summer Intensive helped them *understand the connection between data and student achievement*.
- Fellows were also less likely to strongly agree that the Summer Intensive increased their knowledge of *the Principles of Learning* and *how to effectively assess the Principles of Learning in a school environment* (47%

and 63% strongly agree, respectively). Both of these items also received one neutral response.

- Fewer Fellows strongly agreed with the item: *the Summer Intensive increased my knowledge of how to effectively assess faculty and staff strengths and weaknesses* (68% strongly agree). (Douglas, 2010, p. 53). *Note.* (The Dallas ISD researcher reported results in a narrative style, whereas the researcher of this report used bullets.)

In addition to the written survey, the researcher also conducted focus groups with the Fellows at the conclusion of the Summer Intensive and provided additional information on the program:

- Fellow's comments reflected high levels of satisfaction with the Summer Intensive. When asked what skills or strategies demonstrated in the Summer Intensive Fellows would most likely utilize as a new principal, Fellows reported that Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and setting Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) goals would allow them to evaluate the current needs of their school and create an action plan. Several Fellows stated that the literature the facilitators provided during training was a good resource for the future.
- Two additional themes appearing in the comments were a reliance on data to drive decision making, and developing relationships with staff. Fellows identified three main ways in which their leadership practices may change as a result of their participation in the Summer Intensive: increased time and effort spent on building relationships with staff, improved organization and time management techniques, and more self-reflection. Two Fellows reported that they would make changes to the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at their schools, though no specific changes were mentioned
- Fellows reported that the facilitators, group work, and the curriculum were strengths of the program. The Fellows stated that the curriculum was systematic, focused, well organized, relevant, engaging, thought-provoking, rigorous, challenging, and intense. The facilitators and group work allowed beneficial discussion and were supportive of learning. (Douglas, 2010, p. 54)

The Fellows also gave several suggestions for improvements to future Summer Intensives and these included:

- Better planning with regards to notifying Fellows of their acceptance into the program in a timely manner; distributing information about the training program such as dates, locations and expectations; and distributing residency assignments earlier to allow for planning.
- Fellows also requested more opportunities to learn from experienced principals and other professionals, and additional references and literature to build their professional libraries. (Douglas, 2010, p. 54)

Finally, the evaluator offered the following:

- Results indicated that future Summer Intensives would benefit from increased focus on data analysis techniques and using research to drive practice as well as a more applicable focus on how to apply the 12 Leadership Performance Standards in real-world settings.
- Fellows' comments reflected a strong emphasis on the importance of relationship building on their campuses and personal reflection, but did not provide any specifics on how Fellows planned to effectively apply the skills they learned during the Summer Intensive to their campuses.
- Future evaluation activities should determine the effectiveness of the Summer Intensive with regards to these skills. (Douglas, 2010, p. 54)

The residency portion of Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program was a strong focal point in the evaluation. Two of the seven components in the scope of the evaluation—"Describe characteristics of the Fellows and mentor principals participating in the Aspiring Principals program." and "Measure Fellows' and mentor principals' perceptions of the residency mentorship portion of the Aspiring Principals Program"—address the residency and a third item deals with the training provided to the Fellows and the mentor principals (Douglas, 2010, p. 4).

With regard to the training sessions in which the APP Fellows participated, during their residency "comments during individual interviews indicated that the APP training they had received to date provided them with hands-on practice with both their

soft skills such as self-reflection, building relationships, and communication as well as hard skills such as data analysis, budget review, and strategic planning” (Douglas, 2010, p. 26). During six debriefing sessions following residency trainings, “Fellows were overwhelmingly positive in their comments about their training” (Douglas, 2010, p. 26):

- Fellows indicated that all time was used efficiently and trainings were filled with applicable and relevant information that benefited them on a daily basis on their campuses. Fellows indicated towards the beginning of the year that they were running out of time during trainings because of an overly ambitious agenda; however, this was not an issue later in the year as APP staff adjusted their training objectives to fit within the time allotted. In addition, Fellows stated that the full day trainings were preferable as they did not believe the scope of material presented could be covered in less time.
- Fellows reported that the Cognitive Coaching sessions they attended had a large impact on their daily work and that the Shadow-A-Leader experience was empowering and allowed them to learn from the experiences of master principals.
- Fellows stated that the work completed during the summer training was theoretical and training during the year was “real”, meaning they actually got to practice the skills they were learning on their campuses. Fellows indicated that the training was preparing them for work they will have to do later as principals.
- During one debriefing session, discussion focused on the high-level benefits of the training. One comment of interest was that the training exposed the Fellows to different learning environments and allowed them to determine where they might serve best as principals, what kinds of systems they think might work best on their campuses, and what leadership strategies will work best for them as individuals balanced with the needs of their campuses.
- When asked about the benefits of completing the entire year of training during the final debriefing session, the Fellows reported that staying through the end of the year allowed them to refine their skills. However, they indicated that all Fellows had come into the program at different levels with different skills to contribute and that the program could enhance skills no matter where one started.



- The goal of the program was to place all Fellows into principal positions and did not specify that they complete the training. Because of this goal, the program recruited highly qualified candidates. Fellows stated that the Fellows who had gotten principal jobs earlier in the year were transitioned to a new principal program under the Dallas Leadership Academy and that they could continue to build their skills under that training program (Douglas, 2010, pp. 26-27)

To address the aforementioned items—the Fellows’ work with their mentor principals and the mentor principal training—the Dallas ISD evaluator reported the following:

The sample consisted of Fellows and mentor principals participating in the Aspiring Principals program during the 2010-11 school year. Evaluation and Accountability staff collected data using observations and interviews with Fellows and mentor principals. The evaluator conducted interviews with 17 Fellows and 13 mentor principals.

Fellows completed a ten-month, campus residency under the mentorship of experienced principals. Initially, the program intended the Fellows to have two mentor principals: one at their home campus and a secondary mentor at another campus. The program wanted to identify the Fellow’s strengths and weaknesses and then pair them with a principal who was strong in the Fellow’s areas of weakness. This plan was developed prior to the program actually beginning. Once the program began, staff revised the plan and reported that they, instead, intended to match APP Fellows with their current principal if possible.

The residency exposed Fellows to all aspects of leading a school. Fellows learned to organize instructional improvement efforts, manage school operational issues, and navigate interpersonal and organizational relationships.

The program had little documentation describing the residency component in-depth and limited documentation existed outlining the expectations, procedures, or expected outcomes of the residency experience. The program originally planned for the Fellows to shadow their mentor principals and serve as interns rather than actual employees of the school; however, funding was not available for this option. Thus, assistant and associate principals kept their current jobs (though some were reassigned to new campuses) and teachers had to apply for jobs with little notice. In one instance, this change resulted in a teacher beginning their first year as an assistant principal at a school with a new principal also beginning their first year at a school that was academically

unacceptable and was in its first year of reconstitution. The evaluator collected information about mentor principal role expectations by reviewing training materials from the two mentor principal training sessions held during the 2010-11 school year (Douglas, 2010, pp. 12-13)

Regarding the role of the mentor principals, the Dallas ISD evaluator confirmed that the Dallas ISD Senior Executive Directors, with some input from the APP staff, selected the mentor principals for the 2010-11 residency year. Mentor principals were paid a \$2500 stipend and were expected to “build capacity in the Fellows by allowing them to have a full principalship experience” which meant that the mentor principals would delegate authority to the Fellows and allow them to solve complex problems and participate in important decision-making activities (Douglas, 2010, pp. 13-14). The mentor principals were also expected to facilitate the Fellows’ learning by:

- Designing multi-layered learning experiences (including observing, participating, collaborating, and leading), creating learning opportunities that allowed the Fellows to develop specific skills in the areas of systems and strategic thinking and problem solving,
- The mentor principals were expected to “balance the needs of their mentees with the needs of the school and the expectations of the Aspiring Principals Program” and to coach, assess and support the Fellows by committing significant time to their development, engaging with the Fellows and providing regular feedback, and collaborating and engaging with, and advocating for, their mentees. (Douglas, 2010, pp. 13-14)

The Dallas ISD evaluator noted that, “results of Fellow and mentor principal interviews indicated that the residency mentorship component of the Aspiring Principals program did much to prepare Fellows for the responsibilities of a principalship” (Douglas, 2010, p. 14). Mixed with the potential value of the experience was acknowledgment of the ways in which this experience could have been improved:

- A common theme across comments of both Fellows and mentor principals was that working as an assistant or associate principal while also learning the responsibilities of the principal position was a burden. Fellows would be better able to participate in the mentor/mentee relationship by shadowing and working with their mentor principals more closely if they were fully funded without having to fulfill the responsibilities of an assistant or associate principal. In addition, mentor principals could hire full-time APs, leaving them free to more fully mentor the Fellows.
- When asked to describe a typical day at their school, a majority of Fellows reported that they spent the majority of their time functioning as assistant or associate principals and that all APP work (including mentoring from their principal) occurred after school hours. Some Fellows reported that they had regular meetings with their mentor principal and others stated that they had many principal responsibilities as a result of their principal's mentorship.
- The residency mentorship component of the Aspiring Principals program was a strong addition to the Fellow experience when the mentor/mentee relationship was fully utilized. When Fellows and mentor principals reported that they were fully utilizing the mentorship experience, Fellows reported that they were participating in work responsibilities that were greatly improving their administrator skills including meeting with parents and teachers, working with a campus budget, and leading instructional meetings.
- Fellows' perceptions of the mentorship portion of the Aspiring Principals program were overwhelmingly positive. Fellows reported that the opportunity to learn from a master principal was invaluable, that the training and required projects directly related to the work they would be doing as principals, and that the network they built as a cohort would improve their effectiveness as principals in the future.
- The Fellows reported on the benefits of having a mentor during the residency year. Fellows stated that it was helpful to have someone to walk them through principal responsibilities and procedures, to have someone on the same campus with whom they could talk and receive feedback on their performance, and to have someone with whom they could reflect on their work within the program.
- Some Fellows reported that their principal was not functioning as a mentor and was purely their supervisor.
- When asked what the Fellows were hoping to get from the mentorship experience, whether the mentorship had met their expectations so far, and

what benefits they had received from the mentorship, the Fellows reported that they had hoped to learn about what the role of principal looked like. They stated that they wanted practice with hard skills such as working with a budget and wanted hands-on leadership experience that they would not have received working as assistant or associate principals outside the program

- The majority of teachers entering the program stated that they did not know what to expect as they had little information about the program when they entered.
- Almost all Fellows stated that the program had met their expectations; however, four Fellows reported that they had to do so much work as assistant or associate principals that they were unable to get the full benefit of their mentor principal and of the residency.
- The Fellows identified benefits of the program to be networking opportunities, exposure, and the creation of a strong professional network; the materials provided during the training sessions; and the increased knowledge and experience as a result of working with mentor principals.
- Fellows overwhelmingly agreed that their cohort was a major benefit of the program and that being able to work together, collaborate, share ideas with one another, and receive feedback from each other was a real strength.
- The Fellows reflected on their developing leadership philosophies. Common themes were shared, transparent, servant and collaborative leadership. Many Fellows spoke of empowering their teachers, modeling expected behavior, building capacity and trust, and providing the appropriate tools for teachers to do their best work. When asked how they planned to implement their leadership philosophy once they were principals, Fellows reported that they would lead by example, hold group meetings, listen and communicate openly with staff, and work with staff one-on-one. (Douglas, 2010, pp. 12-16)

The results of the conversations, surveys and observations with the mentor

principals revealed the following:

- When asked about the mentor principal selection process, some mentor principals reported that even though they nominated a staff member for the program, they did not know that meant they would serve as a mentor principal. In addition, some principals were asked by their executive directors to serve as mentors but did not understand the requirements of the position at the time they accepted the additional responsibilities. Many

mentor principals made statements indicating that program staff did not clearly communicate how the selection process worked and what would be expected of them should they serve as mentor principals. In a few cases it appeared that the principals were participating in the program at the request of their executive director and it was unclear whether they would have chosen to participate if the executive director was not included in the recruitment process.

- The mentor principals reflected on a typical day at their school. In some cases, the mentor principals were in such need of APs that they could not afford to share the burden of their principal responsibilities. Mentor principals reported that they had confidence in their Fellows and that they were able to assign many principal responsibilities to them, leaving the principal more time to spend in classrooms with teachers and students. Based on results of interviews, it appeared that mentor principals who fully accepted their role as mentors and allowed their Fellows to take on principal responsibilities had positive perceptions of the program. Principals who needed full-time APs, or who were unwilling to delegate their principal responsibilities were less satisfied with their experience. Allowing the program more autonomy in selecting mentor principals would allow them to create criteria for identifying those principals who best represent the goals of the mentor principal position.
- The mentor principals identified the benefits of having a mentee/Fellow on their campus. They reported that the experience helped them build their own skills as a leader, provided them the opportunity to make a difference in the career of a potential new principal and make a contribution to the district, allowed them to benefit from the resources and training the program provided their Fellows, and relieved some of their principal responsibilities allowing them more time in the halls and classrooms working with teachers and students.
- A majority of mentor principals reported that they were able to increase the responsibilities of the AP position as a result of the program, allowing their Fellows to take on more leadership tasks and that they were able to focus more on leadership and instruction.
- The majority of mentor principals reported that they did not have any expectations entering into their first year as mentors. Two mentors indicated that they wanted to benefit from the training their Fellows received during the year. One mentor stated that they wanted additional assistance with administrative responsibilities. Two mentors reported they expected to work with Fellows who wanted to become principals and were dedicated to

learning the position. All but two of the mentor principals reported that their experience met their expectations. One mentor principal indicated that the training they received did not meet their expectations and that the mentor role was too time consuming given the lack of training benefits. Another mentor reported that they did not think they would be able to adequately prepare their Fellow for a principal role in one year and therefore felt the program did not meet their expectations. When asked what benefits the mentors received from the program, they reported that they benefited from the increased role responsibilities the Fellows were able to take on and from the training both they and their Fellows received.

- The evaluator asked mentor principals to describe their leadership philosophy and how they realized that philosophy on their campus. Mentor principals reported that they believed in servant leadership, moral leadership (doing what is right), leading by example, continuously learning, and including all staff in developing and implementing the vision and mission of the school. To put their philosophies into practice, the mentor principals reported that they worked collaboratively with staff, held regular meetings, actively engaged students and teachers, and worked towards increasing autonomy, empowerment, and responsibility among their staff (Douglas, 2010, pp. 16-18)

The Dallas ISD evaluator interviewed the mentor principals with regard to their training and mentor principals reported that their training was “beneficial with strengths in the areas of learning effective communication with staff, capacity building, and staff development” (Douglas, 2010, pp. 27-28). They also reported that the training “covered information they had heard before, but that they were actually able to practice the skills during training and felt it was a useful refresher on important topics” (Douglas, 2010, p. 28). The evaluator conducted an informal debriefing session with the mentor principals at the conclusion of their second training session in January 2011 and found the following:

- Mentor principals reported that the second training session used role play, videos, reading, and research materials to teach them more specific ways to provide feedback to Fellows. They further stated that APP staff introduced

the standards to them in the September training but the second training connected the standards with providing useful feedback on performance.

- The mentor principals stated that the focus on self-reflection was very beneficial. Watching videos, practicing skills, and role playing were also beneficial components of the training. Mentor principals stated that this training would be useful for administrators across the district.
- When asked for suggestions for improving the mentor principal training component, mentor principals stated that they would have liked to have had contact with one another from the beginning. (Douglas, 2010, p. 28)

While the two evaluations provide valuable insights regarding the effectiveness of Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program, the interviews with principal, teacher, and senior leader—all closely involved in and/or influenced by the program—provided a deeper look at the impact of the APP.

#### *4.3. 2 Interviews*

Almost two years after their entry into Cohort 1 of Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program, three sitting principals responded to written questionnaires and participated in individual interviews. They discussed the characteristics of the program and their experience of the learning during the 14 months they spent in the summer intensive and the residency. They also discussed what they consider the long-term impact of the program, both on them personally and on the district. In addition to the three campus leaders, a senior leader in Dallas ISD also completed a questionnaire and participated in an interview to discuss these questions. Finally, three teacher leaders from each of the three campuses that these principals lead were interviewed.

#### *4.3.3 Rigor of the Summer Intensive*

One of the first topics of conversation was the summer intensive and the rigor of that learning experience:

Well, first of all, the summer intensive is just what it says. It's very intensive. A lot of dedication is going to be needed or required. But the summer intensive gave me the ability to think under pressure, to know how to handle certain situations, including some of those everyday situations we didn't encounter in the textbooks. (Principal Leader No. 1)

I think in the summer intensive you're going to work harder than you've ever worked in your life, but it will be some of the most meaningful work you will ever do in your life. It is tough, it's a lot of reading, but nothing, not one single thing that we had to do, either in summer intensive or in the residency, was a waste of time, or wasn't meaningful, or didn't impact, or change how I thought about something, or gave credence to something that I believed. I feel like every experience made me stronger, better, more knowledgeable and better prepared to do the work that I did as an assistant principal and then as a principal. (Principal Leader No. 3)

#### *4.3.4 Team-Based Learning*

An essential element of the summer intensive was the team-based, problem-based, experiential nature of the learning experiences in this part of the APP. On team-based learning, Principal Leader No. 3 noted that,

The principalship is not a job of isolation. In APP, there were some individual projects to assess our individual learning and growth, but a lot of the things that we did were in groups and when you have so many strong people...I'll be honest, when we first met our groups, I was like, oh my gosh, this group is strong and I'm strong to so how are we going to make this work. But we all learned how to use each other's strengths and how to manage our own needs to be the self-appointed leader and make it work so that the group was successful. We all learned to play a lesser role, but still have a sense of who we are in the project.



#### *4.3.5 Experiential Learning*

On the experiential—and public—learning that took place during the role-plays, Principal Leader No. 2 said that,

Well, first of all from my perspective, is just the fact that you are in front of a group or a class and you are faced with real situations, taken from daily school life and then you have to make choices and your choices are real. Just the pressure of that, at any given moment you have to make that choice in front of everybody. So, for me that was really challenging and I am questioning--am I doing right, am I thinking right, am I making the right decision and what are they going to think about that me as I'm in front of my peers. But, that was the most challenging from my perspective.

And despite the anxiety of being a public learner, engaging in spontaneous role-plays and giving and receiving feedback, for Principal Leader No. 2, “It turned out to be very okay.”

The reason I say this because after a while, after the first couple of decision situations, I just realized that it is safe, it is in a safe environment. I know everybody and I prepared myself mentally saying that this is what it is. This is the reason that we are doing this. So if we end up in the school, we will know how to feel and we will be prepared to deal with that feeling of anxiety and the various what ifs.

The role plays and the fish bowls, key parts of engaging in public learning, prepared the aspiring principals for situations they would encounter in the principalship:

A perfect example is the fish bowl activities that we had, when we had to have a mock meeting, then you were sitting there and in the middle of an actual meeting with your leadership team and you're the new person on campus or the new principal and you're meeting with your person for the first time and they're not necessarily responsive or open to you and what you perceive to be the needs of the campus, so having an opportunity to role play made it easier when those actual conversations had to happen (Principal Leader No. 3)

#### *4.3.6 Leaders as Readers*

In addition to being called upon to be public learners, the APP Fellows, especially during the summer intensive, are required to be effective and efficient synthesizers of information. Principal Leader No. 2 stated that a member of an APP cohort should “expect to read the most recent in research about educational leadership and about best practices in instructional strategies” and noted that being organized and able to read and comprehend quickly are key skills for participation in the program (and for the principalship):

The other challenge that you may face is that you have to have really good study habits. Be organized, have some organization because like I said is a lot of reading is go back and apply what you learned and then bring back data or information then share with everybody. You need to be organized. I think those were my biggest challenges.

All three of the principals interviewed mentioned the books they read, both during the summer intensive and during the residency, as a key part of their learning in APP. Principal Leader No. 3 believed that the reading provided insight and examples for leadership:

I would say as far as how was it shaped by APP, I think it just, having access to the books that we read and looking at what effective leaders do, it for me it made me feel better about my commitment because I, sometimes I wonder if I’m maybe way to gung-ho because I do want my kids to have every single thing I can give them and then more. But the books that we read on effective leaders and how they’re committed to the kids and committed to change and committed to making sure the teachers are successful...

Principal Leader No. 1 remembered Tuesday night as the time to prepare for the Wednesday residency session that provided an opportunity to “digest” the information from the readings and think about ways to apply that learning.

When you’re at work, when we hit the ground at 7 o’clock, or 7:15 on the campus, you really don’t have that kind of time to sit down and say listen, listen this is what I’ve read in this book or this is the nugget that I have gathered from this chapter. To kind of sit down and discuss that and see how we can take the words off that book and implement them and they become practical to us. Again I am going back to that time was very crucial, not only for the debriefing we had but also to talk about those articles or those books we read and how that could impact our campus.

Principal Leader No. 3 noted that all of the reading and the speakers were impactful:

The reading that we did, *Lincoln on Leadership* and *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, and everything, all the books that we read, all the training on Covey, all the staff development we went to. Everything we did, the stuff from Dr. Conley, on college on career readiness...

Last, Principal Leader No. 1 credited the extensive reading with helping her “to shape the vision for the school and to understand what it would take to get there.” She considered that she was able to “strengthen and organize my thoughts relative to what I wanted to do.” The books, now a part of this principal’s professional library, frequently are used to provide resources to teacher leaders on the campus.

#### *4.3.7 Connections among Cohort Members*

One of the benefits of the intensity of the summer work and the time for reflection and learning during the residency is that deep connections are formed among the cohort members. Principal Leader No. 2 shared that APP sessions began to feel like going to a “gathering”:

We were also focused, not on just the content, but, also building a connection between the Fellows that were there. We felt like we were building a network, that we were building friendships, as well. So that's what I believe is the other difference. Every time we came back, we came back to something that was familiar. . . . After a while actually I didn't feel like I was going into a room, I'm going to a gathering.

All of the three principals interviewed were named principals during the 2010-11 school year and all continued to participate in the APP residency classes during the school year. One of these principals, Principal Leader No. 2 discussed the desire to remain connected to APP and continue the closeness of the APP "club":

Yes, this is my second year as principal, but I still need to, I still want to, learn. Just because I'm the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth year, I will still crave the feeling of belonging to a group, of people who have the same interests... I put it in a funny way... I just want to get a club going.

#### *4.3.8 Time to Reflect*

After the summer intensive, the APP Fellows moved into the residency portion of the program. Though a significant part of their work and their learning occurred on their campuses and in the interactions with their mentor principals, the APP Fellows continued to appreciate the opportunity to "gather" together in order to process and reflect on their experiences during their biweekly class sessions. Principal Leader No. 1 noted that assistant principals often have "skates on" in order to react and respond to campus needs, so having the APP sessions during the residency was vital:

Then, having that time on Wednesdays, we did have a day out of the week where we would get together as Fellows to not only to discuss how things were going on our campus, but to have the opportunity to ask questions from those that were, our leaders, such as yourself. And to talk to other Fellows about: hey this is happening, or what do you guys think about this, how do we do that. And so I don't think, just having my day to day activities as an assistant principal I

would have been able to do that; or, I know I wouldn't have had the time if we didn't have that particular day set aside for us to come together to discuss those things and to actually put those things into action that we had talked about, how things worked, or how they didn't work or, what can we do to improve this or that, so it was actually very beneficial.

Principal Leader No. 3 noted that even though the mentor/mentee relationship was an important part of the Fellows' learning, the learning and connections that occurred during the Wednesday sessions were invaluable:

So that Wednesday session was very crucial. Actually we looked forward to that. There would be some things that we would go through or encounter during the school week that we did not have the answers to. I was able to talk to my mentor principal; but at the same time it was good to know that I had a group of Fellows, as well as the leadership, to kind of bounce those ideas off, or this is what I encountered this day or this week, and how do we handle this, and where do we go to find this, so I think it was very, very crucial. And to be honest with you I do not know how, how successful we would have been without it.

#### *4.3.9 Learning from Mentors*

During their residency, the APP Fellows served as assistant or associate principals on their assigned campuses. The principals on those campuses served as mentors—in addition to supervisors—and were charged with creating intentional learning opportunities for the Fellows. Principal Leader No. 1 shared that,

I had the pleasure of being with a master principal who actually either was taught or knew some things to ask me, and actually made me a part of the day to day operations that go on at the school that I don't think I would have been privy to or had the opportunity to participate in.

On the importance of having time to process and reflect with one's mentor principal, Principal Leader No. 1 said that,

Just even the interpretation . . . I may interpret something differently from my mentor principal, but we are talking about the same thing. So, it was very important that we actually sat down and shared those ideas and come to a mutual understanding of whatever the issue or concern.

#### *4.3.10 Leadership Standards*

One of the principals mentioned the issue that the APTG had spent so much time defining and which the NYCLA considers the core of all of their work: the leadership performance standards. Principal Leader No. 3 considered the standards a tool for self-assessment and self-development:

Understanding the different competencies and looking at those and knowing how to build work or do work around them and incorporating that as an assistant principal and then how that would look once I became a principal.

#### *4.3.11 Aspiring Principals Program: The Network*

The type of learning in which the APP Fellows engaged—team-based and experiential—certainly influenced the intensity of the relationships during their participation in the program. However, the connection between and among the Fellows has continued, even after graduation from the program, and those relationships continue to be a vital part of their work as leaders and one of the enduring impacts of the program. In fact, part of the vision for APP was that the Fellows would have “a lifelong cohort of staff and colleagues to work with, to call upon, to problem-solve with” (Senior Leader No. 1).

I think that one of the deliberate side effects of the program is that they have formed a network and I think that they will draw upon each other and they will continue to function as a network well beyond their participation in the program (Senior Leader No. 1)

One of the principals affirmed this reality:

I still feel like I can reach back and ask for support. As a matter of fact, though we ended up in different learning communities, every time we see each other, I just stretch my hand and here is [that support]. I'm living that friendship. So, it is I feel I still feel part of that network and I still feel that connection with them.  
(Principal Leader No. 2)

Principal Leader No. 1 affirmed this enduring connection, stating that she still communicates with various members of the APP cohort “via telephone or text every single night” and explained that “we’ve built a network.”

#### *4.3.12 Aspiring Principals Program= Professional Learning Community*

Another aspect of the APP network that emerged also and that is the capacity of the Fellows to freely share ideas with one another. Since they had spent a year together, functioning as a professional learning community, they were accustomed to being public learners who pushed each other’s thinking. Senior Leader No. 1 commented on that phenomenon:

We had talked early about that being something that stands out when you look at them [the Fellows] in comparison to other new principals in the district, sitting in their learning communities... and they would stand out because they’re more willing to do that [engage in authentic discussion] because they’ve spent a year doing that.

#### *4.3.13 Transformational Leadership*

In addition to the strength of the network, both as a web of support and professional learning community, another theme that emerged for the creators and graduates of APP, was that these principals are different kinds of leaders, less hierarchical and more inclusive and collaborative. Principal Leader No. 1 stated that,

My philosophy of educational leadership is, first of all, to lead by example and to make everyone or every stakeholder involved be made aware of the expectations... showing them that not only am I here to lead, but I am here to help you get to the next level. Whether it's the students to get to the next grade level, whether it's the teachers to grow professionally, whether it's the parents to have more involvement in this school, I want to lead by example.

Principal Leader No. 2 referenced Jim Collins'—the author of *Good to Great*—view of leadership:

What is it level five leadership? It is being humble and being strong in character. To make the tough decisions and at the same time to be humble, where I'm not looking for my own gain.

Two of the principals also discussed initially wondering if their expectations were too high and ultimately coming to understand the importance of keeping their expectations high and matching them with high levels of support. Principal Leader No. 1 stated that,

Sometimes you start to second guess yourself, you start to say, oh, are your expectations too high, or are you expecting something that can't be done. But I think APP kind of helped me realize that if you set the expectations you've got to give [people] the resources they need to meet, or exceed those expectations. I think sometimes as administrators we think we just give out a bunch of directives or give out a bunch of this is what I want done, but we don't really give them enough resources to do that . . . I really think APP helped me to understand that giving the expectations is great, but I need to support them, to give them the resources that they need to meet, or exceed those expectations.

Principal Leader No. 3 shared the following:

For me it made me feel better about my commitment because I, sometimes I wonder if I'm maybe way too gung-ho or you know way too far off to the right or the left from what should be you know in my thinking, because I do want my kids to have every single thing I can give them and then more.



Principal Leader No. 3 also discussed gaining a greater clarity around leadership:

I think it helped deepen my commitment to kids and it helped it to kind of, those roots got deeper and stronger and just that commitment to the work for our kids, it just, APP solidified that for me.

Principal Leader No. 2 expanded that sharper understanding with relation to one's personal definition of leadership:

What it did was to give me hope that there were more professionals that were going to be doing this. One thing it did was gave me hope and realize that there is a research base on my view of what we believe. At the same time, it not just gave me hope but to put it in a better way because I my thinking was random along those lines. . . . So, it gave me the foundation, it strengthened that foundation and it strengthened my beliefs. So, I think that's how APP helped me.

#### *4.3.14 Instructional Leadership*

The theme of greater confidence and clarity in one's expectations and leadership style were certainly present among those interviewed. In addition, moving to a finer grain size, an essential partner in the school community is the teacher and these APP Fellows were very clear that their primary mission was to ensure excellent teaching so that students would learn. Senior Leader No. 1 noted that,

APP Fellows understand that their chief role is to build teacher capacity. To ensure high levels of academic learning for students, they must create a powerful learning community at their school and are always striving to improve and find innovative and creative ways to change schooling for students.

Moving from the general theme of leadership, these school leaders focused on instructional leadership and the charge to improve teaching and learning. Senior Leader

No. 1 discussed the fact that the principal is very much a part of what happens instructionally on the campus:

I think in recent years the trend has been that the principal has responsibility for making sure his or her teachers are developed and that he or she is able to capitalize upon teacher capacity to get the job done. So there's no longer the principal as the lone ranger, and there's no longer the principal being hands off and saying 'I do the operational things and you just take care of the classroom'. There has to be a coming together, a collaboration and I think that that's a new area in some ways.

Principal Leader No. 3 noted that the APP training buttressed the notion that effective principals are instructional leaders and managers of human capital who are responsible for developing the teachers' ability to provide effective instruction. Sometimes principals are called upon to be courageous leaders and remove teachers who are not doing "what's best for kids":

The books that we read on effective leaders and how they're committed to the kids and committed to change and committed to making sure the teachers are successful and for those that, you know you're supporting those that want to grow and need to grow, but you're also committed to removing those who are not willing to grow and change and support and do what's best for kids, reading that helped me feel better about how, about my thinking, and helped me to know that what I was doing was the right thing and that it's OK to be, you know, a strong supporter of you know kids being successful.

Senior Leader No. 1 echoed the importance of principals devoting time and energy to assessing and developing teacher capacity or in some cases determining what must happen when a teacher "can't remain as a part of your team":

I think that an APP Fellow going into a campus should understand the importance of and be able to assess their teacher capacity and begin to figure out how to develop their teachers based on what they need and that might mean a number of different things. It's really important to get a handle on that pretty

early on and decide what kind of supports are needed. In some cases, support might mean that person can't remain as a part of your team and so what can be done about that.

Principal Leader No. 1 noted that APP Fellows serving as principals are focused on the instructional aspects of the job more than the managerial ones:

APP not only helped sharpen our skillset, they opened up, oh gosh, how can I put this, they opened up kind of a new way of leading. Not so much the managing, even though that is a part of the job, but the instructional backgrounds we were forced to have, which is good. I think some of the schools which we've taken over, or we've had the privilege to serve in will be a lot better for it.

While understanding that the "paperwork" aspects of the principalship are necessary, one APP graduate emphasized that it should not get in the way of giving children "110 percent . . . every single day":

We have to make sure we stay focused on giving them the good stuff, we don't let all that extra get in the way, you know we have to do the paperwork and we have to do all of that, but that should not be a legitimate reason to not give kids 110% of what you have every single day, and anything less is in my opinion is a crime. And so I believe that we give them our best every day or we die trying. (Principal Leader No. 3)

#### *4.3.15 Leaders of Learning*

The three principals were clear that their leadership had much more to do with instruction than operations and that collaboration, as opposed to command, was their preferred mode of leading. These principals saw themselves as leaders of learning:

So as the principal what is it that I need to do with my staff to make that possible? What systems and structures do I need to implement so that it provides an opportunity for ongoing learning for ongoing analysis of what is happening between teachers and students? Where is our venue for addressing what it is that we learn from that experience? (Senior Leader No. 1)

#### 4.3.16 *The Power of Relationships*

These graduates from APP understand the relational aspect of leadership and feel that the program helped them to develop that,

- I believe in shared leadership. I know that at the end of the day there will be some decisions that will be mine alone. I never shy away from that, but at the same time I don't... being someone that says my way or the highway has never been my identity, period; whether I was a principal or not, I have always valued other people's opinions. At the end of the day I do know that they're just opinions, but I think sometimes people can see some things that I may not see, for one reason or another, so I do value what others have to say...I cannot lead out of fear; I know that personally I don't think it's effective. (Principal Leader No. 1)
- I do think that a strong APP fellow going into the principalship needs to be, and will be based on their experience, cognizant of the importance of relationships to get people to do what they need to do. I don't see an APP Fellow going in, as I believe some leaders are trained to do, as a hammer with the attitude of I'm coming in, I am in control and it's my way or the highway. I would hope that none of them leave the program with that kind of mindset (Senior Leader No. 1)
- I'm realizing that no matter how good or how great the idea is you have to build support. And you have to realize you know where you're going but you have to stop and back up and make sure teachers know where you're going and your parents know where you're going and the kids know. So you have to do a little bit of stroking and patting on the back and cheerleading to get to that point... We had opportunities to work on growing in those areas and that's an area where I feel like was probably one of my weakest areas coming into the program and I feel like I was given some tools to help me get better at that and I believe they've helped me. I don't think I'm a 100% where I want to be but I know I'm not where I was before I started. (Principal Leader No. 3)

This stance of valuing relationships also applied to the interactions between adults and children in the school. One of the APP graduates expressed the belief that,

If we love them [children in the school] and they know we care, then that will help open them up to learning” and that she communicated consistently to the teachers that “if you love them they will listen and if you teach them they will learn. (Principal Leader No. 3)

#### *4.3.17 A Different Kind of Leader: The Teachers’ Perspective*

In addition to talking with the three principals about their participation in the Aspiring Principals Program, the researcher also interviewed nine teacher leaders, three from each principal’s campus about their principals to get a sense of how these principals might lead differently. One of the core components of the summer intensive, as well as the residency, had to do with being a public learner. This willingness to take risks in the service of learning and growing was mentioned by the teachers:

As far as being self-reflective about what he does wrong or right or what not, that makes us feel comfortable to where we can make mistakes as well and we can learn as well as teachers and were not as afraid to tell him I failed at this or this didn’t work out. We feel OK with it and we’re not I guess intimidated by him like oh he’s expecting perfection or what not. (Teacher Leader 4)

While many of the questions to the teacher leaders focused on trying to define the ways that the APP Fellows, now principals, were different kinds of leaders—less hierarchical and more collaborative, for example—all three sets of teachers brought forth the idea that they wanted a principal who is comfortable with the authority of the role, who could and would function as a supervisor when necessary and who would ensure accountability on the campus. One teacher leader described her principal as a “take-charge person” who is “a leader in general”:

I think she has a strong personality. She speaks out and just presents herself in a kind of a strong way. I have taught for twenty eight years now and had a variety of principals. Some are soft spoken and stay in their office and let you come to

them. But she's more outgoing, more outspoken I see her as really confident, as a confident person, as a take charge person in general. (Teacher Leader No. 1)

Another teacher describes her principal as being "a little bit of both" in terms of being a distributive, collaborative leader and functioning in a more traditional supervisory role.

I think the reason I say that kind of goes back to when I said she has really high expectations. She says specifically what she wants and how she wants it done. So, in that aspect I would see how she can be a supervisor. (Teacher Leader No. 8)

This teacher did not have any negative feelings about a principal functioning in a strongly supervisory role:

I don't think supervisor has to have a negative connotation. I think when you are the head person, you have to be the head person; we have to know who to go to. (Teacher Leader No. 8)

On the other hand, this same principal also appeared comfortable sharing leadership with the teachers:

I think she trusts the teachers with their decisions for the students. If she sees something isn't working then OK, have you talked to your peers, have you talked to the instructional coach? OK, let me see where I can help. I have had times where she has come in my room; I have a student that is nowhere near on level, what can I do because they're not going to make it? She's sat down we've made an initiative together, and things like that. (Teacher Leader No. 8)

One teacher leader discussed the need for interplay between collaboration and accountability:

I think the intention was there for us to collaborate in the best interest of all students. General ed, bilingual, special ed, nobody was left out of that piece. I mean I just have to say the area of opportunity may be there in the fact that we had opportunities to be collaborative for the best interest of all our kids. But

from collaborative to accountable is where we need to move. (Teacher Leader No. 6)

Another teacher leader echoed the occasional need for “top down” leadership:

I think sometimes we need our principal leadership to be there just to make sure that we are following with what we said we were going to do. Because it’s okay to have trust in your teachers, but sometimes we still need that administrative push. (Teacher Leader No. 5)

#### *4.3.18 Equity and Excellence*

The vision of APP from the beginning involved the belief that excellence and equity are “twin aspirations” and a commitment to ensuring that program graduates are principals who are dedicated to meeting the needs of “traditionally underserved students”:

It is made perfectly clear at the onset that the mission for all principals, hence the APP Fellows as aspiring principals, is to improve the life chances for the children that we serve. Well, there is no way to achieve that goal without serious attention to excellence and equity. So, it is inherently and explicitly the primary goal for the Fellows. How can you create a school environment that provides a rigorous, academically challenging environment for ALL children? And to reach all children in an urban setting requires attention to equity, to leveling the playing field—or a better way to state that because leveling might somehow be misconstrued as bringing someone down to my level or giving me something that I don’t deserve—I guess I would rather say to give everyone what they need to be successful. And that does not mean we all get the same thing. To me, it mostly means to make sure that your neediest kids have access to your best teachers, too. In other words, don’t take the good teacher away from the ‘smart’ kids, but make sure that s/he teaches those in need, those who struggle, those who have been left behind for years, teach them, too. (Senior Leader No. 1)

The teachers that were interviewed understood the demands of excellence and stated that while “this is not the campus for a lazy teacher,” s/he believed that the benefits of the push for excellence accrue to both teachers and children:

[My principal] does have high expectations, but along those expectations there are, you see at the end of the tunnel, that there is a path. Because I know for me personally, I was becoming a lazy teacher. Now, it was kind of like I got a little fire under my little backside and I'd go: Oh, this and this are required and that has made me a stronger educator for kids. So, in the long run the payoff for me has been that I've become a stronger teacher, I think. (Teacher Leader No. 7)

A teacher leader from the same campus, noted that “for me I think at the end of the day it's going to make me a better teacher” and said that:

Sometime I think it can be hard but once you figure out what she's looking for you, if you just maintain a high standard for yourself as well, I think it will make us better teachers when it's all said and done. (Teacher Leader No. 8)

The principals, also, spoke very passionately about their dedication to “equity and excellence for all” and their commitment to ensure that every child has access to “the good stuff”:

Well I would say, I think my motto for our campus, committed to excellence and equity for all, kind of speaks to my philosophy on educational leadership. I believe that all kids, regardless of whether they live in the Budget Suites, or their mom and dad live in a \$300,000 house or if they just live in a regular old apartment. I think every kid deserves access to the good stuff on a daily basis. And I just think anything else is a crime, and I just don't want to be a part of that. (Principal Leader No. 3)

The principals communicated their sense of urgency about their work and the belief that what happens at school is instrumental in creating life chances for children. Principal Leader No. 3 said that “I want to know that we did everything we could to prepare those kids . . . to ensure that we give these kids the best that we have every single day and we love them like they're our own” and continued:

I believe that we are, as Mr. Miles, our superintendent said, their last best hope. We are their... we are for some kids, the only good thing they have. And I don't take that lightly, I don't take that for granted because we have an opportunity to come back and to do first grade all over again or to have a new school year.



Those fifth graders have one shot at fifth grade and that's it, and we're sending them on to middle school you know hoping, you know and praying that they're prepared. And I don't want to be hoping and praying and crossing fingers and toes and elbows wondering if my kids were ready. (Principal Leader No. 3)

For one of the principals, APP "put the period at the end of the sentence" in terms of re-affirming the necessity of treating all children and families with fairness and respect:

I think APP helped me to open up my eyes to see people individually and know that everybody has a story, and that not everybody deserves to be labeled; that for better or for worse, we need to treat each person with respect and knowing that everybody is coming from different backgrounds... I have always been one that appreciates diversity and embraces it. But I think APP really just kind of put the period at the end of the sentence for me. ...So, that goes back to the equity, all children despite their economic, or the, and the socioeconomic status, financial status should be treated fairly and with respect, the children as well as the parents. (Principal Leader No. 1)

The ways that excellence and equity issues manifest themselves, especially in an urban school system, are numerous and school leaders must be aware and skilled in order to manage these issues fairly and effectively. One of the APP principals remembered an instance of inequity within the system that s/he observed as a classroom teacher:

I was a Special Education teacher in the northwest (quadrant of Dallas ISD) where I had a group of parents that were very knowledgeable and very demanding. Then when I went to Oak Cliff where I had some parents that were not as knowledgeable or did not know the laws. Sometimes I would see things being handled differently with them. That didn't sit well with me, because I knew that if it was this other parent rather than this one, we would be doing this differently. (Principal Leader No. 1)

In addition to awareness of inequity, one of the principals mentioned the importance of being an effective communicator—especially the ability to listen—when leading a campus in a diverse, urban district:

Empathy, not really sympathy, is what's important, because I find that [students and their families who are living in poverty] do not want you to feel sorry for them; they just want you to know where they are coming from. And then being an effective communicator, and when I say that I mean not just talking, but knowing when to talk, what to say, and when to just listen. Those are going to be real key, because there are so many different factors when you are in an urban school district that come into play when you are leading a campus. You have got to be willing to kind of put yourself in another person's shoes, whether it's the student, or the teacher, or the parent. I think communication is going to be key because if you can first empathize with them and then know when to listen, and then know what to say. Because sometimes it's not what to say, it's how you say it, it makes a world of difference (Principal Leader No. 1)

Senior Leader No. 1 summed up the need for high levels of awareness and highly-developed skillsets to lead in an urban district:

I think it's essential to give the Fellows the skillset to be able to manage the social/political nature of their work, as well as dealing with the issues that all leadership in an urban setting involves. There are challenges and opportunities involved with ensuring that all students receive a quality education and that ideal includes students living in poverty, who are English language learners and who are struggling learners in general. These are on-going concerns, dealing with inequities within the system as well as within your school, and how do you deal with that? And how do you make sure everybody gets what they need, not in an "I have to take this from you to give to someone else" sense, because this is not a zero-sum game, but ensuring that all of the students' needs are met. That is a monumental task.

One of the principals noted the importance of Dr. Carol Dweck's work, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* promotes that belief that a growth mindset, where effort creates ability versus a fixed mindset, can enable children who come to school with academic deficits can learn and succeed:

I always believe that you can accomplish everything by applying yourself. I do believe that is true as well for every student. So as it relates to equity, I think that we all share that, especially with our kids that need so much motivation. It's so difficult for them. That person in front of them who is trying to instill that thinking...well, that seems like it is not your life that you can do something about this. Effort will take you there. The mentality can change. So, I think everybody should be exposed to that. Be trained, be told, be taught, that we can accomplish almost everything. We can if we put the right amount of effort, in spite of many things. (Principal Leader No. 2)

Senior Leader No. 1 saw this dedication to all children learning at high levels as being the goal of APP:

The goal of the program is to change, to improve the life chances and life opportunities for children. I think that any Fellow who comes into the program has to understand that is the core goal. Whatever it takes to make that possible is what they are willing to do.

I would hope that they would go into their schools with a mindset that all children can learn, that all children can learn at high levels and our primary mission is to figure out how to organize and give them the learning experiences that will make that possible.

During the 2011-12 school year, Dallas ISD staff read *Teaching with Poverty in Mind* by Eric Jensen and one of the teacher leaders referenced the book study that had taken place on the campus and noted that, “the emphasis of the whole book was that children can learn and that what we provide here during the day . . . can equalize what they are missing at home” (Teacher Leader No. 1).

Teacher Leader No. 8 noted that her principal “really agrees with the idea that in that book (*Teaching with Poverty in Mind*) because it really focuses on not only the child's mind set, but on our mind set” and explained that,

So we have to change our mind set to understand that all children can learn and have the ability to learn because the mind is able to grow. So, what they come to us with doesn't mean that's what they have to leave us with. So, we still have to

be able to...meet their needs regardless of where they came to us from or where they are going home to when they leave us.

This teacher leader shared that her principal is “a really big believer in making sure that all children learn” and frequently asks the teachers “if not us, who, and if not now, when?” to underscore the sense of urgency about all children learning. (Teacher Leader No. 8)

Teacher Leader No. 4 noted that her principal “pushes for a warm and welcoming environment for all children” which is a “way of saying all children will learn and can learn if the environment is correct or appropriate for children.” She observed that her principal is “always talking to the children, almost every single child in this school asking, ‘What did you do today?’ and if maybe the kids don’t get it at home they are getting it from school as to you know, ‘I’m checking on you and you are important and you need to be learning’.”

In addition to the book study on *Teaching with Poverty in Mind* and the implementation of the school and classroom strategies that the author suggests, including the development of warm and caring relationships with students and their families, there are some systemic and institutional responses to these issues of equity that the teacher leaders did not explicitly address. Senior Leader No. 1 commented on these structural causes of the achievement gap:

I think that one of the ways to address the achievement gap is to be able to be honest about the facts and to look at data, in particular, student achievement data, and be clear about, you know, who’s benefiting from instruction and who’s not. Having the courage to take a look at who’s teaching what to whom and then making decisions and taking action to make sure that all children have access to quality effective instruction. That sometimes requires making difficult human

capital decisions. It could be a matter of the person not being effective across the board. It could be that you have your most effective teachers in front of your least needy students. So it's analyzing what's sitting in front of you and making some decisions again based on the fact that all children need to have access to quality instruction and determining how to do that. One of the things I think the leader has to be particularly careful of is not to take away from one to give to another. So you have to kind of think out of the box, because that would be the easiest thing to do, but that is not ensuring that all children get a quality education or have access to the most effective teachers. So you have to be creative and think of other ways to do that, but that should be the goal.

One of the principals felt so strongly about the importance of "learning for all" that the position of principal would not be worth having if s/he could not ensure equity in the school:

One thing that I always go by is about learning, learning for all, no matter what. What I mean with that is I was thinking always along the lines of what is the ultimate sacrifice that I as a leader can do? I think one of those the ultimate sacrifice goes along with if you really believe in learning for all no matter what. And if you find yourself in a situation where you know that I am not the right person, to lead this group to this goal, well I'll step out. (Principal Leader No. 2)

Senior Leader No. 1 emphasized the courage necessary to dedicate oneself, as a school leader, to excellence and equity:

You have to have the courage to face these serious issues of excellence and equity. You can choose to go about your business and not ever address these issues. Simply looking at data for state and federal accountability purposes will not necessarily ensure excellence and equity. You have to really analyze data and make sure all student groups and all students are performing because you can make it [federal and state accountability] and still have a problem underneath. If you're not willing to peel that back and deal with it and address it, then you're not really dealing with excellence and equity in my opinion.

Asked about the overall impact of APP, from the effectiveness of the learning to the influence of their experience on their campus leadership, one of the principals was eager to comment that,

I so have an opinion about that. [Laughs] I would say that the impact has been that we have a group of new principals, myself included, that I think are better prepared to do the work in a large urban district than we would have been going through a typical leadership program, such as the Team One. Even though I didn't go through that Team One process, I can speak on it based on my experiences with people. There was a lot of reading and you were kind of prepared a little bit, but it was more of people coming and presenting and sharing things with you. To me, I just feel like the work we did in APP, it better prepared us.

The impact is going to be that we have principals who are more committed to training teachers, helping teachers get better. I think the impact is going to be that you're going to have principals who are better at helping their teachers become effective teacher leaders and effective instructors. You're going to have principals who are more willing to put in the time and the work to get rid of teachers who are ineffective because they recognize the damage that they're doing to our children and they're not going to stand by and allow that to happen because they know that they're doing those children a disservice.

So I think that those things are going to be what you're going to see. More effective leaders, more effective teachers, principals committed to insuring kiddos are getting access to quality instruction, high quality instruction on a consistent basis from strong teachers. (Principal Leader No. 3)

Senior Leader No. 1 described the commitment to increasing the life chances of children that the Aspiring Principals Program cultivates and that the APP Fellows embrace and that,

I believe that they are committed to the goal that we have talked about, the goal of increasing the life chances of the students that we serve. So, I think it's a worthwhile investment and I hope the program continues because we need smart people to lead our schools, and we need compassionate people, and we need people who are open to learning, and who are committed to all students. And I think that the program develops and embellishes all of those qualities.

#### *4.3.19 Dallas Leadership Academy: Vision, Mission, and Goals*

In December 2010, the Dallas Leadership Academy spent a day defining the DLA's vision, mission, core values, and strategic goals and created the following:

- Vision—The nationally recognized Dallas Leadership Academy develops transformational campus leaders who ensure systems of excellence and equity.
- Mission—The mission of the Dallas Leadership Academy is to develop and support highly effective campus leaders through powerful learning experiences, coaching, mentoring and professional networking.
- The core values were defined as: accountability, collaboration, equity, excellence, innovation and transparency.
- The key goal for the Aspiring Principals Program was that 100% of Fellows would be selected as principals within 24 months of completing the program.

Of the 15 Fellows who entered Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program in the summer of 2010 as assistant or associate principals, as of August 2012, 12 of the 15, or 80%, are now principals in Dallas. Two became principals immediately after the Summer Intensive and began the 2010 school year as principals. Three more became principals during the 2010-11 school year. Six Fellows were named principals at the end of the 2010-11 school year or during the summer and began the 2011-12 school year as principals. An additional Fellow has been selected for the principalship and began the 2012-13 school year as principal.

Of the six teacher leaders who entered the APP program in the summer of 2010, all became assistant or associate principals at or near the beginning of the 2010-11 school year. Of those, three, or 50%, have become principals, one at the beginning of the 2011-12 school year and two at the start of the 2012-13 school year as a principal. One year after completing the program, 75% of all members of the first cohort of APP

were leading campuses as principals. Regarding the numbers of APP Fellows selected for the principalship, Senior Leader No. 1 stated the following:

I am actually quite impressed with the placement rate. Having placed 75% of the first year Fellows into key principal positions actually exceeded my expectations. I attribute that to a couple of things: a rigorous selection process, the right people in the program and the leadership team's knowledge and commitment to the program, as well as the program design which was heavily influenced by the NYCLA program. That experiential program design, in my view, is what makes the program so unique and so effective.

Two years after beginning the Aspiring Principals Program Summer Intensive, an APP graduate, currently serving as a campus principal, described the impact of the Aspiring Principals Program on her:

APP was, for me, life changing. Both in the sense of my professional life and, I think, even in my personal life because it just, I think it helped deepen my commitment to kids. Those roots got deeper and stronger and that commitment to the work for our kids, it just, APP solidified that for me. And I think it did the same thing for all the other participants, all the other Fellows in our cohort. And I think even the participants in Cohort 2, I think they will find that they're going to be better prepared for the challenges of being a leader in a large urban district because they had those opportunities to go into that, much better prepared than someone who's moving from being an AP [assistant principal] in the traditional setting, with maybe more operational roles and not very many instructional or true leadership opportunities. I think they're [APP Fellows] going to be better prepared to step into those roles when the time comes for them. (Principal Leader No. 3)

#### 4.4 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has explored the creation, implementation and impact of the Dallas Independent School District's Aspiring Principals Program. Through an examination and analysis of archival documents and interviews--with senior, principal and teacher leaders--the three research questions were illuminated.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This case study began with a principal shortage that impacts schools at both the local and the national levels. The reasons for this shrinking supply of principals ready to lead the schools in the U.S., especially those in urban settings, are numerous, complex, and reflect national and global economic and political realities. While the job of school principal has changed radically in recent decades, the ways that the system prepares principals has not kept pace with this changing reality. In fact, most principals in the United States “were prepared for and appointed to jobs that do not exist any longer” (Levine, 2005, p. 12).

How--and why--has the job of school principal changed in the last three decades? The changing economy—from manufacturing-based to information-driven—along with widening income disparities, both caused by and driving the global economy, has severely impacted the context within which schools function. The rise of the accountability movement and high stakes testing have created intense stress on schools and revealed a pernicious achievement gap, in all of its permutations. The calls for equity in achievement have been joined by voices demanding inclusive, collaborative school communities that value and empower teachers and families. School finance uncertainties, funding cutbacks and political changes such as the rise of

pay-for-performance plans and charter schools have all created a demand for principals who move well beyond the realm of school operations and management and are able to function as instructional and transformational leaders.

School leadership matters. Principals account for 25% of the school's impact on student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2005). While teachers have the biggest impact at 33%, principals are key to teacher effectiveness because of their critical role in recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining effective teachers (Cheney, 2010). In fact, much of the impact of principals comes from their roles as managers of human capital. The largest study of the impact of school leaders comes through their impact in four areas--setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. Two of these four areas, developing people and redesigning the organization, emphasize the importance of principals functioning as leaders of learning (Seashore Louis et al., 2010).

The aforementioned change, complexity, and uncertainty certainly contribute substantially to why school districts are facing declining numbers of candidates able and willing to step into the principalship. As mentioned in chapter I, the factors that inhibit movement into the principalship are accountability pressures, complexity and intensity of the job, lack of support from the central office, and inadequate compensation (Young, 2009). Additional factors that have been identified are the fact that administrator preparation programs have not attracted "high-potential" candidates who will commit to leadership roles in schools where they are needed. Again, the working conditions of high-poverty schools make retaining school leaders difficult. Yet again,

and most significant for this study, is the fact that principals are “too often ill prepared and inadequately supported” to take on the challenging work of the 21st century urban principal (Darling-Hammond, 2010, pp. 9-10).

The single factor that seems to override many of the negative factors facing those who might consider becoming a school leader and ameliorate the overwhelming nature of the job is effective principal preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Training that is aligned, both in content and process, to the actual work of the principalship, readies aspiring principals to function as true leaders of learning in the complex world of the 21st century principalship.

Educators know that school leadership matters. Given the importance of the principal, the ways in which school leaders are prepared for the principalship also matters. While many principal preparation programs still do not demonstrate a sense of urgency about preparing principals for a changing world and continue to offer courses that are a collection of general management courses with little emphasis on leading learning, many are doing principal preparation very well, including universities in close partnership with school districts, independent organizations that serve school districts and leadership preparation programs within school districts. These effective principal preparation programs have a number of elements in common, despite their structural variations, and these best practices include:

- A comprehensive definition of effective school leadership, including the knowledge, skills and dispositions that a principal must have in order to ensure high levels of achievement for all student.

- Targeted recruiting strategies that develop a hearty pool of applicants from which to select participants most likely to thrive in the program and grow into effective principals.
- A highly selective, rigorous process in which applicants are evaluated through experiential activities.
- Training that is based on principles of effective adult learning and is experiential and problem-based, utilizes the power of team learning and maps to leadership performance standards.
- Includes effective mentoring and coaching.
- Provides support for graduates.
- Uses data to assess program effectiveness and is committed to continuous program improvement. (Cheney, 2010, p. 9-10)<sup>1</sup>

Within these comprehensive program elements, involving recruitment, selection, training and support, a sharp focus must be placed on the training component. The job of principal has moved from requiring technical leadership, in which the challenges involve clearly defined problems and solutions, to adaptive leadership, where neither the problem nor the solution is clearly known and can only be addressed through changes in beliefs and behaviors (Heifitz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). Thus, the preparation of principals must focus on developing these adaptive skills. Training that engages participants in authentic, experiential, team-oriented and problem-based learning develops the adaptive leadership skills required for the contemporary principalship.

Because schools and their role in society have changed, the principalship also has changed. To effectively prepare school leaders for the complex job of the 21st century principalship, preparation programs must also radically change. The school principal--functioning as an instructional and transformational leader--employs adaptive

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<sup>1</sup> *Researcher's Note.* The summary headings are quoted here. The content under each heading is omitted.)

leadership skills. Therefore, principal preparation programs, traditionally oriented toward developing technical skills, must align learning with the authentic, and adaptive, work of the principalship by engaging participants in adaptive, authentic learning.

Effective principal preparation is a K-16 issue for two reasons. First, and primarily, the need for programs that prepare principals for the authentic demands of the principalship underscores the necessity of school district and university partnerships in order to develop alignment between course content and the work of the contemporary principal. Second, 21st century school leadership requires that campus and district leaders understand that K-12 education must be about graduating students who are college and career ready, necessitating a high degree of awareness of the requirements and demands of post-secondary education and what must be done to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge and skills to be successful.

### 5.1 Findings and Conclusions

The three research questions considered in this case study are as follows:

RQ1: Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed?

RQ2: What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these components?

RQ3: What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?

With an understanding of the principal as a key lever for educational reform, responding to a principal corps with a significant percentage of its members able to retire coupled with schools in dire need of strong leadership and the lack of an effective internal principal pipeline, Dallas ISD senior leaders began the work of creating an internal principal preparation program. The Dallas Leadership Academy's Aspiring Principals Program was a natural outgrowth of then Superintendent Hinojosa's focus on principals as instructional and transformational leaders. Twenty Leadership Institutes, designed to ensure that principals had the knowledge and skills to lead instructional improvement on their campuses, had been held for Dallas ISD principals between 2005 and 2010.

Team One Dallas, which began in 2005 and was suspended in 2009, had been described in the 2008 and 2009 NCEA audits as having "mixed effectiveness at placing graduates in district principal positions." The Aspiring Principals Task Group (APTG) had been charged with developing a rigorous and effective aspiring principals program that would develop effective leaders for the district's schools.

This process, of exploring various principal preparation programs across Texas and the United States, deciding what elements were most aligned with Dallas and deciding to partner with the New York City Leadership Academy as Dallas designed and implemented an aspiring principals program within the school district, responds to RQ1—Why was the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program developed? Dallas' Aspiring Principals Program successfully addressed the concerns regarding graduate placement by instituting a rigorous selection process into the

program, as well as rigorous training that equaled the demands of the principal selection process.

Because it is known that leadership matters, a corollary is that leadership preparation also matters and the best practices that are a part of Dallas' Aspiring Principals Program were explored and discussed. This discussion, through a combination of archival documents and interviews with senior leaders, principal leaders, and teacher leaders, addressed RQ2: "What are the philosophy and components of an effective principal preparation program and how does the Dallas Independent School District Aspiring Principals Program embody these components?" with regard to the program. Based on successful national models, in particular the New York City Leadership Academy, Dallas' Aspiring Principals Program was a 14-month cohort-based program that included a summer intensive organized around a simulated school, a residency on a campus with a mentor principal and on-going classroom sessions and a planning summer to prepare for either principal selection or the first year of the principalship. All learning was standards-based and participants worked collaboratively to solve authentic problems.

Both Research Questions 1 and 2 will be further illuminated as the third research question, "What has been the overall impact of the Aspiring Principals Program in Dallas Independent School District?" of the program within Dallas ISD is addressed in several different ways. First, archival data in the form of two evaluations, one external and one internal, provided insights into how APP was experienced by those inside the program, the Fellows, as well as their mentor principals, and provided context for how

the program is situated within the district. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with people who had been most directly impacted by the program. The senior leader, who was responsible for the development and implementation of the program, was interviewed. Three program graduates, now Dallas ISD principals, as well as three teacher leaders at each of their campuses, were interviewed and they discussed their views on the impact of the program.

To discuss this third research question, “What has been the impact of the program?” the five levels of professional development evaluation provides a helpful lens. These five levels provide an effective overlay with which to explore the impact of the aspiring principals program. Beginning with the participants’ reaction to the learning and ending with a measure of how the professional learning impacts student achievement, Guskey (2002) delineates five levels at which professional development should be evaluated.

By addressing the issue of the impact of Dallas’ Aspiring Principals Program by examining these five levels, one can see that the program had a discernible impact at Levels 1 through 4. Some challenges were associated with Level 4 in terms of how the district supported and accommodated the program and these will be discussed. In terms of the program’s impact on student achievement, there was not enough data to make that determination.



Table 5.1 The Aspiring Principals Program Evaluated with Guskey’s Five Levels

<b>Evaluation Levels</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>How is it measured?</b>	<b>APP Application</b>
Level 1: Participant Reaction	Did they like it? Will it be useful?	Questionnaire S	DISD Formal Evaluation Principal Interviews
Level 2: Participant Learning	Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?	Demonstrations of learning, simulations	APP Curriculum Materials DISD Formal Program Evaluation Principal Interviews Teacher Interviews
Level 3: Organizational Support and Change	What was the impact on the organization? How did the organization support the new initiative?	District Records Observations	Selection of APP Fellows as Principals Interview with DISD Senior Leader
Level 4: Participant Use of Knowledge and Skills	Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills?	Observations Interviews	DISD Formal Program Evaluation Principal Interviews Teacher Interviews
Level 5: Student Learning Outcomes	What was the impact on students? Did it affect student performance, achievement or behavior?	Student Performance	

The first way to address the question of impact is to examine the participants' response to the program. As noted in chapter IV, the Dallas Leadership Academy (DLA) funded a comprehensive evaluation of the Aspiring Principals Program, focusing on the program from June 2010 to June 2011. The evaluator conducted surveys, focus groups, interviews and observations with the APP Fellows, both Cohorts 1 and 2, mentor principals, and DLA staff.

The first survey of APP Fellows was administered at the end of the first Summer Intensive and addressed the first level of evaluation--the participants' reactions to the learning experience. The survey included 16 items that asked the Fellows to respond using a 5-point scale. The results of the survey indicated that the Fellows were "very satisfied" with the Summer Intensive. Of 16 items on the survey, 13 had 100% agreement and all Fellows "*strongly agreed*" that the "Summer Intensive facilitators presented training in a way that allowed me to translate knowledge to practice" (Douglas, 2010).

In addition to the aforementioned item, with which all Fellows strongly agreed, there were several other items that were pertinent to this level of evaluation with which all Fellows *agreed* or *strongly agreed* and these include, according to Douglas (2010):

- Summer Intensive resources were relevant in preparing me to be an effective principal leader.
- Summer Intensive facilitators presented training materials in a way that was relevant to the way I learn.
- Summer Intensive topics deepened my understanding of leadership performance standards related to becoming an effective school leader.
- As a result of participating in the Summer Intensive, I have discovered my professional leadership strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to the written survey, the DISD researcher also conducted focus groups with the Fellows at the end of the first Summer Intensive and noted that “Fellows’ comments reflected high levels of satisfaction with the Summer Intensive” and stated that the “facilitators, group work and the curriculum were strengths of the program” (Douglas, 2010). The Fellows described the curriculum as “systematic, focused, well-organized, relevant, engaging, thought-provoking, rigorous, challenging and intense” and reported that the facilitators and the group work “allowed beneficial discussion and were supportive of learning” (Douglas, 2010).

The Fellows were equally positive about their learning during the residency part of the program. The Dallas ISD researcher noted that in the six debriefing sessions conducted with Fellows following their residency sessions, the Fellows were “overwhelmingly positive in their comments about their training” (Douglas, 2010). Specifically, the Fellows indicated that “all time was used efficiently and trainings were filled with applicable and relevant information” that provided daily benefits for their work on the campus (Douglas, 2010). The Dallas ISD researcher noted that the Fellows’ perceptions of the mentorship portion of the APP were “overwhelmingly positive” and that “the opportunity to learn from a master principal was invaluable and that the training and the required projects directly related to the work they would be doing as principals” (Douglas, 2010).

In addition to the Fellows, the mentor principals also evaluated their training and were also positive in their reactions. The 14 (of 16) mentor principals who participated in the September 2010 mentor training agreed that as a result of the training they had a

clearer understanding of their role as a mentor principal. When surveyed about what they enjoyed the most about the training, comments included the following:

- Great learning format, pacing and relevance.
- Chance for dialogue and reflection.
- The opportunity to have hands-on learning in a non-threatening environment.
- All of it! I always value the affective aspects of adult learning.

(DLA Mentor Principal Survey, 2010)

The DISD evaluation and the mentor principal survey both provide insight into the first level of evaluation--participant reaction--as do the principal interviews. In terms of their reactions to the Summer Intensive and to the residency work, the principals shared the following:

[During the Summer Intensive], you're going to work harder than you've ever worked in your life, but it will be some of the most meaningful work you will ever do in your life. (Principal Leader No. 3)

[The Wednesday residency sessions were] crucial, not only for the debriefing we had, but also to talk about those articles or those books we read and how that could impact our campus. (Principal Leader No. 1)

So, that Wednesday [session] was very crucial...it was good to know that I had a group of Fellows, as well as the [DLA] leadership to . . . bounce those ideas off of...To be honest, I don't know how successful we would have been without it. (Principal Leader No. 3)

In summary, for the APP Fellows, their experience in and reaction to the learning, both in the Summer Intensive and in their residency experience, were positive. Their reactions were captured both during the formal evaluation process that occurred

during the course of the program and through one-on-one interviews conducted a year after their completion of the program. The reactions from mentor principals were captured during a survey following a training session and through focus groups and interviews as part of the formal evaluation. The reactions of the mentor principals to their learning were also positive.

The second level of evaluation moved from the participant reaction to participant learning and asked if the participants, in this case the APP Fellows, learned the knowledge and skills that the program was designed to develop. An initial way to address this level of the evaluation was simply to examine the curriculum. Because the curriculum activities and assignments map to the curriculum standards, demonstrations of learning were integral aspects of the learning experiences that characterize the APP. For example, the organizing structure for the summer session was a school simulation where the Fellows demonstrated their ability to plan and lead meetings, interact and solve situations involving angry parents or upset staff members and develop a year-long professional development plan for the school. During their residency, Fellows were responsible for leading, and reflecting on, a campus initiative.

In addition to the on-going demonstrations of knowledge and skill acquisition that exemplify the APP, the DISD evaluation also found evidence that the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the Fellows were to acquire as a result of the learning indeed were obtained. The survey that was administered following the Summer Intensive included the following statements with which all Fellows *agreed* or *strongly agreed*:

Summer Intensive topics prepared me to use teamwork skills to accomplish school-related tasks.

Summer Intensive topics helped me to develop a plan for human capacity development.

I have deepened my understanding of how my professional leadership skills impact others.

I have increased my knowledge of how to move data analysis to action.

Though the Fellows agreed with the following statements, the percentage of those who *strongly agreed* was less than for other items. Regarding data analysis, 78% and 79%, respectively, *strongly agreed* that the Summer Intensive “helped me to better understand the connection between data and student achievement” and “increased my knowledge of how to move data analysis to action” (Douglas, 2010). As for the Principles of Learning (POLs), 47% of the Fellows *strongly agreed* that they increased their knowledge during the Summer Intensive while 68% *strongly agreed* that they increased their knowledge of how to effectively assess the POLs in a school environment.

The DISD researcher conducted focus groups at the end of the Summer Intensive and Fellows reported that they had learned--and would utilize--the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis as well as SMART (strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-specific) goal-setting strategies. Fellows also reported that they learned the importance of using data to drive decisions and developing positive relationships with school staff and noted that these changes in disposition would lead to changes in their practice in the following ways: “increased

time and effort spent on building relationships with staff, improved organizational and time-management techniques and more self-reflection” (Douglas, 2010).

Focus groups and interviews with the Fellows during the residency component of the program revealed that Fellows stated that the APP training provided them with “hands-on practice with both soft skills, such as self-reflection, relationship building and communication, as well as hard skills, such as data-analysis, budget review and strategic planning” (Douglas, 2010). Fellows also noted that the Cognitive Coaching sessions they attended had “a large impact on their daily work” and that the Shadow-a-Leader experience was “empowering and allowed them to learn from the experiences of master principals” (Douglas, 2010). Fellows also stated that while the work during the summer was simulated, the work during the residency was “real” and that they actually were able to “practice the skills they were learning” on their campuses. One Fellow noted during one of the debriefing sessions during the residency that the training exposed them to “different learning environments and allowed them to determine where they might serve best as principals . . . and what leadership strategies will work best for them as individuals balanced with the needs of their campuses” (Douglas, 2010).

Regarding their work with the mentor principals, Fellows reported that the residency mentorship component was “a strong addition to the Fellow experience when . . . fully utilized” and the Fellows believed that when the mentor/mentee relationship was working as designed they were “participating in work responsibilities that were greatly improving their skills, including [conducting] meetings with parents, working with a budget and leading instructional meetings” (Douglas, 2010). The Fellows were

aware of the benefits of having a mentor during the residency and stated that it was “helpful to have someone to walk them through the principal responsibilities and procedures, to have someone on the same campus with whom they could talk and receive feedback on their performance and to have someone with whom they could reflect on their work with APP” (Douglas, 2010).

Surveyed about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they had acquired as a result of their training, mentor principals reported that they now understood that “leadership can be developed” and the importance of the following:

- scheduling conversations [with my mentee]
- affording quality [learning] experiences to my mentee
- assessing growth according to the standards

During the process of evaluating the program, the DISD researcher noted several programmatic changes that might have enhanced value of the mentor principal component of the APP, thus facilitating both the mentors and the Fellows acquisition of more of the intended knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The researcher wrote that the mentor principals “identified the benefits of having a mentee/Fellow on their campus [and] reported that the experience helped them build their own skills as a leader, provided them the opportunity to make a difference in the career of a potential new principal and make a contribution to the district” (Douglas, 2010). The principals also said that they “benefitted from the resources and training that the program provided to their Fellow” and from the development of their ability to provide feedback on performance (Douglas, 2010). They expressed the desire to have had more contact with



one another throughout the program duration. They also stated that the mentor principal training would be useful for all principals.

In their interviews, the APP graduates, now principals, elaborated on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they developed as a result of the program. Because of the experiential nature of the learning, particularly the Summer Intensive, the Fellows noted the adaptive leadership skills that they had developed:

- The Summer Intensive gave me the ability...to be able to think under pressure, to know how to handle certain situations that we didn't encounter in the textbooks. (Principal Leader No. 1)
- Every experience made me stronger, better, more knowledgeable and better prepared to do the work . . . as a principal. (Principal Leader No. 3).
- Having the opportunity to role-play made it easier when those actual conversations had to happen. (Principal Leader No. 3)

The team-based work in the Summer Intensive forced the Fellows to develop skills in leading and being a part of a team and this set the stage for deep relationships among the Fellows:

- A lot of the things we did were in groups and. . . we all learned how to use each other's strengths and how to manage our own needs . . . and make it work so the group was successful. (Principal Leader No. 3)
- We were focused also not just on the content, but also on building a connection between the Fellows. (Principal Leader No. 2).

The vast amounts of reading the Fellows did caused them not only to develop and refine their ability to organize and synthesize important skills for the principalship, but also provided models of effective leadership and best practices which, along with the other activities, served to deepen their own commitment:

- [An APP Fellow] should expect to read the most recent research in educational leadership and best practices in instructional strategies . . . you have to have really good study habits [and] be organized. (Principal Leader No. 2)
- The books that we read on effective leaders and how they're committed to the kids and committed to change and committed to making sure that teachers are successful . . . reading . . . helped me to know that I was doing the right thing . . . [in being] a strong supporter of kids being successful. (Principal Leader No. 3)
- For me, it made me feel better about my commitment. (Principal Leader No. 2)
- I think it helped me deepen my commitment to kids . . . those roots got deeper and stronger and that commitment to work for kids . . . APP solidified that for me (Principal Leader No. 3)
- One thing [APP] did was to give me hope and realize there is a research base [that supported] my view . . . it clarified my view . . . it gave me a foundation and it strengthened my beliefs. (Principal Leader No. 2)

Ultimately, the APP experience helped to develop a new mindset on leadership and emphasized the principal as developer of capacity in others and instructional, transformational leader and leader of learning:

- I believe in shared leadership. I know that . . . there will be some decisions that will be mine alone . . . but . . . I cannot lead out of fear. (Principal Leader No. 1)
- I do think that a strong APP Fellow going into the principalship . . . will be, based on their experience, cognizant of the importance of relationships to get people to do what they need to do. (Senior Leader No. 1)
- APP . . . helped me realize that if you set the expectations, you've got to give [people] the resources they need to meet, or exceed, those expectations. (Principal Leader No. 3)
- APP not only helped sharpen our skillset, [but] they opened up . . . a new way of leading . . . not so much on the managing, though that is a part of the job, but the instructional . . . which is good. (Principal Leader No. 3)

- I think APP helped me to open my eyes to see people individually and know that everybody has a story . . . I have always been one that appreciates diversity and embraces it, but I think APP just kind of put the period at the end of the sentence for me. (Principal Leader No. 1)

In summary, the Fellows' acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and dispositions was clear from the interviews. Clearly, these principals saw themselves as instructional and transformational leaders who are able to put the focus on student learning and develop teachers' capacity to be effective. The Fellows demonstrated greater valuing of and ability with the softer leadership skills, such as self-reflection and development of positive, collaborative relationships with school and community. Last, a very strong equity mindset was evident in interviews with both the principals and the teachers on their campuses.

Having discussed the first and second levels of evaluation involving participant reaction and participant learning, the third level of program impact involves organizational support and change which measures Dallas ISD's advocacy, support, and recognition of the Aspiring Principals Program. Conversely, how did the Aspiring Principals Program impact the district, its culture and practices? In the case of APP, both positives and challenges emerged.

One shift in practice that had a significant impact on the program and its ability to influence district practices was the way in which APP Fellows were selected for the program. As previously discussed, APP's predecessor--Team One Dallas--was considered unsuccessful due to its declining ability to have its graduates selected for the principalship. Part of the problem with Team One was that at the time of its suspension

in 2009, the process that then Superintendent Hinojosa had instituted for selecting principals, the Request for Principals (RFP) process was “more rigorous than Team One Dallas in terms of identifying and selecting the best new principal applicants” (NCEA Audit Report, 2009).

In their subsequent report to the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees in January 2011, the NCEA stated that,

The first cadre of 20 Aspiring Principal participants was selected through a rigorous interview process that included several performance-based measures of, for example, applicants’ ability to analyze school data and present improvement suggestions, and their ability to offer constructive feedback on a teacher’s classroom performance. Applicants also submitted a portfolio with a resume, letters of recommendation, and leadership artifacts. Applicants had to receive approval from the principal at their current school in order to be considered. (NCEA Audit, 2010)

The influence of “sponsorship” (NCEA Audit, 2006), so significant a factor in selection into Team One, was mitigated by the rigorous selection process into APP, which mirrored the new RFP process for selecting principals.

A relevant historical note is that in 2007, then Superintendent Hinojosa, re-organized and re-cultured the district’s eight vertical area offices led by area superintendents into seven horizontal learning communities led by Senior Executive Directors (SEDs), whose primary charge was to develop principals as strong instructional leaders. A previous focus on operations and a culture of autonomy was replaced with an intensive and aligned focus on instructional leadership. This had been done partly to address the need identified in the first NCEA audit in 2005 to “breakdown silos of communication that exist throughout Dallas ISD [in order] to

improve/broaden access to principals by district administrators.” Additionally, principal selection, though still conducted through the learning communities, was now done through a structured protocol, the RFP, which brought a measure of transparency to the process.

A key metric that was critical to the question of program impact relative to the district involves the numbers of APP graduates who have been selected for principal positions. How effective was the program in preparing its graduates for selection into the principalship? The Dallas Leadership Academy, APP’s umbrella department, set as a strategic goal that 100% of all APP graduates would be selected as Dallas principals within 24 months of graduation. The first cohort, the group that is part of this case study, entered the program in June of 2010 and graduated in July of 2011. As of September 2012, 14 months after their graduation from the program, over 70% of the first cohort were leading campuses in Dallas and it is probable that by June of 2013, the 24-month target, all 21 members of the first cohort will have been selected for a principal position in Dallas. In this significant way, Dallas ISD supported and valued the work of the Aspiring Principals Program.

Some other organizational issues that showed up in the formal DISD evaluation had to do with the placement of Fellows on campuses, their role there and the selection of their mentor principals. Following their participation in the summer intensive, the Fellows began their residency year, in which they served as assistant or associate campus principals. During the residency, the Fellows continued to have weekly class

sessions in the Aspiring Principals Program and to be mentored and developed by their mentor principals.

Because the APP Fellows were working in the capacity of assistant or associate campus principals, as opposed to interns, several problems emerged. First, because the Fellows were campus administrators, and in some cases, the only other administrator on the campus besides the principal, there were occasionally concerns and resistance to having the Fellows off campus for weekly sessions. Second, the traditional role of the assistant principal frequently is to handle operational details on the campus. At times, campus demands seemed to be in opposition to the Fellows' development. Both principals and APP Fellows stated that the needs of the campus and the traditional job demands of assistant principals sometimes superseded the role of the principal as mentor and developer. Regarding this issue, the DISD researcher stated the following:

The program originally planned for the Fellows to...serve as interns rather than actual employees of the school; however, funding was not available for this option...A common theme across comments of both Fellows and mentor principals was that working as an assistant or associate principal while also learning the responsibilities of the principal position was a burden. Fellows would be better able to participate in the mentor/mentee relationship...if they were fully funded without having to fulfill the responsibilities of an assistant or associate principal. In addition, mentor principals could hire full-time APs, leaving them free to more fully mentor the Fellows. (Douglas, 2010)

A related concern with regard to the Fellows' residency experience had to do with the Senior Executive Directors' role in making the Fellows' campus placements. For the first APP cohort, the Senior Executive Directors (SEDs) decided on what campuses the Fellows would be placed and with what mentor principals they would work. For the most part, these selections were operational ones. For example, many of

the Fellows stayed on the campuses where they had been working when they were selected for the program. In some instances, APP Fellows were moved because of campus needs, such as shifting student numbers or a struggling principal in need of a strong assistant principal. On the selection of mentor principals, the DISD researcher wrote that when asked about the mentor principal selection process,

Some mentor principals reported that even though they nominated a staff member for the program, they did not know that meant they would serve as a mentor principal. In addition, some principals were asked by their [SEDs] to serve as mentors, but they did not understand the requirements of the position at the time they accepted the additional responsibilities...In a few cases, it appeared that the principals were participating in the program at the request of their [SED] and it was unclear whether they would have chosen to participate if the [SED] was not included in the recruitment process.

Additionally, the DISD researcher noted that based on interviews,

It appeared that mentor principals who fully accepted their roles as mentors and allowed their Fellows to take on principal responsibilities had positive perceptions of the program...Allowing the [APP staff] more autonomy in selecting mentor principals would allow them to create criteria for identifying those principals who best represent the goals of the mentor principal position. (Douglas, 2010)

It was atypical in the first year of APP for Fellow placements to have been made based on the development needs of the Fellow: Addressing these issues regarding the Fellows' placement on campuses and the selection of mentor principals by utilizing a process with the Fellows' development as its basis would have translated to more organization support for the program. Funding the Fellows to learn as interns during their residency year would have ensured that the development of the Fellows as future principals would have been primary.

In summary, while there was support for the Aspiring Principals Program at the Superintendent and Chief levels, there were some challenges at the Senior Executive Director level. The SEDs, to whom the principals directly report, thought, in some instances, that they should be solely responsible for identifying and training aspiring principals and selecting them for the principalship. Therefore, some Senior Executive Directors resisted having the Aspiring Principals Program function as designed, specifically by allowing the placement of Fellows on campuses and with mentor principals based on the needs of the aspiring principal. Clearly, however, the SEDs saw the value of the training since APP graduates were selected for principal positions, an activity that was largely the responsibility of the SEDs at high rates.

Some additional organizational impacts in which APP influenced the district are mostly anecdotal. The first impact seems to be overall impact on professional learning. Certainly, the APP Fellows and the mentor principals adopted and used strategies for adult learning that they learned about through their experience in APP on their campuses. Additionally, other principals and SEDs occasionally were in sessions with the DLA staff and stated that they had or intended to use some of the learning experiences with the teachers on their campuses or the principals in their learning communities.

A second impact was the impact on the principal selection process. The assessment center for applicants to the APP was more rigorous than principal selection process and several SEDs that participated in the APP selection events stated that they intended to use some of the activities for their assessment center.



The third level of professional development evaluation which examines the organization's advocacy and support for the initiative, as well as the program's impact on the organization is, in ways, the most complicated of the five levels and certainly is a gateway to the deep implementation that would be seen in Levels 4 and 5.

The fourth level of evaluation of concerns the Fellows' application of the new knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they acquired in the Aspiring Principals Program. While both Levels 4 and 5, student learning outcomes will be discussed in more depth in the section suggesting further research; the teacher and senior leader interviews do provide some information regarding application of the new learning.

First, the relationships that were fostered by the emphasis on team-based learning have endured almost a year and a half after graduation from the program and the vision that APP Fellows would enjoy "a lifelong cohort of . . . colleagues to work with, to call upon, to problem-solve with" (Senior Leader No. 1) appears to be the case. Principal Leader No. 1 confirmed this powerful connection, stating that she still communicates with various members of the APP cohort "via telephone or text every single night" and explained that "we've built a network." Principal Leader No. 2 stated that, "I still feel like I can reach back and ask for support . . . I still feel part of that network and I still feel that connection with them."

Regarding leading with both high expectations and high levels of support, Principal Leader No. 3 noted that,

My philosophy of educational leadership is . . . to lead by example and to make...every stakeholder . . . aware of the expectations. . . showing them that not only am I here to lead, but I am here to help you get to the next level . . .

whether that's the students getting to the next grade level, the teachers growing professionally, or the parents having more involvement in the school, I want to lead by example.

The nine teacher leaders who were interviewed echoed this exemplar of high expectations and support with regard to the three principals with whom they worked:

- She has really high expectations. . . . I think she trusts the teachers with their decisions for the students. If she sees something that isn't working, [she asks] have you talked to your peers, have you talked to the instructional coach...let me see where I can help. I've had times when she has come into my room [and seen] a student that is nowhere near on [grade] level . . . [and] she's sat down [and] we've made an initiative together. (Teacher Leader No. 8)
- I think the intention was there for us to collaborate in the best interest of all students. General ed., bilingual, special ed . . . nobody was left out...but from collaborative to accountability is where we need to move . (Teacher Leader No. 6)
- I think sometimes we need our principal leadership to be there just to make sure that we are following what we said we were going to do. It's okay to have trust in your teachers, but sometimes we need that administrative push. (Teacher Leader No. 5)
- [My principal] does have high expectations, but along [with] those expectations there [is] a path. (Teacher Leader No. 7)
- Sometimes, I think it can be hard, but once you figure out what she's looking for, if you maintain a high standard for yourself. . . . I think it will make us better teachers when all is said and done. (Teacher Leader No. 8)

Another element of the high expectations, high support dynamic is support for risk-taking, even if it sometimes results in failure:

As far as being self-reflective about what he does wrong or right . . . that makes us feel comfortable . . . we can mistakes . . . and we can learn . . . and we're not afraid to tell him 'I failed at this or this didn't work out' . . . We feel okay with it and we're not intimidated by him, like he's expecting perfection. (Teacher Leader No. 4)

A very prevalent and important disposition that appears to have been deeply applied at the campus level is the APP emphasis on excellence and equity. Senior Leader No. 1 observed that, “I believe that [the APP Fellows] are committed to the goal . . . of increasing the life chances of the children that we serve” and Principal Leader No. 3 stated that, “my motto for our campus--‘Committed to Excellence and Equity for All’--speaks to my philosophy on educational leadership.” This principal elaborated on this philosophy:

I believe that all kids, regardless of whether they live in the Budget Suites or their mom and dad live in a \$300,000 house or if they just live in a regular old apartment, deserve access to the good stuff on a daily basis. I just think anything else is a crime and I just don’t want to be a part of that.

As with the discussion on high expectations and high support, in this case regarding excellence and equity, all of the teacher leaders emphasized their principals’ commitment in this area. Referring to the 2011-2012 Dallas ISD book study on *Teaching with Poverty in Mind*, the teachers discussed the application of the ideas contained within the book on their campuses: “The emphasis of the whole book was that children can learn and that what we provide here during the day . . . can equalize what they are missing at home” (Teacher Leader No. 1). Another teacher leader shared that her principal “really agrees with the idea in that book, because it really focuses on not only the child’s mindset, but on our mindset . . . to understand that all children can learn . . . because the mind is able to grow. So, what they come to us with doesn’t mean that’s what they have to leave us with” (Teacher Leader No. 8). This same teacher revealed that her principal frequently asks the school staff, “If not us, who and if not

now, when?” to emphasize the sense of urgency regarding all children’s right to learn.

Teacher Leader No. 4 noted that her principal “pushes for a warm and welcoming environment for all children” which is a “way of saying that all children will learn if the environment is . . . appropriate for children.”

One principal explained that he felt so strongly about the importance of “learning for all” that the position of principal would not be worth having if he could not ensure equity in the school:

One thing that I always go by is about learning, learning for all, no matter what. What I mean with that is I was thinking always along the lines of what is the ultimate sacrifice that I as a leader can do? I think one of those the ultimate sacrifice goes along with if you really believe in learning for all no matter what. And if you find yourself in a situation where you know that I am not the right person, to lead this group to this goal, well I’ll step out. (Principal Leader No. 2)

In summary, the Fellows’ acquisition of new knowledge, skills and dispositions that was evident in the discussion of Level 2 was also seen at the campus level. Clearly, these principals were functioning as instructional and transformational leaders who are able to develop powerful teaching and learning on their campuses. The Fellows’ valuing of self-reflection and development of positive, collaborative relationships with school and community impacted their work on the campus. Finally, the strong equity mindset that was evident in interviews with the principals clearly was evident on the campus as evidenced by the teacher interviews.

From these findings, some conclusions can be drawn. In terms of Research Question 1 which asked why the program was created, a related conclusion concerns the sustainability of the APP and other similar programs. Dallas’ Aspiring Principals

Program was development and implemented in the sixth year of Superintendent Michael Hinojosa's tenure in Dallas. In May of 2010-11 school year, before the first cohort of the APP Fellows had graduated from the program, Dr. Hinojosa left the district. An interim superintendent served from June 2011 to May 2012; the second cohort of APP began in June 2011.

With the arrival of Dallas' new superintendent, Mike Miles, in May 2012, the Aspiring Principals Program was eliminated and a new program was instituted. What made the program vulnerable to be eliminated? Partly it was timing--coming at the end, rather than the beginning, of a superintendent's tenure—and partly it may have been the structure of the program itself. As discussed in chapter II, the NYCLA is an independent entity whose major client is the New York City Department of Education. NYCLA was created in 2003, the second year of then Chancellor Joel Klein's 9-year tenure. New Leaders for New Schools is a national organization that contracts with school districts to provide principal training. The Denver Public Schools, also a NYCLA partner, has a strong working relationship with a university.

From an organizational perspective, an effective and enduring principal preparation would ideally be situated in a cohesive and coherent system of principal preparation, development, and support. The comprehensive framework of leader competencies that provide the basis for selection into the program and the learning experiences in the program should also be the basis for principal learning and principal evaluation within the district. Principal supervisors should have the skillsets to develop principals and the central office would be targeted toward supporting the work of the

campuses. As New Leaders for New Schools cites in their theory of action: “Well Selected and Trained Principals + Aligned and Supportive Context = High Student Achievement” (New Leaders Policy Recommendations).

## 5.2 Further Research

Many of the suggestions for further research have to do with the third, fourth, and fifth levels of professional learning evaluation. However, broad questions regarding Level 2, the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions are relevant. They are as follows:

- How can preparation be differentiated for principals who will lead elementary and secondary schools?
- How can preparation be differentiated for principals who will lead start-up schools, maintenance/status quo schools, or turnaround schools?
- What type of professional learning do new principals, versus veteran principals, need?

In terms of taking aspiring principal programs to scale, specifically with regard to program sustainability, possible research questions include the following:

- What can districts do organizationally to support and enhance principal effectiveness?
- What are the required knowledge, skills, and dispositions of effective principal managers and how can this be developed?
- What are the qualities of aspiring principal programs that have been in existence for ten years or more?

- What are the factors that positively impact sustainability of programs?
- With programs that have district and university partnerships, in what ways are both organizations positively influenced one by the other?

In general, further investigation of the fourth level of the program evaluation regarding the participants' application of the new knowledge and skills could be conducted. While this was addressed in this research through interviews, more extensive research could be conducted through a series of structured interviews with teachers, principals, and principal supervisors that focus on application of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions learned in the training, a series of observations focusing on application, as well as participant reflections and portfolios.

- Do graduates of effective preparation programs lead differently? If so, in what ways?
- Are principals who have participated in highly effective preparation programs that utilize principles of adult better leaders of learning at their campuses?
- In addition to student achievement, what other metrics might be used to determine principal effectiveness?

With regard to the fifth level of evaluation, a very powerful research question becomes, "Do graduates of effective principal preparation programs lead schools with higher student achievement levels than graduates of traditional programs?" It is important to note that the New York City Leadership Academy requested and received a study conducted by New York University that looked at 109 New York City schools

led by graduates of the Aspiring Principals Program and 331 schools led by other new principals hired in the same year and found that the APP graduates tended to improve student performance in Math and English at a higher rate (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2011). This would be important research to conduct with regard to all principal preparation programs.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Though there are some specific programmatic and organizational changes that would have increased the effectiveness of the program—and these have been alluded to in previous sections of this chapter—the majority of recommendations, while grounded in the Dallas experience, have application to all developers and implementers of programs in all school districts or universities. Across the board, educational researchers and policymakers struggle to find ways to bring effective and successful programs to scale. Partly, this is due to the notion of scale relying strictly on scope of the initiative, where scale may have several additional dimensions (Coburn, 2003).

In “Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change,” Coburn (2003) suggests that the following four elements to define scale:

1. Depth--Change that involves beliefs, principles and norms.
2. Sustainability--The extent to which change is embedded in policies and procedures and has a professional learning community wrapped around it to support it.
3. Spread--Influence the change has had on policies and practices, as well as the extent of professional development to support.



4. Ownership--Degree to which structures are in place for on-going learning.

Finally, the degree to which these four components form a coherent and aligned system that reinforce one another is a critically important factor in going to scale.

Clearly, the APP graduates, now principals, had integrated the vision of the principal as instructional and transformational leaders with a strong equity mindset, a vision in alignment with the leadership performance standards on which the curriculum was based. While the Aspiring Principals Program used a set of leadership performance standards as the basis for activities and assignments, one programmatic suggestion would be to tighten the link between the standards and the demonstrations of learning. A way to accomplish this would be to utilize individual leadership profiles based on demonstrated competency with regard to the standards and to require demonstrated proficiency for program completion.

On a larger scale, the clear leadership competencies that were a driving force for the professional learning within APP were not equally translated into practice at the district level where leadership competencies were more implicit than explicit. Though the shift from managerial to instructional and transformational leadership was reflected in Dallas' revision of the principal appraisal instrument in 2009, the appraisal was used almost exclusively as an evaluation tool. While an integrated evaluation instrument could function as an individualized learning plan for principals, there was limited development or use of protocols for professional learning that would develop as well as evaluate principals. Expanding the use of leadership competencies as drivers for

professional learning from strictly an APP context to a district context would have been a very positive step in taking the best practices of APP to scale.

Another related issue is that of defining differentiated competencies for different school contexts. The leadership competencies are slightly different for principals leading campuses at different levels--elementary and secondary--as well as schools at different stages, such as start-up schools, status quo schools, and turnaround schools. While the APP Fellows appreciated the opportunity to explore the various types of schools they might lead in a reflective sense, the program would have been made even stronger by defining specific skills that are unique to the different types of schools. At an organizational level, professional learning, typically the same for all principals, could have been differentiated by type of school, as well as experience in the principalship. In this way, the professional learning that both Fellows and mentor principals viewed so positively, could have gone to scale through depth, sustainability, spread, and ownership.

Also discussed in depth in a previous section is the issue of the Fellows' residency experiences and their assignments to campuses and mentor principals. The fundamental recommendation is a shift from making these assignments about convenience, campus need, or principal reward to a focus on the developmental needs of the aspiring principal. Assuming a differentiated learning profile based on assessment results and demonstrated learning, Fellows would be assigned to campuses and principals who wanted to serve as mentor and who were able and willing to develop the aspiring principal. The ideal situation would be one in which the aspiring principal

is functioning as an intern rather than an official campus administrator so that the focus can be on the learning and development of the Fellow. A related recommendation, and one which seeks to use the principal evaluation as a way of getting more of the actions that are necessary to taking leadership development to scale, is to include human capital development as a metric on which principals can be measured and evaluated. All of these recommendations would serve to take the leadership development aspects of an aspiring principals program to scale.

An essential skill in terms of leadership development is coaching. Coaching “closes the gap between where you are and where you want to go” by inspiring clients, in this case, aspiring principals, to “maximize their personal and professional potential” (International Coach Federation, 2009). Both APP Fellows and mentor principals spoke of the value of their coaching training and this researcher strongly recommends that formal coaching training be a part of all curricula designed to develop aspiring principals. Coaching training should be a requirement for the aspiring principals, the mentor principals, and for program staff. Additionally, coaching training for all principals, including assistants and associates, teacher leaders and, more importantly, for principal supervisors, is also recommended. The shift in mindset when coaching is part of the expected skillset for school leaders is profound and impacts all four components of scalability.

A related recommendation involves support for new principals. When program graduates successfully move into the principalship, they must continue to receive support from their program, as well as from the district. While professional learning

should be differentiated and support from principal supervisors should be targeted for new principals, program staff also should continue to be in communication and contact with the new principal in order to ensure that the system supports his or her work. To ensure that the new principal enters a system that is supportive of his or her work as leader of learning on the campus, a focus on central office transformation to promote accountability in the central office to support teaching and learning is key.

A significant recommendation regards program sustainability. Various models exist for aspiring principal programs. There are university-based programs such as the Ritchie Program for School Leaders which, in partnership the University of Denver, serves the Denver Public Schools. Other programs, like the Dallas Leadership Academy are district-based, with no formal university affiliation. Some entities, like the New York City Leadership Academy, develop principals for one primary client, in this case, the New York City Department of Education, while others, such as New Leaders, contract to develop school leaders for many school districts. All of the organizations mentioned, with the exception of the DLA, are approaching ten years of work preparing aspiring principals for the principalship and there are several key components that have led to their sustainability and many of these have been discussed.

While New Leaders and the NYCLA are both non-profit providers that provide services to schools, the Ritchie Program is a district-based program with a strong university partnership that illuminates several lessons in a K-16 context. Chief among these is the need for transparency and for both entities to be open to being influenced by the other and to see how both could benefit from the partnership. This model has

enabled the Ritchie Program to last through three changes in superintendents and the primary factor that is cited is the district/university partnership.

Timing is also a critical part of the sustainability issue. The New York City Leadership Academy began as a part of educational reform efforts at the beginning of a superintendent's long tenure and has endured beyond that tenure, whereas the Dallas Leadership Academy began in the final two years of a superintendent's tenure and was ended by an incoming superintendent. Having the opportunity to become embedded in the culture of the organization is a key part of sustainability.

In order to take an aspiring principals program to scale, it must be part of a coherent and cohesive whole that includes not only the recruitment, selection, training and support of aspiring principals, but the recruitment and selection of principals and support for new principals, differentiated training for principals with different school assignments, an evaluation system that measures a variety of metrics, including human capital management, principal supervisors with the appropriate skillset to develop and support principals, and a central office with a campus focus. Building a coherent and aligned principal pipeline, with a sharp focus on aspiring principals has salutary effects on all parts of the K-16 system.

### 5.5 Summary

Chapter 5 centers on a discussion of the findings, based on analysis of archival documents and interviews, with regard to the three research questions. Using the lens of Guskey's (2000) five levels of evaluation of professional learning, the researcher concluded that the participants of Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program had a very

favorable view of their experience and to a large degree successfully acquired the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the program presented. Organizational support for the program was significantly impacted by the departure of the superintendent and other senior staff, under whose leadership the program was implemented. There was evidence of the acquired knowledge, skills, and dispositions being applied at the campus level. The fifth level of evaluation, student achievement, was not addressed due to a lack of data.

In terms of recommendations, some internal and programmatic recommendations were offered. The focus regarding recommendations centers on the most effective models and how to ensure that effective programs are taken to scale and are sustainable. Suggestions for further research involve examining program model effectiveness, especially relative to student achievement and sustainability.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF PROJECT APPROVAL FROM DALLAS  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Michael Hinojosa, Ed.D.  
*Superintendent of Schools*

January 7, 2011

Ms. Jennifer Parvin  
Dallas Leadership Academy  
2909 N. Buckner Blvd., 6th Floor  
Dallas, TX 75228

RE: The Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program Case Study

Dear Ms. Parvin:

The Research Review Board (RRB) of the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) has reviewed and approved your proposal to conduct the above-referenced study. Based on the information provided, the committee concludes that the study serves a worthwhile purpose and will benefit the district.

It is our understanding that you have read and agreed to the terms described in the *Procedures and Policies for Conducting Extra-District Research in the Dallas Independent School District*. Please note that all school and district information, wherever applicable, should remain confidential within the limits of the law. In addition, any data collected from Dallas ISD may be used solely for the purposes of the approved study.

Approval by the RRB does not guarantee that any Dallas ISD department, school, or employee will comply with data requests for the study. If the study involves collection of primary data at a school or schools, the permission of the building principal(s) must be obtained separately from this approval.

Please provide the RRB with a copy of any data file constructed using Dallas ISD student or personnel information, and a copy of your final report, within 30 days following the completion of the study. In all future communications, please use the study's reference number (10-061).



On behalf of the committee, I wish you the best of luck with your study.

Sincerely,



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Dorothea Weir, Ph. D.  
Chair, Research Review Board  
Office of Applied Research  
Department of Evaluation and Accountability  
Dallas Independent School District

**3700 Ross Ave. Dallas, TX 75204 (972) 925-3700 [www.dallasisd.org](http://www.dallasisd.org)**

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR LEADERS

1. What is your background? (in terms of school leadership)
2. What was your role in Dallas ISD during the creation and implementation of the Aspiring Principals Program?

#### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

3. What are the greatest needs in terms of school leadership?
  - a. What aspects are being addressed well and which aren't?
  - b. Where are the gaps?
  - c. How has the field of school leadership changed over the last few years?
  - d. What major trends do you see in school leadership?
  - e. What are the biggest challenges facing principals today?

#### ASPIRING PRINCIPALS PROGRAM

Question One: Why was Dallas ISD's Aspiring Principals Program created?

4. What problem was being solved when you assembled the APTG?
  - a. What was your vision?
  - b. What was the vision of the group?
  - c. What was the process?
  - d. What about the NYCLA caused you to decide to partner with them?
5. Some people feel that since the APP Fellows are already certified and that the SEDs provide training for principals, the APP is unnecessary. How do you respond to that?
  6. What would an ideal APP graduate be like?
    - a. What does s/he do differently?
    - b. How does s/he lead differently?
7. Is the current implementation of APP in line with your vision/expectations?
  - a. How is it the same?
  - b. How is it different?
8. How important were issues of excellence and equity as you planned the Dallas APP?
  - a. How did you imagine those qualities would be cultivated through the program?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPAL LEADERS

Question Three: What has been the impact of the program?

What additional comments or suggestions do you have?

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPAL LEADERS**

### ***Demographic Information***

Each respondent will be issued a code number.

How many years have you worked in education?

How many years have you worked in Dallas ISD?

How many years have you worked in this school?

***Research Question Two: What is the program like? What is the philosophy? What are the components?***

1. Imagine that I am a new member of APP Cohort III and I am getting ready to begin the program. What should I expect from the summer intensive and the residency?
  - a. What was the most impactful part for you? Why?
  - b. What was the least impactful part? Why?
  - c. How is APP different from the university coursework you took to receive your master's degree and certification?
  - d. How is APP different from most professional development that you have had?
2. How do you believe Dallas' aspiring principals program prepares Fellows for the principalship?
3. What is the philosophy of APP?
  - a. What is your philosophy of educational leadership?
  - b. How was your philosophy shaped by your experience in APP?
  - c. How do you view the role of principal?
  - d. How did your leadership identity change, if at all, as a result of your participation in APP?
  - e. Would you say that the way you interact with teachers and staff is different as a result of participating in APP? In what ways? To what do you attribute this shift, if applicable?
  - f. How is your mindset and skillset regarding equity issues in education different as a result of participating in APP?

***Research Question Three: What has been the impact of the program on Dallas ISD?***

***What additional comments or suggestions do you have?***

APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER LEADERS

*Demographic Information*

Each respondent will be issued a code number.

How many years have you worked in education?

How many years have you worked in Dallas ISD?

How many years have you worked in this school?

*Research Question Three: What has been the impact of the program?*

1. Describe [your principal] as a leader.
  - a. In what ways has [your principal] created/strengthened the professional learning community on this campus?
  - b. In what ways does s/he distribute leadership?
  - c. In what ways does s/he live out the belief that “All children will learn”?
  - d. Would you say that [your principal] is more of a supervisor or more of a leader of learning? Why?
  - e. In what ways is [your principal] different from other principals that you have worked with?
  - f. How would you describe [your principal’s] leadership philosophy?

*What additional comments or suggestions do you have?*

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