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DEVELOPING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: THE CURRENT CHALLENGE

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On a sunny San Diego day, we followed principal Leslie Marks[1] on her regular walk-through at Tompkins Elementary School, as she visited fifteen classrooms humming with productive learning. Tompkins, with a student body is predominantly composed of low-income children of color, had been failing badly only three years earlier. Since Leslie became principal, the school had experienced a remarkable turnaround. Its state Academic Performance Index (API) had grown by more than 150 points in those three years, exceeding state and federal targets and far outstripping the performance of most schools serving similar students statewide. Equally important, the faculty experienced major breakthroughs in their practice . . . and confidence levels rose markedly.

When we entered a bustling fifth grade classroom, we saw small clusters of students working together to craft an outline of their social studies chapter. Leslie quietly watched the teacher review how to identify and summarize the main points in their text and then observed

[1] All principal, teacher, and school names are pseudonyms. Actual names are used for district leaders.

as the students began working together on their task. Approaching a group of students who appeared to be puzzling over the passage, Leslie engaged them in a discussion about what they knew about the reading and how they were determining what points to emphasize. Afterward, Leslie talked about what she saw in this class and each of the others in light of her vision for the school:

> As a school we've been looking at "How do we really know kids get it?" And the only way that we really know is because they either talk about it or they write about it. If they're talking or they're writing, they're showing their understanding. And in the upper-grade classes we went to, there were three different ways that [teachers] were looking at getting kids to explain their thinking. So, I'm kind of "heartwarmed" about that.

With each class she visited, Leslie collected notes on the strengths and areas of need she identified during her observations. As she reflected on her instructional observations, she began to think through the conversations she planned to have with specific teachers about what she had seen. For example, with the social studies teacher, she planned to build on her diagnosis of his practice in several subject areas:

> With the fifth grade class, that was an opportunity for kids to talk and write about the main idea. I think they needed a little more scaffolding, and that's an interesting place to go with him, because I know he's really working on strengthening his reading instruction in the same way that his math instruction has gotten stronger. So I want to talk to him about, "So how did it go?" and "Why were the kids struggling?" It may be that they needed a couple more steps before they launched out at that point.... I felt like the kids needed to talk about the main idea before they had to write anything down.

She framed these planned conversations in terms of inquiry—asking teachers for their assessment of what was effective for students' learning, their rationale for their strategies, and their views about how to improve. She also used her notes on these classroom visits to plan for grade-level and schoolwide professional development focused on supporting student learning.

In a survey that year, teachers affirmed Leslie's strong leadership. The vast majority (more than 85 percent) agreed that she had communicated a vision of the school to all staff, encouraged involvement in decision making, and helped them share instructional practices.

Nearly all said that Marks was "very effective" at encouraging professional collaboration, working with staff to develop and attain curriculum standards, encouraging staff to use student evaluation results in planning curriculum and instruction, and facilitating professional development. They overwhelmingly agreed that she "stimulates me to think about what I am doing for my students," is "aware of my unique needs and expertise," and is "a source of new ideas for my professional learning." Teachers described her as focused on helping all students to meet standards and pushing and supporting all teachers to accomplish their goals for their students. As one of her teachers observed,

> I think that one out of Leslie's strengths is she has a really good vision and she sees the big picture. She spends her energy where it needs to be spent. She is going to coach or suggest or push the people who need that. She is going to see the people who are competent and ask them to help other people. She focuses her energy where it is needed. That is what helps the school run effectively.

Teachers credited Leslie's professional development work with improving their own practice. As one of the previously resistant staff members observed,

> In the last several years we have had heavy staff development. I have been resistant to some of it, but I have watched and seen and tried it on anyway—and seeing things that work, I have given myself permission to look into it further. I used to say, "I'm not going to do that. It is not valuable." Now I'm seeing that it is valuable.

Leslie Marks illustrates how strong instructional leaders can be developed through purposeful training. In 2000, she had been recruited as one of the first cohort of the Aspiring Leaders program at San Diego's Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA), after more than ten years as an elementary bilingual teacher. At the conclusion of the ELDA program, Leslie assumed a position as vice principal at a low-performing elementary school while she participated in the first cohort of ELDA's Induction and Support program for early career site leaders.

Leslie described her preparation experience—which she called "super powerful"—as a critical influence on her current leadership. She noted that before ELDA she had not believed being a principal could be a vehicle for achieving her vision, "because the principals that I had known were not about instruction. . . . When I came into the internship, I was just freed knowing that we would be looking at instruction."

The full-time internship was a tremendous learning resource, Leslie said. "Working side by side with someone for a year is incredible. All of those different situations that would come up . . . learning to be a problem solver and thinking outside of the box. . . . I would attribute so much of that to my mentor. . . . I still think of what she would say when I make decisions." Leslie also credited her success to ELDA's tightly linked coursework, which helped her develop her role as a leader of adult learning. For example, she noted, "There are so many different ways to think about being a principal. . . . I would go back and reread people like Sergiovanni, who talked about ways to support the adults so that the adults could support the kids. I think that that became my philosophy."

Leslie Marks's ability to "support the adults so that they can support the kids" is an in-a-nutshell description of instructional leadership. Her experiences vividly illustrate what such leadership looks like and how it can be developed—a pressing concern that has grown in importance as researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have increasingly recognized the role of school leaders in developing high-performing schools and closing the achievement gap. Largely overlooked in the various reform movements of the past two decades, principals are now regarded as central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students, rather than merely maintaining the status quo (NPBEA, 2001; Peterson, 2002). This recognition, coupled with a growing shortage of high-quality leaders in American schools, has resulted in heightened interest in the enhancement of leadership development as a major reform strategy.

Since the "effective schools" research of the 1980s, which identified the importance of principals who function as strong instructional leaders in improving academic achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998), many studies have identified the critical role of principals in recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers; creating a learning culture within the school; and supporting improvements in student learning (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995). In one of several studies identifying school leadership as a key factor in schools that outperform others with similar students, researchers found that achievement levels were higher in schools where principals lead a school-reform process, act as managers of school improvement, cultivate a shared vision for the school, and make use of

student data to support instructional practices and to provide assistance to struggling students (Kirst, Haertel, & Williams, 2005).

Knowing that these leadership practices matter is one thing, but developing them on a wide scale is quite another. What do we know about how to develop principals who can successfully transform schools and lead instructional improvement? What distinguishes programs that are most successful in recruiting, preparing, and developing strong school leaders? What are the most effective ways for states, districts, and other funders to support programs that develop leaders who have the knowledge and skills to transform schools and school communities to meet the learning needs of all children?

This book addresses these questions based on a nationwide study of principal-preparation and development programs and the policies and funding structures that influenced them. We sought to understand:

Qualities of Effective Programs. What are components of programs that provide effective initial preparation and ongoing professional development for principals? What qualities and design principles are displayed in these exemplary programs?

Program Outcomes. What are the outcomes of these programs? What are principals who have experienced this training able to do? Do graduates of exemplary programs demonstrate distinctive instructional and organizational leadership practices that are associated with more effective schools?

Context of High-Quality Programs. What role do state, district, and institutional policies play in the development of principal-development programs? What are the costs of exemplary preparation and professional-development programs, and how are they funded?

The Study: Context

In addressing these questions, it is critical to understand the scope of the challenge faced by practitioners who lead today's schools and policymakers who need to recruit and support them. Contemporary school administrators play a daunting array of roles, from educational visionaries and change agents to instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). New standards for learning and expectations of schools—they now must successfully teach a broad array of students with

different needs while steadily improving achievement—mean that schools typically must be redesigned rather than merely administered. This suggests yet another set of skill demands, including both the capacity to develop strong instruction and a sophisticated understanding of organizations and organizational change. Finally, as school budget management is decentralized, many reform plans rely on the principal's ability to make sound resource-allocation decisions that are likely to result in improved achievement for students.

Despite the obvious need for highly skilled school leaders, the significant role of the principal in creating the conditions for improved student outcomes was largely ignored by policymakers throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the ability of principals to rise to the ever-increasing demands of each additional reform effort was often taken for granted. Although new initiatives to recruit and differently prepare school leaders have recently begun to take root, these supports are sparsely distributed across the country. Some states and districts have recently moved aggressively to overhaul their systems of preparation and in-service development for principals, making sustained, systemic investments. Others have introduced individual program initiatives without systemic changes. Some universities, districts, and other program providers have dramatically transformed the programs they offer, whereas others have made only marginal changes. Understanding the promising initiatives that have emerged and the conditions necessary to expand such efforts is critical to developing the leadership cadre required to sustain the intensive school reforms underway across the country.

This study was designed to fill in gaps in knowledge about the content, design, and costs of various approaches to principal preparation and professional development. We build on a growing body of evidence about what principals need to know and be able to do in order to be effective leaders of instruction—that is, to be able to manage resources and align them toward the sustained improvement of teaching and learning for all children. We examine how a carefully selected sample of "exemplary" programs cultivates these skills and abilities, and we examine the costs, financing, and policies associated with these programs.

Eight Exemplary Programs

This study examines eight exemplary pre- and in-service principal-development programs. The programs were chosen both because they provided evidence of strong outcomes in preparing school leaders and because, in combination, they represent a variety of approaches with

respect to their designs, policy contexts, and the nature of partnerships between universities and school districts. The pre-service programs were sponsored by four universities: Bank Street College (New York City), Delta State University (Mississippi), University of Connecticut, and University of San Diego working with the San Diego City Schools. In-service programs were sponsored by the Hartford (Connecticut) School District, Jefferson County (Kentucky) Public Schools (which also included a pre-service component), Region 1 in New York City, and the San Diego City Schools. In several cases, pre- and in-service programs created a continuum of coherent learning opportunities for school leaders.

To understand how the programs operate and how they are funded, we interviewed program faculty and administrators, participants and graduates, district personnel, and other stakeholders; reviewed program documents; and observed meetings, courses, and workshops. We surveyed program participants and graduates about their preparation, practices, and attitudes, comparing their responses to those of a national random sample of principals. In addition, for each program we observed program graduates in their jobs as principals, interviewing and surveying the teachers with whom they work, and examining data on school practices and achievement trends to understand strategies their and outcomes of their work.

We conducted case studies of policies in the states represented by the program sample: California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi, and New York. These were augmented by three additional states that had enacted innovative leadership policies—Delaware, Georgia, and North Carolina—which provided us with a broader perspective on how state policy and financing structures influence program financing, design, and orientation. In these eight states, we reviewed policy documents and literature and we interviewed stakeholders, including policymakers and analysts; principals and superintendents; and representatives of professional associations, preparation programs, and professional development programs. Our national survey oversampled principals from these eight focus states to allow state-level analyses of principals' learning experiences, preparedness, practices, and attitudes in relation to the state's policy context. (See Appendix A for more detailed discussion of the research methodology.)

From these data we evaluated what exemplary leadership development programs do and what they cost; what their outcomes are in terms of principals' knowledge, skills, and practices; and how the policy and funding contexts in which they are embedded influence the programs. We also looked at the range of state policy approaches to leadership development,

examining evidence about how these strategies shape opportunities for principal learning and school improvement.

The Dilemma: Issues in Leadership Development

Several factors have contributed to recognizing the importance of quality school principals and the absence of such leaders in many underperforming schools. During the 1990s, most states developed new standards for student learning and assessment and accountability systems that focused attention on school progress. There is now widespread agreement among educational reformers and researchers that the primary role of the principal is to align all aspects of schooling toward the goal of improving instruction so that it is successful for all children (see, for example, Elmore & Burney, 1999; Peterson, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004). Few jobs have as diverse an array of responsibilities as the modern principalship, and any of that multitude of roles can distract administrators from their most important one: cultivating high-quality instruction. The demands of the job, particularly in large schools, far exceed the capacity of most people. As a result, the urgent demands of the moment too often supersede the long-term, challenging work of improving instruction.

Ongoing reports of underperforming schools, an awareness of the growing demands placed on principals, and media coverage of an impending national "principal shortage" have brought issues of administrative recruitment, credentialing, training, and support to the attention of policymakers. In addition to the excessive demands of the job that can make it difficult for principals to focus their efforts on instructional improvement, only a small fraction of those who occupy the role are well trained to lead these efforts, particularly in culturally diverse, low-income communities and schools.

The Challenges of Recruiting Strong Principals

Although a national estimate of demand in 2002 set the proportion of principal vacancies over the upcoming five-year period at 60 percent (Peterson, 2002), districts were reporting growing shortages. A 2001 Public Agenda survey (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, & Foleno, 2001) found about half of superintendents reporting difficulty finding qualified principal candidates, and this rose to 61 percent in urban areas. In most parts of the country, the problem is not a shortage of certified administrators but a shortage of well-qualified administrators who are willing to work in the places of highest demand, especially in underserved communities

and schools where working conditions are most challenging. Analyses of principal shortages have identified the pressures of new accountability systems, expanding responsibilities, reforms removing principal tenure, and inadequate compensation as some of the factors discouraging individuals who are certified for administration from seeking or remaining in principalships (see Whitaker, 2001, for a review).

The literature identifies three kinds of problems as contributing to this shortage. First, traditional administrative preparation programs have not attracted sufficient numbers of high-potential candidates who are committed to leadership roles in the places where they are needed (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003). Second, even if the pipelines were cultivated to channel more high-potential candidates into the principalship, the working conditions of high-poverty schools that most need these leaders, coupled with the lack of advancement opportunities, make it extremely difficult to retain strong leaders. A *Los Angeles Times* story headlined "Principal: A Tougher Job, Fewer Takers" summed up the problem: "Fifteen-hour work days. Unending paperwork. And the ever-increasing role of school board politics.... Plenty have the credentials for the job. Many don't want it" (Richardson, 1999). Many candidates do not see the principal's job, as it is currently configured in many districts, as doable or adequately supported. Third, principals are too often ill prepared and inadequately supported to take on the challenging work.

This book and the study underlying it were motivated by the third problem—the inadequate preparation and support of our nation's school leaders. Moreover, the other two problems—the lack of willingness of potential leaders to take on this difficult job and their inability to survive and succeed in it—appear to be related to the quality of candidates' preparation experiences. As Winter, Rinehart, and Munoz (2002) found, candidates' self-perceptions of their ability to do the job were the strongest predictor of their willingness to apply for a principalship, pointing to the importance of training that builds prospective principals' skills and sense of self-efficacy. Reformers argue that recruiting the right people, preparing them comprehensively, and supporting them as they lead schools is essential to improve the pool of available school leaders, decrease turnover, and foster reform in schools aimed at developing students' abilities.

Concerns About Principal-Development Programs

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 (AACTE, 2001; Copland, 1999; Elmore, 2000; Lumsden, 1992). Relatively few programs have had strong clinical training components that have allowed prospective leaders to learn the many facets of their complex jobs in close collaboration with highly skilled veteran leaders. In addition, many professional development programs for principals have been criticized as fragmented, incoherent, not sustained, lacking in rigor, and not aligned with state standards for effective administrative practice (Peterson, 2002; AACTE, 2001).

Accordingly, principals have frequently lacked the ongoing professional support they need to develop their skills and meet the demands placed upon them. This stands in contrast to career paths in many management jobs or in such professions as medicine, architecture, and engineering, which build in apprenticeships in the early years, along with ongoing professional development. Wide variability in the quality of professional development has led to intensified and often undifferentiated criticism of administrative training and development in general.

Critiques of Pre-Service Programs

Traditional pre-service programs have come under attack for failing to adapt the curriculum to what is required to meet the learning needs of increasingly diverse student bodies. The knowledge bases on which programs rest are viewed as frequently outdated, segmented by discrete subject areas, and inadequate for the challenges of managing schools in a diverse society where expectations for learning are increasingly ambitious. Some critics contend that traditional coursework in principal-preparation programs often fails to link theory with practice and is overly didactic, out of touch with the real-world complexities and demands of school leadership, and not aligned with established theories of leadership (AACTE, 2001; Copland, 1999; Elmore, 2000; IEL, 2000; Lumsden, 1992; McCarthy, 1999; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). Often missing from the curriculum are topics related to principles of effective teaching and learning, the design of instruction and professional development, organizational design of schools that promote teacher and student learning, and the requirements of building communities across diverse school stakeholders.

Some of the common features of traditional preparation programs have also been subject to increased scrutiny. For example, the quality and depth of internships and field experiences, widely recognized as pivotal to

candidates' professional learning and identity formation (Orr & Barber, 2005), are notably uneven across programs. Efforts to provide field-based practicum experiences do not consistently provide candidates with a sustained, hands-on internship in which they grapple with the real demands of school leadership under the supervision of a well-qualified mentor. Instead, some programs require little more than a set of ad hoc projects conducted while a candidate is still working full time as a teacher. Often these are written papers disconnected from the hands-on challenges and daily requirements of the principal's job.

Compounding these problems, field experiences are often loosely linked to academic coursework, which is structured around discrete domains of educational administration rather than being a more integrated set of learning opportunities that build upon and support the field-based experiences (Lumsden, 1992; Trapani, 1994). Some analysts suggest that the weakness of the field-based component of many programs partly stems from the insularity of educational administration programs and faculty; these programs fail to find ways to use their local schools and the expertise within them as learning resources for prospective principals (Neuman, 1999).

Critiques of In-Service Programs

Although there is a smaller research base available to guide in-service rather than pre-service programs, there is a growing consensus that ongoing leadership support and development, like leadership preparation, should combine theory and practice, provide scaffolded learning experiences under the guidance of experienced mentors, offer opportunities to actively reflect on leadership experiences, and foster peer networking (Peterson, 2002).

Despite an improved understanding of the components of effective professional development, few in-service programs for school leaders provide what Peterson (2002) terms "career-staged" support, providing a cumulative learning pathway from pre-service preparation throughout a principal's career. Although induction programs for new principals are becoming more widespread, relatively few districts offer systematic mentoring for beginning principals to help them learn how to make sense of this complex job, prioritizing and juggling its many demands and developing skills in managing and leading other adults. Beyond the initial years, principals need to develop more sophisticated skills that require differentiated approaches to professional development. In addition, depending on their own backgrounds and prior experiences, as well as the school

contexts in which they work, different principals need different kinds of supports.

Criticisms of existing professional development programs include (1) a misalignment between program content and candidate needs, (2) a failure to link programs with school or district core values and missions, (3) a failure to leverage job-embedded learning opportunities, and (4) uneven use of powerful learning technologies (Coffin, 1997). Too many districts fail to link professional development to instructional reforms, and they continue to waste resources on one-shot workshops, rather than designing ongoing support that would help align school activities with best practices and support principals' problem solving.

Although some districts do little or nothing to support professional development for principals, and others offer discrete, unconnected programs, some districts view ongoing, multipronged professional development for principals as a major component of an integrated, district-based reform strategy. The work of these districts needs to be better understood.

Variability in Principals' Opportunities to Learn

The clearest generalization that can be made about principal-preparation and development programs is that they are highly variable and depend on where the principal works. The present study points to a number of exemplary preparation and development programs for principals, as well as policy initiatives that have had a very substantial influence on leadership development in some states. We also found tremendous variation across the country in principals' access to high-quality learning opportunities before and after they enter their jobs.

One source of this inconsistency has been a lack of common standards. The structure, content, and method of evaluation has depended on the particular standards adopted by a state, the standards of practice embedded within various program accreditation agencies, and the particular goals and mission of institutions themselves. Much of this inconsistency was rooted in a lack of consensus about the definitions of competence and standards for certification for school leaders, compounded by a lack of agreement about how programs can most effectively cultivate these competencies.

In response to concerns about these disparities, there is now a growing interest in the professional standards for school leaders established in 1996 by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and updated in 2008 (ISLLC, 2008).

The ISLLC standards provide a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school leaders, grounded in principles of effective teaching and learning (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; NPBEA, 2001). As of 2005, forty-one states had either adopted the ISLLC standards or aligned their own standards with ISLLC's for use in reforming educational administration certification programs in their states. In addition, most states now rely on various assessments as part of their certification processes, including the School Leadership Licensure Assessment (Sanders & Simpson, 2005).

Despite the growing alignment of programs with the ISLLC standards for professional practice, requirements for administrative certification and the extent to which state policies support or undermine professional development and preparation continue to vary dramatically across states. Among preparation programs, there is wide variability in entry and exit standards, program structure and academic content, pedagogy, and program duration. Some programs require field-based internships with close supervision, some rely on coursework only, and others require a mixture of these plus an exit test or performance assessment (NCEI, 2003).

Financing sources and models also influence the availability, content, design, and impact of professional development and preparation. State funding is uneven and subject to the budgetary ebbs and flows. Teachers and principals often compete for federal and state funding allocated to professional development. Perhaps more problematic, although substantial resources are devoted to professional development, there has been limited consideration of the coherence of those investments and minimal attention to evaluating the relative benefits of different approaches. Increasingly, private sources of funding have supplemented and, in some cases, replaced public expenditures, opening the way for not only new sources of funding but also private providers and collaborations between public and private institutions, adding to the complexity of the landscape.

Unfortunately, very little is known about either the financing or costs of pre-service and in-service professional development for principals and the impact of financing strategies on the nature and design of principal preparation and performance. Research in this area has been hampered by a variety of difficulties, including a lack of consistency in defining and tracking relevant expenditures, an incomplete understanding of costs and absence of tools to measure them, and the complexity created by the multitude of decision makers who play a role. Better information about the sources of financing and the costs of effective preparation and professional development for principals is essential to assessing alternative models and planning for successful reforms.

Conceptual Framework: What Makes an Effective School Leader

Although there are significant gaps in knowledge about how best to develop school leaders and how to develop policies that support such programs, there is considerably more research on what contemporary principals need to know and be able to do. In this section, we describe this research and the criteria we used to evaluate the programs.

Elements of Effective School Leadership

The importance of leadership to school and instructional improvement has been well documented (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2003). Prior research has shown that leaders influence classroom outcomes through two primary pathways. The first pathway involves leadership practices that directly influence teaching and learning, for example, through the selection, support, and development of teachers. The second includes activities that indirectly influence practice by creating organizational conditions in the school that are conducive to positive change. Each of these pathways has been linked to important student outcomes (see, for example, Leithwood, et al., 2004; Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002).

Instructional leadership. According to research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000, 2005) and others (for instance, Marks & Printy, 2003), the most critical practices—with both direct and indirect effects—involve:

- Working directly with teachers to improve effectiveness in the classroom, through evaluation, supervision, modeling, and support
- Providing resources and professional development to improve instruction
- Coordinating and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Regularly monitoring teaching and student progress
- Developing and maintaining shared norms and expectations with students, staff, and families in the school

Together, these activities, which are aimed squarely at improving classroom teaching and learning, are key components of *instructional leadership*. The concept of principal as instructional leader stands in sharp contrast to traditional images of school administration, which emphasize

the leader's role in maintaining discipline and bureaucratic order. Moreover, whereas traditional conceptions would select for principal candidates who seem well positioned to maintain order, instructional leadership places a premium on instructional qualifications.

Transformational leadership. Transformational school leaders go even further in their efforts to redirect the organization by changing the context and sense of purpose surrounding instruction and learning. The term was originally used by management scholar James McGregor Burns, in 1978, to describe leadership approaches that he observed among effective business managers, political leaders, and army officers, who influenced members indirectly by, for example, cultivating people's engagement in a common vision, increasing their commitment to their work, creating a context that encourages risk taking and learning, and developing processes for shared decision making.

Transformational leadership is often contrasted with "transactional" approaches, which are based on an exchange of services or resources or more direct forms of influence. Transactional leaders do not encourage followers' individual development or urge them to take on greater responsibility—two attributes that are necessary for organizational change and improvement. According to Burns (1978):

> Transforming leadership . . . occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. . . . Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose. Various names are used for such leadership, some of them derisory: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, exalting, uplifting, preaching, exhorting, evangelizing. The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both. (p. 20)

Although not originally used to describe school leadership, *transformational leadership* has become a common descriptor of a critical class of leadership activities found to predict organizational learning and change. These include:

- Setting direction by instilling a shared vision and compelling goals
- Promoting a trusting and caring work and schooling culture

- Holding high performance expectations and developing individuals through direct and indirect support
- Developing the organizational conditions (structures, processes, culture) to facilitate teaching and learning
- Developing collaborative decision-making structures
- Engaging families and the community in school improvement (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, & Wilson, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002)

The sets of activities associated with instructional leadership and organizational transformation reinforce each other. For example, setting direction involves articulating a clear vision and creating performance expectations tied to a set of clearly delineated goals. Similarly, leaders can develop people by modeling desired behaviors, by offering direct support and feedback to help staff improve their practice, and by providing relevant and goal-related professional development.

A growing body of research has shown that effective school leaders are those who can both influence teaching and learning directly *and* cultivate a social context that supports those efforts: a vision, a professional culture, shared decision-making structures, and engaged families and communities (see, for example, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). These leaders recognize the interdependence of these two sets of activities: efforts to improve teaching and learning can only be sustained and successful in a context that supports those efforts, and supportive contexts are of little value without activities and resources aimed at improving the core work of instruction.

Given this mutually reinforcing relationship, it is not surprising that several of the principals in our study who stood out as exemplary instructional leaders also engaged in transformational leadership activities. For example, one principal described her school improvement efforts in terms of the learning culture she was trying to inculcate, in which teachers, students, and parents were all engaged and working together as learners. She characterized this effort as building a "circle of learners": "I'm a learner, and I expect you to be learners. I'll do everything I can to help you learn what needs to be learned, but you have to support each other."

In addition to her efforts to build a learning culture, she also intervened directly by creating study groups for teachers and parents and provided direct support for skill development in classroom management, instruction, and the use of new instructional technologies. In subsequent

chapters, we provide further illustrations of the interdependence of these two dimensions of leadership and the program designs that cultivate these capacities.

In sum, although no list of practices can fully predict whether a leader will be effective in a given context, prior research suggests that instructional and transformational leadership are highly predictive of practices associated with gains in student achievement. We therefore looked for evidence of these activities among graduates of the programs we studied.

Leadership Preparation and Development

The literature and professional standards generally agree on critical features of leadership practice and, increasingly, on key elements of preparation programs for principals, but there is little empirical support for the efficacy of these program elements or design features. Most of the research on particular program features consists of data reported by the programs themselves, with little evidence of how graduates actually perform as principals or how their behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes have been shaped by their experiences in a program.

The relative quality of leadership programs should be judged ultimately by their graduates' capacity to promote school improvement and student learning. Some argue that programs should also be assessed by what graduates learn, how well they learn it, what they come to believe about being a principal, and how deeply they identify with the role as a result of their participation in a program. According to Orr (2003), shifts in professional practice follow from these important cognitive developments.

Research on adult learning (see, for example, Kaagan, 1998) suggests that learning and attitude shifts by adults are likely to be promoted by programs that:

1. Have a well-defined and *well-integrated theory of leadership* for school improvement that frames and integrates the program. The theory should provide coherence and be consistent with other program elements.
2. Use preparation *strategies that maximize learning, learning transfer, and leadership identity formation*. These strategies include the use of cohorts, student-centered instructional pedagogies, faculty and mentor support, and opportunities to apply theory to practice.
3. Provide *strong content and field experiences* in leadership preparation that are intellectually challenging and offer

comprehensive, coherent, and relevant experiences and high-quality internships (Orr, 2006).

Limited research has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of university-based leadership preparation programs (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004; Orr, 2003), and even less exists on the effectiveness of district-level leadership development programs and strategies (Peterson, 2002). However, the available research suggests that these precepts of adult learning are reflected in many of the specific program features identified in effective leadership development programs:

- Clear values about leadership and learning around which the program is coherently organized
- Standards-based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management
- Field-based internships with skilled supervision
- Cohort groups that create opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in practice-oriented situations
- Active instructional strategies that link theory and practice, such as problem-based learning
- Rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty
- Strong partnerships with schools and districts to support quality field-based learning (Davis et al., 2005)

Preliminary research suggests that when these programs employ innovative features, graduates give higher ratings to both their training and their abilities as school leaders as do the members of their staff. In a study of eleven innovatively redesigned principal preparation programs, Leithwood and colleagues (1996) surveyed teachers in the graduates' schools and found that the teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership effectiveness were strongly correlated with such program features as innovative instructional strategies, cohort membership, and program content. Similarly, in comparing graduates of two university-district partnership programs (with many innovative features) and a conventional program (with few), Orr and Barber (2007) found that supportive program structures; comprehensive, standards-based curriculum; and broader, more intensive internships were significantly but differentially related to three types of outcomes: leadership knowledge and skills, career intentions, and career advancement.

Finally, Orr, Silverberg, & LeTendre (2006) compared initial learning and career outcomes of graduates from five leadership preparation

programs that varied in their features and how they had been redesigned to meet national and state standards. The researchers found that the five programs differed most on the programs' challenge and coherence, their use of active, student-centered instructional practices, and the length and quality of internships. These same qualities were positively associated with how much graduates learned about instructional leadership practices and how to foster organizational learning. Internship length and quality were also positively associated with career intentions and advancement. These results suggest that programs using somewhat different models but with well-implemented, innovative program features yield positive and significantly better outcomes than more typical preparation programs.

Much of this literature has stressed the importance of partnerships with districts for developing targeted recruitment, an efficient hiring pipeline, affordable internships, and strong clinical preparation. Although most literature on university-district partnerships for leadership development focuses on the challenges and approaches, little research has assessed the benefits and impacts of specific program models (see, for example, Browne-Ferrigno, 2005; Goldring & Sims, 2005). One exception is research by Orr and Barber (2007), which found that partnership-based preparation programs had more high-quality attributes than conventional programs in the same institutions and yielded higher levels of graduate-reported learning, aspirations to take on leadership roles, and leadership advancement.

Research on in-service professional development programs for principals is more limited. In their analysis of program models, Peterson and Kelley (2002) emphasize features that are similar to exemplary features of leadership preparation programs: having a clear vision; coherence; and a thoughtful sequencing of career development knowledge, skills and abilities. They also conclude that stronger programs offer a long-term set of experiences; combine workshops or institutes with on-site training, practice, and coaching; are closely linked to participants' work; and foster a sense of membership.

Even given this consensus about core program features, the field lacks knowledge about their efficacy under different conditions, the specific dimensions and content needed to produce powerful learning, the conditions that affect their implementation, and the combination of factors that must be in place for learning to be robust and for candidates to develop a deep commitment to the work. For example, although there is agreement about the importance of internships, the quality of field experiences varies dramatically and depends partly on how the internship combines

with other program elements. The relative impact of other features is likely to be similarly contingent.

Moreover, few studies have evaluated how recruitment and selection shape program content, the quality of candidates' experiences, or what graduates are able to do upon completion of their programs. The historical lack of attention to recruitment and selection has resulted in screening processes that are often ill-defined and lacking in rigor. Recent recognition of the importance of recruiting high-potential candidates for leadership has resulted in experimentation with alternative pipelines into the principalship, including a number of programs that recruit candidates who have no prior educational experience. This trend stems from concerns that state laws, district policies, and traditional pipelines prohibit the credentialing and hiring of high-potential leaders from noneducational backgrounds (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003). Opposing voices express concerns that expanding recruitment to noneducators makes the prospect of developing strong instructional leaders even more remote. These debates are symptoms of the lack of consensus about the relative importance of various qualifications for leadership, how to select for potential leaders, and how best to develop different pools of candidates.

Guided by the findings and frameworks of prior research, our study seeks to fill in some of the empirical gaps to provide a more fine-grained portrait of how and under what conditions various program designs produce effective leaders. We did not aim to develop a one-size-fits-all portrait of effective programs. Rather, we selected distinct program designs that serve different constituencies to illuminate, on the one hand, the essential elements shared across disparate programs and, on the other, the dimensions along which high-quality programs can vary.

Policy Influences on Principal Development

State policies play a critical role in supporting the district's ability to create a strong instructional environment and in enabling principals to support teaching and learning. This effect occurs in part through a state's approach to funding, regulating, and supporting education—for example, by creating thoughtful and coherent standards, curriculum, and assessment and support systems that are focused on important kinds of learning. State policies also affect how the state supports, organizes, and manages professional learning (pre-service and in-service) for school leaders and for teachers.

Individual states enact each of these functions more and less well. States structure their preparation and professional development enterprises differently in terms of funding streams, standards and regulations guiding content, and institutions authorized and funded to provide training. The infrastructure for professional development and preparation in a state may influence the degree to which offerings are short-term, ad hoc and disjointed, or coherent and sustained, as well as the extent to which field-based opportunities for training are available or whether learning is more decontextualized, the extent to which principals in a state are likely to share a common knowledge base or are likely to learn entirely different content, and the extent to which promising programs have long-term support and can become institutionalized. In short, states vary widely in regard to which their policies support professional development for administrators.

Similarly, district policies and priorities can greatly affect the nature and content of professional preparation and development, and this may or may not be related to state policies. Some districts work closely with the state and are largely dependent on state funding allocations. Other districts position their leadership preparation and development programs as central components of comprehensive district reform initiatives and seek funding sources outside of district and state allocations.

Many states, districts, and funders are developing policies and investing resources to improve strategic leadership development for new and experienced school leaders as well (Sanders & Simpson, 2005; SREB, 2006). In recent years, state requirements, national accreditation recognition, and other policy factors have influenced program improvement and redesign work (see Sanders & Simpson, 2005, for state policy actions on leadership preparation requirements). Some leadership preparation programs have exceeded the national and state standards for program reform, although such developments have been largely documented through case studies (see, for example, Carr, 2005).

Some local districts, primarily in urban areas, are addressing the perceived leadership shortage by creating new preparation programs through collaboration with local universities (Grogan & Robertson, 2002; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Sandlin & Feigen, 1995). Federal, foundation, and state grant funds encourage collaboration as a means of program innovation and responsiveness to local needs for high-quality leaders (McCarthy, 1999). The recent federal School Leadership Program, for example, encourages university and district collaboration through funding, and considers such relationships essential for program relevance, improved leadership development, and response to local leadership shortages

(U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In some cases, such collaborations support both pre-service and in-service leadership development (Norton, 2002; SREB, 2006).

Understanding the costs of effective preparation and professional development for principals is particularly important to assessing alternative models and planning for successful reforms. Despite the critical importance of these material considerations in determining the "payoff" of various program investments, little good information can be found on the cost of effective preparation and professional development—that is, the full amount of resources required beyond budgeted expenditures, whether monetary or in-kind services. Most studies of the costs of professional development since the 1980s have limited their focus to (1) estimating the range of spending by states, districts, or initiatives on professional development; (2) identifying and estimating the costs of categories of activities or budgetary line items for professional development; or (3) examining the distribution of the cost burden for professional development across government and stakeholder groups (see, for example, Little et al., 1987; Miles, 2003; Monk, Plecki, & Killeen, 2003). A close reading of these studies indicates that there is little consensus on what to include or how to allocate costs across program components in cost estimates of preparation and professional development programs.

In sum, little empirical research has been done that examines carefully the relationship between the qualities of programs and the policy and financing infrastructures in which the programs are embedded. Yet the evolution and specific features of programs are inexorably shaped by their political and economic contexts. We have sought to understand these links and the landscape of current policies to inform decision makers seeking to improve the stock of school leaders through recruitment, preparation, and development.

In the remainder of this book, we explore these questions, describing how eight exemplary leadership development programs operate, and what their graduates accomplish as leaders. We also examine the policy landscape for leadership programs across the country and the strategies used by states, universities, and districts that have made a commitment to ensuring that school leaders are better able to meet the extraordinary challenges they face.