

Special Issue

Shifting Paradigms: Redesigning a Principal Preparation Program's Curriculum

Ellen Reames
Auburn University

The purpose of this paper is to describe Auburn University's story of developing an innovative field-based master's level principal preparation program. Our goal was to align the program's curriculum and internship experiences with state and other accrediting agency standards, current leadership preparation research, and local educational agency (LEA) partner input and support. As a faculty, we decided to model best practices throughout the redesign and approached the curriculum development project using a variety of data collection processes. What emerged was a creative Instructional Leadership Program (ILP) curriculum, involving multiple partnerships, best practices research, and an understanding that it was a living, breathing document which would change as implementation occurred and data were collected to suggest needed changes. As the program is constantly evaluated and the university revisits with LEA partners, 2008 educational leadership cohort students, other stakeholders and researchers are beginning to see richer results than originally anticipated. Similar to Murphy's (2002) "New Blueprints" discussion of new educational leadership foundations, several important paradigms are emerging from the program: leadership based on school improvement and student achievement, and creating schools as socially just, democratic learning communities (Furman & Shields, 2005; Green, 1999; Smylie, Bennett, Konkol, & Fendt, 2005; Strike, 1999).

On November 30, 2004, Governor Bob Riley and State Superintendent Joseph B. Morton convened the Alabama Governor's Congress on School Leadership in Montgomery, Alabama to propose the development of strong leadership in Alabama schools. Five task forces to address the development of school leaders were formed and included members from K-12 school systems, higher education, the Alabama State Department of Education

(ALSDE), education foundations and agencies, professional associations, businesses and other community leaders (Alabama State Department of Education [ALSDE], 2006a). From the Implementation Task Force, which was responsible for university redesign, came important changes requiring new instructional leadership candidates to complete a program addressing all Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders. Requirements included

knowledge and abilities, dispositions, and performances for the following eight areas: planning for continuous improvement, teaching and learning, human resource development, diversity, community and stakeholder relationships, technology, management of the learning organization, and ethics (ALSDE, 2006b).

As a result of the above actions, the Alabama State Board of Education in 2005 adopted and disseminated a set of performance assessment guidelines for university leadership programs. A significant component of the new standards was the requirement of K-12/university partnerships to support the preparation of leadership candidates (ALSDE, 2006a). Furthermore, the Alabama State Department agreed to support redesign initiatives by providing funding, training, and assistance opportunities (ALSDE, 2005). To begin, a competitive grant system was offered to state higher education institutions who desired to become lead institutions in the redesign process. On November 15, 2005 Auburn University's grant proposal was approved, and the university was chosen as one of four lead institutions to design and pilot a new educational leadership program.

For Auburn University and the other three lead institutions, the Alabama State Department of Education created a timetable consisting of benchmarks and completion dates. Auburn University as well as their LEA partners committed personnel, funds, and relationships for the endeavor. In December, 2007 after two years of demanding work and approval processes, Auburn University's

redesigned Instructional Leadership Program (ILP) received formal approval from the Alabama Board of Education as one of three approved programs. Beginning in May, 2008 the first master's ILP cohort began their journey through the new program.

Related Research and Underpinnings

Instructional leadership preparation has become a focus of much attention from the educational community. A number of reasons for this attention include the scrutiny schools and school systems are receiving from accountability measures like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the ever increasing demands placed on administrators from external and internal sources (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). Research has been fairly strong in pointing to the importance of leadership in schools to encourage improvement efforts and increase student achievement. In fact, other than actual classroom instruction, school leadership is the leading school-based factor in student learning (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Shortages in the ranks of qualified, innovative leaders who can lead schools of the future have been suggested by many agencies and state organizations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008; Peterson, 2002). At the same time, university and college programs have come under tremendous scrutiny because some are not sure higher education is capable of moving educational leadership programs forward in preparing the special breed of school leadership that is needed in

the 21st century (Hoachlander, Alt & Beltranena, 2001; Levine, 2005).

The majority of programs range from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the country's leading universities" (Levine, 2005, p. 23). [Educational leadership programs] are "cash cows" – diverting revenues they generate to other parts of the campus. A cash cow program is pressured to keep enrollments high and reduce costs in order to bolster these transfer payments. This encourages programs to set low admission standards in order to hit enrollment targets; admit more students than the faculty can reasonably educate; hire lower cost part-time faculty rather than an adequate complement of full-time professors; and mount low cost, high volume, off-campus programs (p .24) .

While there are trepidations from some, others recognize the efforts to redesign, change, and strengthen preparation programs (Kowalski, 2008; Orr, 2006; Young & Kochan, 2004).

One area which shows significant promise is the widespread support for the notion that redesign should be partnership-based with LEAs, community and business leaders, and other university preparation programs (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Orr, 2006; Young & Kochan, 2004). Significant events such as UCEA's *Primis* and the establishment of various national and regional agency standards have assisted

in the adoption of clearly aligned instructional leadership knowledge and proficiencies (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). From these advancements university/college leadership programs can provide course content that promotes the understanding of school culture and an effective instructional program, collaborates with families and communities, acts ethically, manages the day to day operations of the school, influences the larger political, social, economic, and cultural context, and formulates the internship whereby the experiences are meaningful and related to realistic school issues (ALSDE, 2005; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008; Smyllie, Bennett, Konkol & Fendt, 2005; O'Neill, Fry, Hill & Bottoms, 2005).

There have been numerous and positive innovations to preparation programs that focus on organizing principles whereby course content is related and sequential and connected to field experiences at school settings (Orr, 2006). School leadership preparation programs should be research-based and provide linkages between curriculum and field experiences. In addition, cohort models which emphasize the development of learning community processes and structures are crucial (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). In addition, most current literature suggests collaboration as a key component in all facets of the leadership program to include university faculty and administrators, state departments of education, school systems as partners, cohort members, and others associated with the program in question (Davis et.

al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Young, Petersen & Short, 2001).

Others have suggested our attention should be focused on the purpose of various levels of educational administration degrees, that is M.Ed., Ed.D. and Ph.D (Young, 2006). While there is not total agreement concerning the goals and what should be taught in the subsequent degree levels, Young (2006) offers some unique perspectives in regards to this issue. For a master's level degree, she suggests career goals should include an entry level position as assistant principal, principal, or teacher leader. Knowledge requirements and experiences are to be practical and field based. Research skills should include an emphasis on action research projects that can improve learning. Candidate assessment should include a variety of sources and data types including problem-based learning in real life settings.

Developments in the literature from the last decade suggest that the arguments will continue concerning what is to be included in leadership preparation and that some use of framing or "scaffolding" (Murphy, 2002, p. 177) the research from a number of base areas is needed. Murphy began this discussion by suggesting three paradigms: school improvement, democratic community, and social justice and elaborated further that social justice and democratic community should be "nested" (p. 54) within school improvement. While Murphy (2002) speaks of a "next era of the profession" (p. 176) and "three key concepts that provide new anchors... school improvement, democratic community,

and social justice" (p. 177), others describe similar coherency in the literature as a critical need in preparing leaders (Furman & Shields, 2005) and shifting or conceptualizing our present paradigms.

Increasingly, school improvement has become a focus of school leadership preparation and practice (Green, 2010; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Murphy, 2002). Accountability measures in the 21st century, such as NCLB, are helping redefine school leadership as instructional leadership. Leadership for school improvement includes being able to create a vision for learning that is accepted by all, forming teams and communities of learners, making student and adult learning the center focus, having high expectations for students, faculty and community, being an advocate for children, and engaging community stakeholders in the educational process (Green, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Today's school leaders must themselves be sound in pedagogical practices and curriculum design, recognize outstanding practice, know how to analyze data, and know how to create and sustain professional learning cultures (Green, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005). These leaders find models to guide their school towards what needs to be done to make it more effective, and almost always this involves some core elements such as: results-driven goals, data driven decision making, instruction connected to learning, professional development, learning in the organization, and developing collaborative teams (Kowalski, Lasley &

Mahoney, 2008). Unlike past decades, leadership preparation programs must be designed to meet the challenges of school improvement, not just graduate certified managers who lack the depth to lead effective school change. Through experiences designed by the preparation program, this new breed of school leaders must be able to perform the best practices outlined above (Davis et al., 2005; Hoachlander et al., 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Furman and Shields (2005) see democratic community as “a way of ‘ethical living’ in a diverse society” (p.120) and not as a specific concept. It is not a neat and tidy concept, or as Furman and Shields (2005) suggest, merely focused on the rights of individuals or majority rule but more readily useful when seen as “interdependence in working for the common good that is necessary in a multicultural, diverse society” (p. 120). Furman and Shields (2005) point to earlier work by Starratt (1991) and Maxcy (1995), which calls for schools to build upon the belief of the worth and dignity of individuals, respect for freedom and “inquiry” (p. 120) of ideas, and the responsibility each of us has to move our communities forward.

Murphy (2002) suggests that school leaders must be community builders. He describes them as administrators who can build relationships in three related dimensions: (a) parents and other stakeholders, (b) building community with faculty and staff, and (c) creating “personalized learning environments for youngsters” (p. 188). Murphy goes further and suggests that the democratic

leader learns to lead “not from the apex of the organizational pyramid but from a web of interpersonal relationships—with people rather than through them” (p. 188). Empowerment, encouragement of self, and leadership capacity building as described by Lambert (2003) would be valued descriptors for democratic leadership.

Social justice is the second “nested” paradigm (Murphy, 2002). As described by Murphy (2002) the social justice leadership paradigm emphasizes moral stewardship. This means that school leaders must lead by a core of values and belief systems which maintains that all children can learn and that the core purpose of schools is to see that this happens. It implies the heart of school leadership is an ethical enterprise (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 1991; Strike, 2002).

Furman and Shields (2005) summarize there are several meanings for social justice. Social justice will depend upon one’s perceptions of history, their life experiences, and the organizations in which they belong. The authors do argue that social justice for schools of the 21st century should focus on “multiple aspects of equity” (Furman & Shields, p. 125). As described by the authors those aspects are:

- robust and dynamic understanding of social justice;
- acknowledgment of injustices related to power and privilege (including inputs and outcomes, behaviors and attitudes);

- recognition of individual prejudice as well as collective inequities, and
- a concern for pedagogical implications of social justice (p. 125).

In conclusion, Furman and Shields conceive social justice and democratic community as being interwoven. One does not exist without the other. Leadership that is strongly centered in social justice is also strongly aligned with democratic community. Both are “first and foremost, about pedagogy” (p. 129) learning, student success, and student achievement.

The Auburn Story

Shortly after the state grant was approved, Auburn formed an advisory council of key university administrators, college of education faculty and graduate students, LEA partners, and other primary stakeholders. Original LEA partners included: Alexander City, Auburn City, Lee County, Lowndes County, Macon County, Opelika City, and Tallapoosa County. The council was organized to facilitate action and first met in January, 2006 to establish the mission, goals, expectations, and work groups. Some of the more important details from this meeting in regards to leadership curriculum development included conversations concerning the mission of the redesign project and the advisory council’s challenge to the group: “leave our everyday world and move to the balcony...to look at the big picture of systems design” (Pascarelli, 2006, p. 2).

The Auburn University advisory council recognized the Governor’s Congress had given them a wonderful opportunity to create a meaningful “cutting edge” program based on core concepts, such as learning-centered leadership, partnership development, and meaningful, engaged internship experiences. Informed by research and practical day-to-day needs of schools and school systems, council members began creative conversations on how to organize for the task. Based on the group’s decision making processes and data gathered at this initial meeting consensus was reached concerning organizational dimensions of the advisory council and the redesign tasks. Four sub-committees were formed to address critical areas in the design process: partnerships, admissions, curriculum design, and evaluation (Pascarelli, 2006; Samford, 2006).

Partnership, Admissions, and Evaluation Committees

Pre-existing partnerships and strong ties between the university and surrounding school districts already existed. Auburn University, the college of education and the Truman Pierce Institute had a long standing commitment to many community outreach projects. Because of years of hard work fostering stakeholder relationships and the trust that had been built the Partnership Committee’s work reaped some powerful outcomes for the new leadership program during its development and implementation. Representatives from each of the seven districts served and helped identify needs of their districts specifically

related to leadership. Projections for principals, assistant principals, superintendents and other administrative roles were only one of many areas discussed. The crucial Memorandum of Agreement, which formalized the university/school district partnership, was created by the Partnership Committee, and it was this committee who suggested effective ways to work together during the redesign planning phase as well as implementation of the program.

The Admissions Committee consisted of a diverse group of K-12 practitioners and higher education faculty from Auburn University. They examined the current admissions criteria and potential criteria which included standards and mandates established by the Alabama State Department of Education. The committee designed a comprehensive system using multiple criteria and processes. Under old criteria, students applied through the Graduate School and upon being approved by the graduate school, faculty would review GRE scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and a letter of intent. Many times students were admitted without meeting faculty or discussing the program with university faculty. With recommendations established by the admissions committee, a much more rigorous process has been developed. Included are: informational meetings in our partner school systems to recruit prospective students; an on-site writing sample that is scored by leadership faculty using a pre-established, rigorous rubric; portfolio development, which exemplifies how the candidate has

improved learning for children, and an interview with a committee made up of partner districts and faculty.

At the end of year one and the beginning of year two, the admissions committee has yielded some fruitful benefits to the program. Because we have worked well with partner districts to establish a meticulous admissions process, candidates understand the qualities sought in our students: strong teachers, dispositions that express all students can learn, a willingness to work hard, demonstrated teacher leadership abilities, data orientation to student learning and strong communication skills. While we have not asked our partner districts to officially nominate candidates and our applicants still self-nominate, the demanding admissions process has caused some applicants to reconsider, withdraw, or delay the commitment to our program. As a result, our cadre from the first year started and graduated all 16 members.

The Evaluation Committee

Its goal was to create a comprehensive, inclusive and on-going process with a focus on continuous improvement. The committee was charged with designing a means to evaluate program components, faculty and students through a number of formative and summative assessments. For example, one summative student evaluation will be a passing score on Praxis II in School Administration before graduating. Another example of a summative student evaluation is successful completion of their capstone project. Formative assessments of

students include a review after the first semester to include a case study essay, program faculty team assessment of candidate dispositions and a formal status letter for each student. This review is used to determine eligibility to continue in the program. Students are also to be evaluated using an on-line system. Three independent evaluations are included: self, instructor, and field-based personnel who work directly with the students to complete project-based learning activities attached to course work in the field.

In addition to student evaluations, the evaluation committee created several ways to assess outcomes of the program curriculum. Students are asked to complete a pre and post assessment of learning outcomes for each course. Theoretically, this can show student growth in knowledge and ability of important leadership standards. Educational leadership faculty members are assessed using the College of Education Faculty Evaluation and Annual Program Portfolio Review. Those assessments are reviewed periodically by individual professors, the department head, the dean, and others who are charged with teaching and faculty development. This information can be reviewed through an internal college of education on-line system. In addition to these assessments, educational leadership faculty have begun discussions of an innovative curriculum map as a means of evaluating the content, assignments, and outcomes of our program. The intent is to compliment each other and add congruence to our classes, diminish

the gaps, and reinforce the major themes of our program.

The Curriculum Committee: Organizing for the Mission

Advisory council members were charged with redesigning a seamless system of preparation, which included curriculum and experiences that would prepare future leaders to improve schools and increase student achievement (ALSDE, 2006a; Pascarelli, 2006). Additional facets of the mission included district partners and university personnel working collaboratively during all stages of the redesign process and jointly: establishing criteria for candidate selection, creating a curriculum in which courses focused upon instruction and the improvement of student achievement, constructing problem-based learning activities, plus developing relevant site-based experiences for course work and the internship. In conclusion, the curriculum committee wanted instructional encounters for leadership candidates that would engage them in the "principal's world"

Curriculum Committee Challenge "From the Balcony"

Our challenge began by researching current leadership preparation literature and examining standards from state, regional, and national agencies and stakeholder groups. The curriculum committee initially compared former curriculum to the newly adopted state standards and other leadership standards such as Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and National

Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to see what level of revision would be necessary (ISLLC, 2008; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2008). In curriculum committee meetings, it became apparent partner districts were echoing sentiments reflected in the new standards. When asked what today's school leaders needed to know and be able to do, partners indicated they wanted:

- "leaders who are responsive to the community;"
- "effective leaders not just good managers;"
- "leaders who are aware of and embrace changing demographics," and
- "leaders who know how to analyze data and improve instruction"

When asked what leadership preparation programs needed to provide and look like partners suggested:

- "developing leaders who are change agents and not agents of stagnation;"
- "exposing them to problems and experiences in schools which will truly prepare them to be principals;"
- "giving leadership candidates authentic experiences tied to course work and internship experiences," and
- "being able to demonstrate how they have improved schools and instruction for children".

Because of input from a variety of sources, it became apparent that a revision of the previous coursework was doubtful and that revisiting the current leadership curriculum would not provide the answers needed. The vision and mission tasked to all members of the advisory council had been to create an integrated system of classes, field experiences, and program evaluation. The curriculum committee embraced this challenge, honored their commitment to the vision, and thus embarked on creating an entirely new program design and delivery model (Pascarelli, 2006; Samford, 2006).

A Qualitative Process

To analyze input from professional standards and organizations, members of partner districts, and research findings from current leadership preparation literature, curriculum committee members decided to invest in a qualitative inquiry and research design. Analysis of data was accomplished using Max QDA, a qualitative software package. The software allows researchers to add rich text formatted documents and code the segments according to emerging themes the researcher finds throughout the project. After completion of segment coding, the software retrieves activated segments of data according to the needs of the researcher. The software also has the capability of making maps to assist in visualization of the researcher's findings.

Designing Instructional Leadership Program (ILP) Coursework: Content

That is Sequential, Developmental, and Integrated in "Real Life" School District Contexts

As the curriculum committee engaged in work, apparent themes emerged from data input collected from agency standards, LEA partners and the literature review. Those 21 themes included: change processes, collaboration, communication, leadership dispositions, mission and vision, culture and diversity, ethics and social justice, professional development, supervision, action research, data driven decision making, and field experiences. Developing patterns and emphasis appeared as researchers examined the matrices. In most cases, the matrices allowed the curriculum committee members to visualize apparent course content areas: principal leadership dispositions, action research, leadership in creating and sustaining a learning organization, planning and continuous improvement cycles, instructional and curricular leadership, financial and resource management, educational systems, communities and technology, legal and ethical contexts of education, supervision, and internship experiences.

The curriculum committee continued to analyze data and gather input and feedback from faculty and LEA partners concerning the themes that had appeared. As focus groups, informal meetings and committee meetings ensued, curriculum committee members reported findings to the advisory council of the overarching principles. These seven core principles were used to guide the creation of program curriculum. Those principles that emerged were: (a) collaboration and

communication, (b) reflective practice, (c) data driven decision making, (d) inclusiveness/democratic community, (e) technology, (f) leadership dispositions, and (g) culture/diversity. These principles were constantly referred to as program decisions were made, and they informed participants about the necessary components to meet the vision of the redesign committees and the advisory council.

As mentioned previously, the decision had been made to completely redesign the program and course content because new standards, partner school district needs, and best practices research could not be adhered to using old content and program paradigms. Therefore, a new curriculum model and original course content was developed. For each step of the way, whether it was programmatic delivery decisions or leadership preparation course content, faculty members, curriculum committee members, and LEA partners collaboratively wrote, reviewed, and revised course objectives. Active participation from all resulted in course syllabi which were representative of the content and delivery sought by the group.

Course Delivery

Research indicates quality educational leadership programs will include features enabling school administrators to be more effective in their day-to-day activities. At the same time, there is little evidence to support a specific set of principal knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and it is suggested that university programs experiment with a number of

combinations of curriculum, methods, and program structures in order to enhance leadership practices (Davis et al, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006). The following have been found useful in other educator preparation settings and were therefore included in the Auburn paradigm.

Cohort Model

Using a cohort model, the candidate group starts and progresses through 4 sequential semesters. By taking the sequence of courses, and field and internship experiences together, the candidates are able to support and encourage one another and share experiences from their schools and districts. Supporters of cohort models rely upon adult learning theory, which suggests these learners are best served when allowed to participate in socially cohesive ways of learning and doing (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Orr, 2006). In addition, cohort models have been a strong force and successful method of developing leaders in university settings for quite some time (Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, Wilson, 1996; Twale & Kochan, 2001).

Team Teaching

Many programs, like Auburn's, have chosen to team teach (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Orr, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1999). All courses are taught using full-time educational leadership faculty, the clinical supervisor, experts from the field, and guest speakers and lecturers. Various personnel combinations are used to teach the classes, depending on the semester and course content. For example, during the fall semester, EDLD

7530 Planning and Continuous Improvement and EDLD 7540 Instructional and Curricular Leadership are taught using two university faculty members and a distinguished principal practitioner who is versed in identifying curriculum and instruction shortcomings using "gap analysis" techniques. In addition to this team, occasional guest speakers are used to explain curriculum mapping techniques and processes. Our intent is to provide students with research-based, current, and practical expertise from academia as well as the K-12 field.

Clinical Supervisor and Mentoring

Auburn University invested and committed to a clinical supervisor who is responsible for coordinating the Instructional Leadership Program (ILP). New personnel configurations such as this are suggested in much of the literature concerning innovative methods and features of newly designed programs (Daresh, 2001; Davis et al, 2005). Responsibilities include arranging and overseeing field-based and internship experiences, teaching occasional classes, coordinating the Leadership Institute held each summer, maintaining positive relationships with partner school districts, and obtaining and training field-based coaches to support internship opportunities.

The clinical supervisor also serves as a mentor to ILP candidates. In this role, the clinical supervisor has close contact with students throughout their tenure in the program. As a result, the clinical supervisor can provide immediate assistance and guidance to the students and help them resolve

issues and construct their individual leadership dispositions and skills. It is expected that students who are mentored will take these positive relationships to their schools and in turn become mentors themselves. While mentoring begins with the clinical supervisor, program delivery systems allow multiple mentoring opportunities for the candidate (Hanson & Moir, 2008; Hall, 2008).

Field Based Coaches

It is well documented in the literature that leadership preparation programs must have a strong, district embedded programs for future school leaders. There must be organizational commitment from all parties to include the voices from the field in instruction, intern experiences, and maintenance and evaluation of the program (Davis et. al, 2005; Young et. al, 2002; Peterson, 2002). Field-based coaches are experts from the field and are educational leaders in our partner districts. They are willing and able to work closely with pre-service instructional leaders. Field-based coaches act as models for the interns and, therefore, demonstrate they are respected members of the educational community and have demonstrated success in improving schools. In addition, they participate in the ILP mentoring/coach training. ILP students are placed with these coaches for their field-based and internship experiences. Again, these coaches serve in the capacity as master craftsman and are there to support and guide the leadership candidates as they participate in practical experiences aimed at improving school performance

and student achievement (Hall, 2008; Southern Regional Educational Board [SREB], 2007).

Instructional Leadership Program (ILP) instructors. Face-to-face and Hands-on Learning

Instruction for cohort members includes full-time educational leadership faculty and distinguished clinical faculty. Members from partner districts with expertise in specific fields, such as instructional technology applications and school district financial resource management, are used for sporadically for specific course content. Guest lecturers are encouraged and used throughout the program.

All Courses Are Face-to-face

There was a great deal of consensus among partner districts and the university faculty concerning the need for aspiring leaders to receive instruction from educational leaders in a supportive environment where they could learn from guest speakers and lecturers, clinical faculty, university faculty and partner district co-instructors. To do this, on-line formats would not have provided the personal hands on experience we wanted for beginning administrators. While many of our classes meet in partner schools rather than in a university setting we still maintain a traditional face-to-face format. Several of our classes have been arranged to meet on weekends and mini-semester concentrated formats i.e. meeting for more concentrated periods of time over a shorter period of time than a regular 15 week semester.

Instructional Leadership Program (ILP) Sequence and Coursework

Leadership Institute. The master's ILP begins with a weeklong intensive series of large group, small group, break out sessions, and panel sessions. It includes leading stakeholders and experts from the field, such as the governor, state superintendent, nationally renowned guest speakers, Auburn University's president, the college of education dean and associate deans, Auburn University leadership faculty and directors of university outreach programs, LEA partner's with expertise in technology, curriculum mapping, and community leadership development. The leadership institute was constituted using the seven principals outlined from the curriculum committee's data analysis: (a) collaboration and communication, (b) reflective practice, (c) data driven decision making, (d) inclusiveness/democratic community, (e) technology, (f) leadership dispositions, and (g) culture/diversity.

Coursework Cycle Outline. Developing course content and sequencing involved many conversations and analysis of data by the curriculum committee. All along the way partner districts, other standing committees, faculty, and the advisory council were consulted by the curriculum committee. In every case, those involved were cognizant of the seven core principles. In one case, LEA partner members of the curriculum committee recognized future principals needed to be exposed to action research early in the program. Members of the

committee acknowledged professional growth and renewal as the extent to which school leaders are reflective practitioners, engaged in inquiry, and constantly refining their theories-of-action. The committee knew today's principals must be equipped to begin their tenure with the dispositions and skill sets which use classrooms, schools, and school communities as laboratories for experimentation and learning. Action research became a cornerstone of the program and was moved to the first semester of course work. Other dialogues with LEA partners lead to practical course sequencing. Suggested by advisory council LEA members, the ethics coursework was moved to what appeared to be a more viable pairing with personnel and supervision.

Outlining the four semester sequence demonstrates the intensive and challenging nature of the program. In addition, it is the culmination of many discussions with partner school district personnel, the advisory council, curriculum committee members, college of education faculty, research on best practices and data analysis from our study. In creating the program by involving our LEA partners and other stakeholders and using research of best practices to drive our decision making process we have designed a 33 hour, sequential and integrated curriculum, which is field and practice based. There are 9 three-credit courses and 1six-hour internship/residency course. The internship/residency, known as EDLD 7930, is distributed throughout the 4 semesters and is aligned with course objectives for that semester:

Summer I Coursework:	EDLD 7500 Principal Leadership EDLD 7510 Action Research and Analysis EDLD 7520 Leadership and the Learning Organization EDLD 7930 Administrative Internship/Residency (10 consecutive days)
Fall Coursework:	EDLD 7530 Planning and Continuous Improvement EDLD 7540 Instructional and Curricular Leadership EDLD 7930 Administrative Internship/Residency (5 consecutive days)
Spring Coursework	EDLD 7550 Educational Finance Resource Management EDLD 7560 Educational Systems and Communities EDLD 7930 Administrative Internship/Residency (5 consecutive days)
Summer II Coursework:	EDLD 7570 Legal and Ethical Issues EDLD 7580 Supervision and Personnel Issues in Education EDLD 7930 Administrative Internship/Residency (10 consecutive days) Other requirements: Capstone Project, Passing score on Praxis Examination in School Administration, and Graduation

Unique Instructional Methods. Best practices literature suggests educational leadership programs should use a host of delivery modes and techniques that are directly reflective of the experiences administrators will face in school settings. These experiences should be embedded in their schools and school systems. For example, school leaders will be expected to think on their feet, problem solve, determine future trends, and consider issues from a developmental perspective (Murphy, 2005; O'Neill et. al, 2005; Orr, 2006; Peterson, 2002). Two unique instructional methods designed to encourage growth in these areas are described in the following section.

Think Tanks. Each semester the ILP cohort participates in a “think tank” activity which is designed to provide a practical, field-based application of course learning to real school district issues. It is to be an authentic learning opportunity for students. Prior to beginning of each semester, the educational leadership professors who are teaching the courses that semester and the clinical supervisor arrange for partner school districts to nominate ideas and issues that are directly linked to course objectives for the particular semester. Once the project is selected, students are to engage in action research in an effort to develop possible solutions to the problem. The think tank activity is

developed by the course professor, a partner district representative, and the clinical supervisor. Those three members provide guidance and support for the students throughout the semester. Towards the end of the semester, students present their findings to members of the district from which the think tank was selected. Other stakeholders, partner districts, faculty, and administrators from the university are also invited to the presentation. The curriculum committee designed these think tanks as one means to provide for the type of integration between the theoretical and the practical that is needed in quality leadership preparation programs.

For example, during the semester when planning and continuous improvement was the focus of university coursework, students were engaged in a district think tank activity that incorporated the essential question of how to meet the needs of all students. Instructional leadership cohort members were to consider four critical components of students: the changing demographics of our youth, the changing nature of work, the international influences of students, and how to continue the press for focus on learning. Students were to address these issues using data provided by the school district such as student/family demographic survey data, discipline data, and stakeholder satisfaction surveys and focus groups. During the think tank, cohort members were challenged to act as leaders and determine ways to prepare this district's students for life, college, and work.

Capstone Project. An end of program capstone project requires students to present to faculty, fellow cohort members, and LEA partners a culminating action research product that spans the entire four-semester experience. This activity is another comprehensive way of assessing each student's ability to integrate the knowledge and skills obtained through the program into a practical, applied setting. Candidates begin developing their project during the EDLD 7510 Action Research and Analysis course. With direction and supervision from the clinical supervisor and the students' faculty advisors, cohort members continue developing the topic and collecting data during subsequent semesters. Student projects are evaluated by university faculty, field supervisors, and cohort members.

One capstone project centered on how best to serve the needs of students who were transferring to his high school from other state, regional, or national districts. Also, some students were transfers from international arenas. As new students, there was concern that the transition to the school could be made easier if instructional and social accommodations were made. Progress and benchmarks for academics as well as student focus groups were conducted to measure the effectiveness of interventions that had been put in place. The ILP candidate found mentoring and support counseling to be effective for some students while academic programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) fostered a more humane and faster assimilation into school life.

Looking Back and Moving Forward: Implications and Discussion

It is essential to note that our redesigned program is still in its infancy. Although we spent over two years planning and preparing for the new program, this is the first year the program has been implemented. As we begin to gear up to admit our next cohort of students, it is essential that we continue to assess the strengths and areas for growth in the programming provided to our current cohorts, while meaningfully engaging our program partners in this assessment process. Collectively, we must identify lessons learned and consider the implications of those lessons and implementation choices. Critical to this reflection is this question, Where were we prior to the redesign, and where are we now?

To answer this question we must begin by recognizing that the Auburn ILP will continue in positive directions. At the same time, it is important for us to recognize that as a program we must model what we teach. Therefore, continuous evaluation and improvement efforts will come into play, and we will continue to reflect on our progress as an institution and as a program. As we look to the future, there do appear to be important challenges the ILP will face. Sustaining funding, especially in the economic uncertainty of today will be a major challenge. Continuing and strengthening the partnerships we already have as well as forging new partners takes constant attention. Evaluation of our program and the progress we make needs to be at the forefront. Benchmarks for formative as well as summative assessment were

established during the program creation, but it is imperative that these be adhered to and constantly evaluated for implementation as well as improvement.

Sustaining the Intent and Vision of the Program

As with any curriculum implementation there must be the intent to get it right. Implementation involves interpretation and a full understanding of the vision that was expected as the program was designed. Implementation also involves a level of practicality and willingness of members to see that what is on paper is not always right or correct and at times must be changed. Those that implement the ILP curriculum and make program decisions must understand this is a living, breathing document, yet must remain true to the intent of program components collaboratively developed by all partners and approved by the accrediting agencies.

Our partnerships with school districts will need to be encouraged and maintained in healthy ways. They need to be involved all aspects of the program including evaluation of candidates and the program itself. The advisory council is to be assembled half way through the cohort program cycle. As we approach that mark, we are making plans to evaluate the progress thus far. Members of the advisory council have been involved with the program since inception and have provided assistance through every phase. Our joint evaluation of the program should offer insights and provide future directions.

As we just concluded our second meeting with the advisory council, some of us recognized that our partners still need to play a more active role in the implementation of courses and the Leadership Institute. While they are engaged in discussion, there is still tremendous room for growth and for having partners involved in the planning and implementing of program needs in a more integrative manner. For example, while the partner districts do provide input concerning the three day Leadership Institute, they do not use this opportunity to develop leadership within their own districts, nor has the educational leadership faculty done an adequate job of bringing them together to actively participate in this activity and celebration.

Financial Sustainability

As we are implementing the first iteration of course work, field experiences, and internships with our cohort, we have come to realize we have created a very intensive program with resources and allocations that will need to be sustained over the coming years. For example, the creation and commitment of a clinical supervisor position at the university was no small feat for the educational leadership department and the dean of the college of education. While our efforts have been adequately supported by the university, we have received additional grant support from the ALSDE; although, this is a temporary situation. In addition, field based coaches and internship placements and instruction by distinguished clinical faculty and guest lecturers create additional

economic ramifications. Under present funding situations and economic conditions, those involved cannot help but wonder if the needed revenues to continue assistance will be available. To help improve the chances for a sustainable position, the ILP coordinator's job description requires that she successfully write grants to support programming and her own position once current external funding is gone.

Paradigm Shifts to Be Proud Of: Creating Schools As Democratic/Socially Just Learning Communities and Leadership Based on School Improvement and Student Achievement.

As we look back on the two years of redesign and the first year of implementation, there are two paradigm shifts that are evident in the ILP. First, we are creating a democratic/socially just community (Furman & Shields, 2005; Murphy, 2002; Strike, 1999). There is shared purpose and inclusion of ideas from many participants. As a result of the creation of the ILP, long standing relationships with schools districts have remained strong and are becoming deeper and more meaningful. At the same time our cohort students have been exposed to curriculum experiences that invite conversation from stakeholders to better the education community. Our leadership students have come to understand the importance of including parent, student, and community voice in the decision making process. Secondly, we are developing future leaders whose focus is continuous improvement and student

learning (Murphy, 2002). Our first cohort of graduates understands their role for the 21st century is to be instructional leaders. They are committed to providing top quality instruction for all children because they sincerely believe all children can learn.

Paradigm Shift: Democratic Community/Social Leadership Justice and

Strike (1999) refers to democratic community as “thick” democracy and describes it as “civic friendship, inclusiveness and participation” (p. 60). The ILP program, the participants in its design, and the processes used to develop the program have used the seven guiding principles from our initial programmatic research: (a) collaboration and communication, (b) reflective practice, (c) data driven decision making, (d) inclusiveness/democratic community, (e) technology, (f) leadership dispositions, and (g) culture/diversity. These guided our advisory council and curriculum committee meetings, were the cornerstone of course designs, and are an active component of the delivery model we currently use.

Throughout our process, there have been many collaborative partnerships fostered between school districts and Auburn University. In each experience we have valued and included our school districts, and this has promoted shared purpose and community engagement. Through unique programmatic and instructional delivery, ILP leadership candidates are being exposed to many positive leaders in the state, region, and nation. Through

guest speakers and lecturers at the Leadership Institute and class settings, students are hearing from a number of authorities in the educational community. Our unique think tank activities engage students and current leaders from the field in meaningful projects, which are important to school districts and student learning.

Leadership Institutes

The first Leadership Institute was modeled on the seven guiding principles of the ILP. Leadership candidates from the first cohort were able to actively engage in conversations, breakout sessions, and panel discussions with national, regional, and state leaders from school systems, communities, and university/college faculty. Topics of discussion and activities focused on the guiding principles and included transformational leaders from nationally ranked school systems, Blue Ribbon schools known for academic achievement, and the Alabama State Board of Education Superintendent Joseph Morton and Deputy Superintendent Tommy Bice. Diversity and social justice panel discussions spoke to the need to advocate access to learning for all students and of the need to see ourselves as part of the larger global educational community.

Growing and Strengthening District Partnerships

Our positive work with this new and innovative program has spread quickly amongst area superintendents. New districts are forming partnerships with Auburn University because of this,

and our existing partners are encouraging personnel to join our program. Beginning with the second year, it now looks as if we will grow from seven partner districts to eleven. Districts that had only one student in our first cohort now have six. In another district, a competing university has reopened its educational leadership program, but their superintendent is pushing his future leaders towards our program. Members from our first cohort have commented how important it has become to them to hear and see what other districts are doing. Their exposure to multiple districts has become one of the most rewarding aspects of the program. The sharing of ideas from other students, partner district co-teachers, and field based coaches has enlightened most.

Paradigm: School Improvement and Student Success

School leadership should be synonymous with student learning. New paradigms of school leadership squarely focus on student success as the most important mission. School leaders can no longer only be managers (Green, 2010; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Murphy, 2002; Young & Petersen, 2002; Chenowith, Carr & Ruhl, 2002). They must be pedagogically strong and create experimental cultures and environments of trust (Murphy, 2002; Hoachlander, Alt & Beltranena, 2001). Other recent and emerging instructional delivery strategies for leadership preparation programs are similar to what literature suggests for our nation's youth. Included should be collaborative learning, group exercises, problem

based learning, reflective practice, and action research (Bridges & Hallinger, 1995; Chenowith et. al., 2002; Murphy, 2002). In other words, our school leaders should model what they wish for teachers and students to do. Their leadership preparation should do the same.

It appears that our efforts to educate future leaders with school improvement and student achievement as the focus of their work is having positive effects in classrooms and schools (Green, 2010; Murphy, 2002). ILP members have incorporated data-driven decision making in their classrooms. They have also become more active participants in their school improvement plans and governance systems. In general, many have commented that they perceive themselves as more engaged with their students and their colleagues. These emerging school leaders are more proactive in their schools and in their leadership classes. They lead discussions more readily and have shown tremendous growth in many areas. ILP members see the importance of connectivity between every classroom, every school, and every school district. They understand the "big picture" and how society depends on schools to move our nation forward.

Our internship experiences should be and are aligned with course content. For example, during the fall semester, EDLD 7540 Curriculum Leadership exposes students to curriculum mapping by bringing experts from the field to assist instruction. Students actually create curriculum maps and then are expected

to practice this during school internship experiences. In addition, this course was also sequenced with EDLD 7530 Planning and Continuous Improvement so ILP students could practice “gap analysis” activities at their school sites. While course alignment is important to school improvement, there are important processes that create school improvement and increase student learning. Most of these processes are equated with learning communities and include: mentoring and coaching, collaborative learning, action research, reflective practice and learning by case study and problems. Almost all of these delivery methods are evidenced throughout our program. Mentoring and coaching experiences by university faculty and field based personnel are one of the important points discussed earlier.

The Capstone Experience promises to be one of the hallmarks of the ILP. Each student is responsible for creating and conducting an individual action research project focused on improving student learning opportunities. Research findings from these projects are to be shared during the final semester of the program. The sole focus of the capstone is to exemplify how the leadership student has improved student learning or

participated in meaningful practices aiding school improvement. As Capstone Experience projects begin to be developed one to mention is a leadership student’s school data room. Colleagues at his school will be encouraged to help define, collect, and disaggregate data that will help the faculty improve student learning. Faculty will look at high school graduation test results, ACT scores, attendance, student GPA’s, and some parent survey data. Results will be used to move the school forward for the 2009-2010 year.

In essence, Auburn University’s program is based on many of the best practices suggested by current instructional leadership preparation. Our students, our partner districts, and our faculty members represent the paradigm shifts of a socially just/democratic community and school improvement. While this is true, it is difficult to determine what the future will bring. Continued economic and political pressures from the outside, a university that sometimes operates slower than we would care for, a program in infancy, faculty members trying to think in very different ways, and students who must be tested to think outside the box continue to challenge us.

References

- Alabama State Department of Education. (2005). Alabama Standards for Instructional Leadership. Retrieved December 30, 2008, from <http://alex.state.al.us/leadership/>
- Alabama State Department of Education. (2006a). Retrieved

- September 15, 2008, from <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/certification/pdf/alunivredesign.pdf>
- Alabama State Department of Education. (2006b). Retrieved September 15, 2008, from ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/70/Alabama_Standards_for_Instructional_Leaders.pdf
- Barnett, b. G., Basom, M. R., Yerkes, D. M., & Norris, C. J. (2000). Cohorts in educational leadership programs: Benefits, difficulties, and the potential for developing school leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(2), 255-282.
- Bottoms, G. & O'Neill, K. (2001). *Preparing a new breed of school principals: It's time for action*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.
- Bridges, E. W., & Hallinger, P. (1995). Using problem based learning to prepare educational leaders. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 72(2), 131 -146.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2008). *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Retrieved November 20, 2008, from: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos007.htm>
- Chenowith, T., Carr, C., & Ruhl, T. (2002, August). *Best practice in educational leadership preparation programs*. Paper presented at the Administrator Licensure Planning Forum, Portland, OR.
- Daresh, J. C. (2001). *Leaders helping leaders: A practical guide to administrative mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., Lapointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (SELI).
- Furman, G. C., & Shields, C. M. (2005). How can educational leaders promote and support social justice and democratic community in schools? In W. A. Firestone & Carolyn Riehl (Eds.), *A new agenda for research in educational leadership* (pp. 119 - 137). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Green, J. M. (1999). *Deep democracy: Community, diversity, and transformation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Green, R. L. (2010). *The four dimensions of principal leadership: A framework for leading 21st century schools*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hall, P. (2008). Building bridges: Strengthening the principal induction process through intentional mentoring. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89,(6), 449-452.

- Hanson, S., & Moir, E. (2008). Beyond mentoring: Influencing the professional practice and careers of experienced teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(6), 453-458.
- Hoachlander, G., Alt, M., & Beltranena, R. (2001). *Leading school improvement: What research say. A review of the literature*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.
- Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. (2008). *Educational leadership policy standards: ISLLC 2008*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 3, 2010 from [http://www.ccsso.org/Resource/Publications/Educational Leadership Policy Standards ISLLC 2008 as Adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration.html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resource/Publications/Educational_Leadership_Policy_Standards_ISLLC_2008_as_Adopted_by_the_National_Policy_Board_for_Educational_Administration.html)
- Jackson, B. L., & Kelley, C. (2002). Exceptional and innovative programs in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 192-212.
- Kowalski, T. J., Lasley, T. J., & Mahoney, J. W. (2008). *Data driven decisions and school leadership: Best practices for school improvement*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2005). A review of transformational school leadership research 1996-2005. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 4(3), 177 - 199.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(4), 496-528.
- Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., Coffin, G., & Wilson, P. (1996). Preparing school leaders: What works? *Journal of School Leadership*, 6(3), 316-342.
- Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). How leadership influences student learning. New York: Wallace Foundation. Retrieved September 14, 2008, from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/>
- Levine, A. (2005). *Educating school leaders* [Electronic version]. Washington, DC: The Education Schools Project.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B.A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Maxcy, S. J. (1995). *Democracy, chaos, and the new school order*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Murphy, J. (2002). Reculturing the profession of educational leadership: New blueprints. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 176-191.
- Murphy, J. (2005). The ISLLC Standards: Exploring the foundations and addressing concerns in the academic community. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(1), pp. 154-191.
- Murphy, J., & Vriesenga, M. (2006). Research on school leadership preparation in the United States: An analysis. *School Leadership and Management*, 26(2) 183-195.
- National Association for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2008). *NCATE unit standards*. Washington, DC: National Association for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Retrieved June 29, 2009, from: <http://www.ncate.org/public/unitStandardsRubrics.asp?ch=4>
- O'Neill, K., Fry, B. Hill, D., & Bottoms, G. (2005). *The principal internship: How can we get it right?* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.
- O'Neill, K., Fry, B. Hill, D., & Bottoms, G. (2007). SREB Module: Coaching for school improvement. Retrieved October 1, 2008, from http://www.sreb.org/uploads/documents/2009/08/2009082508012080/Coaching_School_Imp.pdf
- Orr, M. T. (2006). Mapping innovation in leadership preparation in our nation's schools of education: the increased emphasis on the role of educational leaders in the success of schools of education to examine their leadership preparation programs, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(7), 492-499.
- Peterson, K. D. (2002). The professional development of principals: Innovations and opportunities. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 213-232.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1999). A decade half full or a decade half empty. Thoughts from a tired reformer. In J. Murphy & P. Forsyth (Eds.), *Educational administration: A decade of reform* (pp. 237-250). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2005). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Smylie, M., Bennett, A., Konkol, P., & Fendt, C. (2005). What do we know about developing school leaders? A look at existing research and next steps for new study. In W. A. Firestone &

Reames / SHIFTING PARADIGMS

- Carolyn Riehl (Eds.), *A new agenda for research in educational leadership* (pp. 138- 155). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Southern Regional Educational Board. (2007). *SREB leadership curriculum modules: Engaging leaders in solving real school problems*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Educational Board.
- Starratt, R. J. (1991). Building an ethical school: A theory for practice in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 27(2), 155-202.
- Strike, K. A. (1999). Can schools be communities? The tension between shared values and inclusion. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1), 46-70.
- Twale, D.J. & Kochan, F.K. (2000). Assessment of an alternative cohort model for part-time students in an educational leadership program, *Journal of School Leadership*, 10, 188-208.
- Young, M. D. (2006). From the director: The M.Ed., Ed.D. and Ph.D. in educational leadership. *UCEA Review*, 45(2), 6-9.
- Young, M. D. & Petersen, G. J. (2002). The National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation: An introduction. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 130-136.
- Young, M. D., Peterson, G. J., & Short, P. M. (2001, September). *The complexity of substantive reform: A call for interdependence among key stakeholders*. Paper presented at the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation. Racine, Wisconsin.
- Young, M. D., & Kochan, F. K. (2004). UCEA leaders respond: Supporting leadership for America's schools. In Thomas J. Lashley, II (Ed.), *Better leaders for America's schools: Perspectives on the Manifesto* (pp. 115-129). Columbia, MO: University Council for Educational Administration.

Ellen Reames is an Assistant Professor in the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology Department at Auburn University. Dr. Reames was a teacher and administrator in Columbus, Georgia for thirty years. She believes that to be an “informed practitioner: both at the university and K-12 levels one must demonstrate an understanding that the best educational leaders are themselves led by a focus on research, current trends, and an eye towards the future. Her research interests include school culture, learning communities, at-risk youth and alternative schools, bullying and redesigning educational administration programs.