Leadership-Focused Coaching: A Research-Based Approach for Supporting Aspiring Leaders

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (ICPEL) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

Julie Gray
University of West Florida

Educational leadership professors prepare aspiring leaders by providing uplifting opportunities to connect theory and practice. This paper proposes a research-based model called leadership-focused coaching, an approach to support graduate students in developing and honing instructional leadership skills and responsibilities (Gray, 2016). This paper addresses the shift in principal preparation programs from theory-to-practice to a knowledge-to-practice approach over the last 20 years (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Cunningham, 2007; Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; Daresh, 2004). While there are numerous models for coaching teachers, we offer this model for aspiring and new instructional leaders of schools.

Keywords: leadership preparation, university-school partnerships, leadership field experience, leadership-focused coaching, and leadership mentoring

ISSN: 2155-9635

Professors of educational leadership prepare aspiring leaders by providing opportunities to connect theory and practice, while emphasizing practical leadership skills. This paper proposes a research-based model called Leadership-Focused Coaching (LFC), an approach to support graduate students in developing and honing instructional leadership skills and responsibilities (Gray, 2016). Over the last 20 years, a shift happened in principal preparation programs from theory-to-practice to a knowledge-to-practice approach over the last 20 years (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Cunningham, 2007; Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; Daresh, 2004). To address this shift in pedagogical methodology, university instructors provide LFC while candidates complete coursework and once hired in school leadership positions.

Trends in the Literature

Educational leadership programs hope to prepare aspiring leaders with more real world and practical experiences in schools and districts (Cunningham, 2007; Geer, Anast-May, & Gurley, 2014). As a part of this trend, faculty in educational leadership programs need to provide more opportunities for students to have early field experiences and authentic leadership practice in schools (Geer et al, 2014; Wallace Foundation, 2016). Experienced practitioners and university faculty members work collaboratively to support aspiring and novice instructional leaders in the school setting (SREB, 2001; Wallace Foundation, 2016). This model for leadership preparation integrates coaching, Leadership-Focused Coaching, as described in this paper, and mentoring with opportunities for early field experiences embedded in coursework as a solution to this concern (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2008; Lochmiller, 2014; Schleicher, 2012).

More recently, the trend is to prepare aspiring leaders as instructional leaders, rather than as administrators of schools, as done in the past (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Geer et al., 2014; New Leaders, 2012; Schleicher, 2012; SREB, 2001; Wallace Foundation, 2016). Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) contend "efforts to provide field-based practicum experiences do not consistently provide candidates with a sustained, hands-on internship . . . with the real demands of school leadership under the supervision of a well-qualified mentor" (p. 6). Prospective instructional leaders are matched with strategically selected mentors and coaches to build their leadership capacity and experience a variety of leadership skills in real world settings (Brown-Ferrigno, 2007; Geer et al. 2014; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Schleicher, 2012).

The Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (SELI) promotes the following attributes for highly effective leadership preparation programs: a philosophy and curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, a connection of practice to theory via experiential learning in the field, structured and supervised internship and practicum experiences, formalized mentoring support from experts, and a selective recruitment process with recommendations from local school districts (Gray, 2016, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Schleicher, 2012; UCEA & New Leaders, 2016). There is a great demand for high quality and effective leaders in schools, for which leader preparation programs need to meet more effectively (Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010). This paper is offered a theoretical framework and conceptual model for addressing this need.

While there are numerous coaching models, this study offers a new style of aspiring leader support, called Leadership-Focused Coaching (LFC). This approach varies from facilitative coaching (coach builds upon protégé's level of skills); consultative coaching (coach consults from expert perspective); instructional coaching (coach draws upon experience and shares resources); transformational coaching (coach goes beyond improvement to shift to innovative thinking and actions); and collaborative coaching (coach works with protégé to develop skills and knowledge)

and offers an coaching that leadership theory in practice (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005; Farver & Holt, 2015; Hargrove, 1995). While LFC integrates some of the skills of these models, the LFC model is individualized, candidate-focused, and driven by goals set by the coach and candidate/protégé and includes coaching cycles of feedback (Gray, 2016, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Through the lens of Boyer's *Scholarship of Integration*, this study offers a new construct which is made up of the concepts of experiential learning, early field experiences, leadership-focused coaching, and mentoring support with university faculty and school district leaders and mentors working collaboratively to support novice leaders (Boyer, 1990; Gray, 2016; Hill, 2011). The theoretical framework for this paper encompasses adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998) and theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the form of communities of practice. Organizational change theory (Lewin, 1951) is discussed, in regard to continuous change in schools and leaders acting as change agents. Finally, the framework considers the role of continuous improvement in our schools, which tends to be complex organizations (Orton & Weick, 1990).

Boyer's Scholarship of Integration Model

According to Boyer (1990), the professoriate is divided into four functions, which can overlap one another, to include: the scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Boyer's (1990) model of *Scholarship of Integration* helps scholars to make "connections across disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context illuminating data in a revealing way" (p. 18). *Scholarship of Integration* allows researchers to link literature from a variety of fields and to interpret the patterns of each to one another, as part of their creative scholarly work (Hill, 2011). A scholar can find a way to interpret what others have already discovered in a different way that has not been considered by others (Boyer, 1990).

For this paper, the theoretical framework is built upon adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984), a theory of situated learning as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), organizational change theory (Lewin, 1951), and continuous improvement models within school organizations (Orton & Weick, 1990) (See Figures 1 and 2). Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship of Integration* serves as a model for the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study as each of these theories are pieced together for the sake of research. Boyer (1990) divides the professoriate into four functions to include scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching. The *Scholarship of Integration* model allows the researcher to make connections from one discipline to another, while considering the larger context of each and giving scholars an opportunity to make connections in the literature.

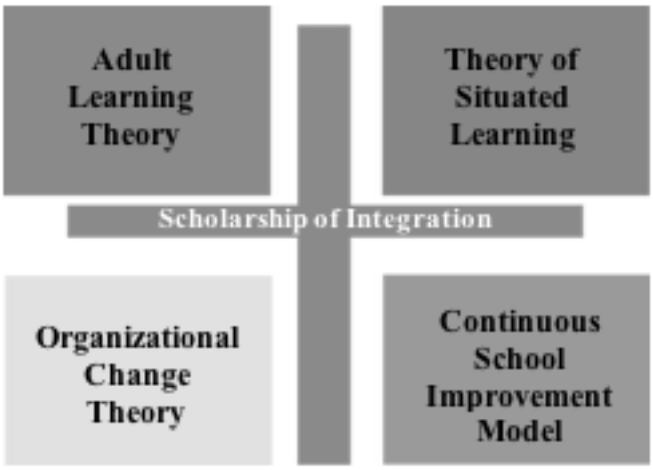

Figure 1. Theoretical framework for study

Previously, a three-phase model for leadership preparation programs was developed and shared, which included leadership-focused coaching for educational leadership graduate students. The three phases to the model include one while students are enrolled in coursework, the second while completing a practicum experience, and the final phase once hired and working in the field. The first phase focuses on providing student with experiential learning and early field experiences while taking Master's level courses. The second phase, the focus of this paper, involves leadership-focused coaching, which is offered by university faculty for students during the practicum or internship semester. The final phase includes mentoring support from experienced leadership for novice leaders once hired in the local district. Universities would provide any professional development needed for novices and experienced mentors, in partnership with the districts.

Relevant Literature

Adult Learning Theory

Andragogy, adult learning theory, was introduced by Knowles (1980, 1984) who defines adult learners as "autonomous, motivated, and ready to embrace growth-oriented experiential based learning" (Richardson, 2015, p. 2071). Course learning tasks allow students to be self-directed, open to feedback from peers, and self-reflective (Knowles, 1984; Richardson, 2015). Those who are more actively engaged in their learning, rather than passive, are more likely to succeed as instructional leaders (Richardson, 2015). Keeping this in mind, it is important to offer opportunities for leadership students to participate in reflective writing tasks and course discussions. This type of discourse helps aspiring leaders to gage their thinking in contrast to classmates or determine common perspectives with others.

Richardson (2015) purports leadership preparation course "should provide opportunities for aspiring leaders to retrieve, reflect, and infuse their experience into their learning, and provide context, variability, and personalization for learning success" (p. 2071). Reflective writing tasks give aspiring leaders a chance to think more critically about past practical experience and connect such to the theoretical content in courses. As future leaders are more contemplative critical thinkers, they can discern the causes of decisions made by leaders and effects on stakeholders within schools (Gray, 2016). As adult learners, aspiring instructional leaders need to engage actively in learning

to connect to their prior knowledge and reflect upon what they have learned, discovered, experienced, observed, contrasted, compared, realized, and contextualized about leadership (Richardson, 2015).

It is not surprising that many graduate students enter a preparation program with biases, based upon their past experiences, which can influence their learning (Richardson, 2015). Future leaders should be encouraged to reflect upon, scrutinize, and contemplate the implications of their beliefs and philosophies of teaching, learning, and leader, and consider other perspectives (Richardson, 2015). Class discussions, debates, and interactive activities allow prospective leaders to solidify their thoughts about leadership and education (Gray, 2016). Curriculum mapping in educational leadership programs should be strategic in incrementally developing leadership skills and knowledge during coursework (Richardson, 2015). It is important to keep the characteristics of adult learners in mind as a program and course assignments are developed.

Theory of Situated Learning and Communities of Practice

Lave (1988), while researching how learning occurs, developed the theory of situated learning, which explains how knowledge is acquired. Learning takes place within the context of the place where it happens, where it is situated (Lave, 1988). Further, communities of practice are made up of groups of people who have a set of issues or concerns in common and learn together (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). As members of the group bond and share values and information, they become a community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002). The members of the community of practice learn from one another as they face common issues and develop solutions collaboratively (Wenger et al., 2002). As an organizational model, a community of practice evolves as its members share goals, values, best practices, and discussion with one another (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Sutter, 2005). For this study, communities of practice will include the cohorts of students, faculty, district mentors, and district leaders.

Organizational Change Theory

Huber and Glick (1995) define organizational changes as "departures from the status quo or from smooth trends" (p. 3). The theory has evolved significantly since the early 1900s (Ott, Parkes, & Simpson, 2003). Argyris is credited with establishing the principles of organizational change theory (Ott et al., 2003). "The application of knowledge about motivation, group and intergroup dynamics, leadership, teamwork, empowerment, effects of the work environment on individuals at work, power, and influence" requires organizational change (Ott et al., 2003, p. 444). In his fifth discipline 'systems thinking,' Senge (1990) emphasizes the importance of organizational change and learning. For this study, change theory is considered regarding the inevitability of change within organizations, how university and school district partnerships can face this inevitability, and the effects such change can have on leadership preparation programs.

Continuous School Improvement Model

While the concept of continuous improvement has been in the business literature for several decades, it has been discussed more in the context of schools over the last 15-20 years (Cheney et al., 2010; Park, Hironaka, Carver, & Nordstrum, 2013). The Coalition of Essential Schools defines continuous school improvement as "the process cycle of school improvement with the major components of

creating the vision, gathering data related to that vision, analyzing the data, planning the work of the school to align with the vision, implementing the strategies and action steps outlined in the plan, and gathering data to measure the impact of the intervention" (para. 1). In contrast to traditional school improvement, a continuous school improvement model finds that schools should always be working toward improvement and progress, that is ongoing (Cheney et al., 2010; Park et al., 2013). In this study, continuous improvement is viewed as a means for addressing gaps in the principal preparation programs and ways to build stronger partnerships between local school districts and universities.

Conceptual Framework

In this conceptual paper, a model is described for early field experiences and experiential learning for educational leadership students, leadership-focused coaching from university faculty members, and mentoring support from and with the school district (see Figures 2 and 4). While completing educational leadership coursework, students would have early field experiences and experiential learning activities embedded in each class, especially in the practicum course. University faculty members would work in collaboration with school district partners to design and develop practical and authentic assignments (see Figure 4).

One of the goals of this model is to more effectively prepare leaders for jobs in schools. During the student's practicum semester, leadership-focused coaching would be provided by the university instructors and within the context of the school environment by a supervising administrator (Gray, 2016, 2017). The final part of the conceptual model includes mentoring support within schools (see Figure 2). Once hired in a leadership position, districts would match each novice leader with principal or district-level mentor. University faculty members would support partnerships with districts by developing and providing ongoing mentoring workshops, professional development, and resources for such mentors, as well as remediation support for struggling new leaders as requested and part of the warranty agreement that exists in most states in the U.S. (see Figure 4).

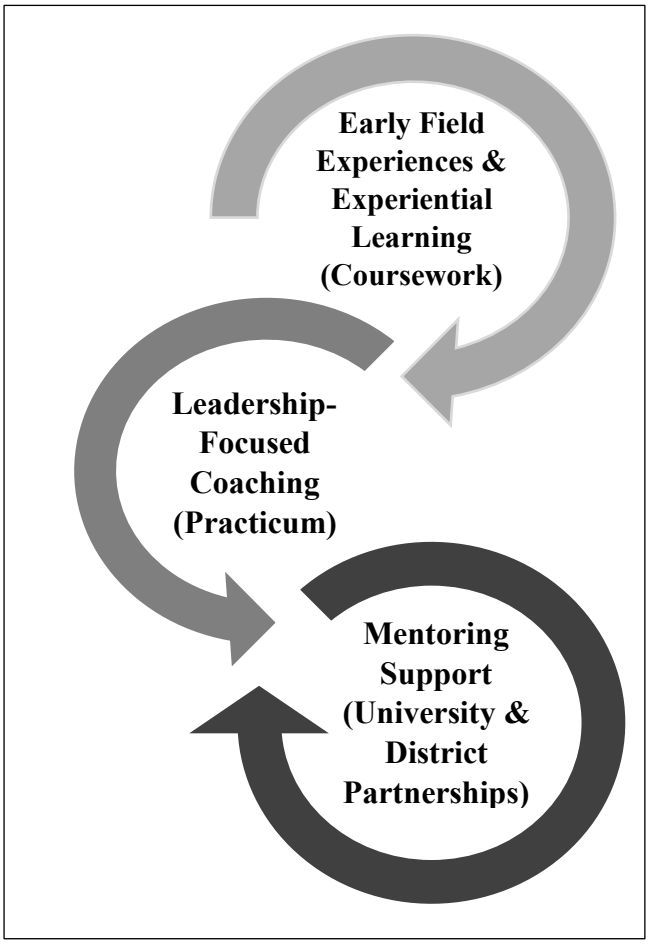

Figure 2. Conceptual diagram of model

Early Field Experiences/Experiential Learning

In teacher preparation programs, early and sustained experiences in the field are highly recommended, so that pre-service teachers are well-informed about their future roles and responsibilities (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014). In other words, they know what will be expected of them as a teacher in a school setting. In this study, we apply the same thinking, but for leadership preparation programs. If students have more practical experiences in the field, they are more informed about their path to leadership with a more realistic perspective of the responsibilities and expectations (Figueiredo-Brown, Ringler, & James, 2015; New Leaders, 2012). For the field-based assignments, leadership students would work under the guidance and supervision of a variety of school level and district leaders to deepen the extent of their experiences in the field (Pounder & Crow, 2005). Candidates would be encouraged to participate in diverse settings and schools during this phase. Many researchers have described the significance of experiential and practical learning in the field while students are enrolled in educational leadership courses (Cheney et al., 2010; Cunningham, 2007; Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh, 2004; Geer et al., 2014).

Internships and practicum courses "provide authentic experiences to bridge the gap between theory and practice when students work in schools addressing daily school issues" under the

guidance of a school leader (Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015, p. 38; Cunningham, 2007). Students benefit from a "practice-rich" experience in a real school leadership setting (New Leaders, 2012, p. 6). With universities and school districts working together to improve principal preparation programs, candidates' capacity to lead school effectively increases (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008). Professional development should be linked to practice, ongoing, problem-focused, and emphasize leadership skills not yet mastered (Best, 2006). This model asserts that experiential field-based learning will address this need for practice and skill building.

By redesigning principal preparation to include more "practical, experiential curriculum designed to teach explicitly for transfer of skills, knowledge and strategies may improve the impact leaders have on learning in schools when they assume a leadership position" (Richardson, 2015, p. 2074). The U.S. Department of Education (2004) report Innovative Pathways to School Leadership determined programs must be "more innovative and need to include intensively focused, authentic courses and lots of field work" (p.4). While experiential learning is considered a best practice, this study describes leadership-focused coaching as a means for improving leadership preparation programs (Gray, 2016).

Other Coaching Models in Education

While there are numerous models of coaching teachers, this study focuses on the two approaches: peer coaching and clinical supervision. The original models of clinical supervision of Cogan (1973) and Goldhammer (1969) are mentioned briefly in context of clinical supervision.

Peer coaching.

Many coaching models are designed for providing support to aspiring or novice teachers, rather than leaders as this paper suggests. Peer coaching is one such model in which colleagues work collaboratively "to expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace" (Robbins, 1991, p. 1). This approach to coaching is typically teacher-led, informal, specific to instructional practices, and formative in nature. However, peer coaching often leads to formal observations, in which a pre- and post-conference would be involved. To be clear, peer coaching is never intended to be used for evaluation or summative means. Robbins (1991) shares the rationale for peer coaching is to:

> Reduce isolation among teachers; build collaborative norms to enable teachers to give and receive ideas and assistance; create a forum for addressing instructional problems; share successful practices; transfer training from the workshop to the workplace, promote the teacher as researcher; and encourage reflective practice. (p. 8)

Finally, teachers involved in peer coaching are not required to do so, but rather volunteer or choose to participate. Principals' role in peer coaching is limited to offering support and resources (time in the schedule, etc.), although some have been known to act as a peer coach (Robbins, 2009).

Clinical supervision.

Acheson and Gall (2002) developed the model of clinical supervision, which varies from the earlier models by Cogan (1973) and Goldhammer (1969). The model described by Acheson and Gall (2002) is more collaborative, interactive, and teacher-centered, rather than authoritative, directive, and supervisor-centered, as Cogan and Goldhammer defined clinical supervision. Clinical supervision involves a three-step cycle with a pre-observation conference, observation, and post-observation conference (Acheson & Gall, 2002). During the pre-observation conference, the teacher communicates the goals for the lesson, personal concerns, and areas for feedback. The supervisor assists in clarifying the teacher's current instructional skills and strategies for reaching the most

effective level of instruction. Together, they select a tool for gathering data, the actual observation instrument to be used.

During the observation, the observer gathers data in an objective manner. In the post-observation conference, also called the feedback conference, the data is reviewed and the observer shares his inferences from notes and based upon his expertise about best practices. Often times, the feedback conference becomes a planning session for more effective instructional practices (Acheson & Gall, 2002). The goals for clinical supervision are:

> to provide teachers with objective feedback on the current state of their instruction; to diagnose and solve instructional problems; to help teachers develop skill in using instructional strategies; to evaluate teachers for promotion, tenure, or other decisions; and to help teachers develop a positive attitude about continuous professional development. (Acheson & Gall, 2002, pp. 12-13)

The peer coaching and clinical supervision models were designed for teacher preparation, while the learning-focused coaching is intended for leadership candidates.

Learning-Focused Coaching

In the conceptual diagram of the proposed model, leadership-focused coaching makes up the second part of the process described in this paper (See figure 2). The model promotes early field experiences and more experiential learning and leading for students pursuing a Master's of educational leadership. Leadership-Focused Coaching is provided by university faculty while aspiring leaders are completing coursework and the principal practicum (or internship). The final part of the model involves mentoring support from the school district, once candidates are hired in leadership positions.

The concept was first inspired by Content-Focused Coaching (CFC), an approach to mathematics coaching (West & Staub, 2003). Content-Focused Coaching is "a professional development model designed to promote student learning and achievement by having a coach and a teacher work jointly in specific settings, guided by conceptual tools" (Staub, West, & Bickel, 2003, pp. 1-2; Staub, 2004; West & Staub, 2003). Content-focused coaches use specific lesson planning and observation tools to support new mathematics teachers (West & Staub, 2003). Novice teachers collaboratively plan, develop, and teach lessons with their content-focused mentor, who models strategies and gradually shifts more responsibilities to the developing teacher during the process (West & Staub, 2003; see Figure 3).

In the same way that novice teachers receive the support, coaching, and feedback from a faculty supervisor using the CFC model, aspiring instructional leaders would have an educational leadership faculty member offer coaching during the practicum experience. However, the emphasis for LFC is placed on developing and honing instructional leadership skills and responsibilities through feedback cycles. The researcher defines Leadership-Focused Coaching (LFC) as an approach to provide specific instructional support for aspiring and novice school leaders (Gray, 2016). This model differs greatly from that of CFC in its focus on support to aspiring and novice instructional leaders and integration of experiential learning and early field experiences (see Figure 3). While participating in the practicum course, educational leadership interns would be visited by the university faculty while conducting leadership-type activities in the school environment (Gray, 2016). This type of support could also be provided virtually via Skype, Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, or phone conference by the faculty member with the candidate, as needed.

The leadership-focused coach assists aspiring leaders in questioning current practices and philosophies about leadership, establishing professional goals during the practicum semester, and further developing leadership skills (Lochmiller, 2014). Early field experiences and critical reflection assignments in courses prior to the practicum should facilitate the shift from classroom teacher to instructional leader, a transition some aspiring leaders struggle to make. Leadership coaching has been described as "one induction strategy that supports principals in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to be successful as instructional leaders" (Lochmiller, 2014, p. 60; Killeavy, 2006; Rhodes, 2012; A & Hammack, 2011). While cultivating a culture of change among adult learners, coaches will likely face those who are hesitant to change. Frequently, there are "some entrenched norms . . . schedules, use of time, ways of relating, and habits of mind." which will need to be addressed via coaching (West & Cameron, 2013, p. 28). This study describes a model designed to address these types of challenges for future leaders enrolled in educational leadership preparation programs.

Content-Focused Coaching	Leadership-Focused Coaching
• Designed for teacher candidates or novice teachers of mathematics • Professional development model to promote student learning and achievement • Coach and teacher work together using specific observation tools • Specific lesson planning format implemented • Novice teachers plan, develop, and teach lessons in collaboration with coach • Coach models and scaffolds strategies, but gradually shifts responsibilities to developing teacher • Coach leads sessions as the content expert • Focuses on specific instructional skills, strategies, or knowledge • Provides formative, constructive feedback (Staub, West, and Bickel, 2003; West & Staub, 2003)	• Designed for aspiring instructional leaders • Model to promote best leadership and decision-making processes and skills • Coach and candidate work together using PSEL, state, or district instruments, evaluation tools, or resources • Format will vary based upon district format recommendations • Candidate plans activities (during practicum/ internship) with guidance from coach and supervising principal • Candidate leads sessions with coach facilitating • Focuses on connecting theory and practice, leadership skills, and decision-making processes • Provides formative, constructive feedback (Gray, 2016)

Figure 3. Contrast of content-focused and leadership-focused coaching

A leadership-focused coach offers feedback for building upon strengths, suggestions for improvements, and strategies for improving areas or skills needing growth, while sharing relevant leadership theory and decision-making models (Gray, 2016; see Figure 3). Checklists and rubrics are developed and aligned to state standards and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, formerly known as the ISLLC Standards (NPBEA, 2015). A sample observation form was developed and aligned to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (see Appendix A). The observation form could be used to establish baseline data, in addition to formative and summative evaluations throughout the student's coursework. In addition, the sample form could be used by candidates as a self-assessment tool, as well. Finally, a sample practicum/internship plan template is shared (see Appendix B). Ideally, the Leadership-Focused Coach would work collaboratively to develop the practicum/

internship plan with the supervising principal and candidate. The plan provides a structure to guide the candidate through the practicum experience. Other organizational tools could be used as well, such as critical reflection logs, structured response reflections, and guided discussions.

A key aspect of LFC is the development of instructional leadership skills and knowledge for aspiring leaders. While in the past, principals typically worked independently within their schools, often lacking a colleague or mentor to reach out to as a resource (Mitgang, 2008; Schleicher, 2012). Mitgang compares working in isolation to that of a conductor of a music group who leads and motivates others but lacks support for himself (2008). Thankfully, recent trends have led to principal networking opportunities and learning communities being developed among principals, veterans and novices alike (Schleicher, 2012). These networking connections established can "foster collaborative problem-solving and alleviate the sense of isolation that some school leaders feel" (Schleicher, 2012, p. 22).

Every educational leadership student would be paired with an area principal (or assistant principal as needed) during the practicum/internship semester. Most students choose to work with their current supervising administrator but have the option to consider another school or district level leader if requested. At the beginning of the practicum semester, the candidate would use the template aligned to the PSEL or state's standards (if preferred) to develop a plan of action for a variety of leadership-type activities and experiences with feedback from the university faculty member and supervising school leader.

Some competencies would have required tasks to be completed (i.e.: attend a school board meeting and writing a reflection; visit another school campus and compare the school's culture to that of your own school, etc.). Under each competency would be several options or examples of ways to demonstrate mastery or experience while developing specific leadership skills. By allowing choices and flexibility, the practicum candidate is more likely to take ownership of the plan. Interns could use the sample observation form (Appendix A) as a self-assessment by ranking their skill levels for each of the competencies and at the end of the practicum semester as a reflection of their progress.

The leadership-focused coach would provide constructive suggestions for improvement, feedback for building upon strengths, and strategies for further developing areas needing growth while emphasizing relevant decision-making models and organizational leadership theory (Gray, 2016). Formative and summative evaluation forms, rubrics, and checklists would be designed to align to state and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). Leadership-focused coaches will assist novice leaders in establishing goals, questioning current practices, and improving leadership skills throughout the leadership practicum semester (Gray, 2016, 2017; Lochmiller, 2014).

Leadership coaching has been described as "one induction strategy that supports principals in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to be successful as instructional leaders" (Killeavy, 2006; Lochmiller, 2014, p. 60; Rhodes, 2012; Wise & Hammack, 2011). When promoting and cultivating a culture of change among adult learners, coaches often face teachers and leaders who are hesitant to change and "some entrenched norms . . . schedules, use of time, ways of relating, and habits of mind" which will need to be addressed via coaching (West & Cameron, 2013, p. 28). This study offers a model for facing these types of challenges for aspiring leaders. Figure 3 offers a contrast of content-focused coaching, intended for aspiring and novice teachers, and leadership-focused coaching for aspiring and novice instructional leaders. In Figure 4, the roles and responsibilities for the student, faculty member, school supervising principal, and districts are described for each phase of the model.

While many candidates will self-select their current principal, others may need to be matched to a supervising principal or district leader. Ideally, these mentoring relationships could be developed and sustained over time, to the benefit of the mentor and aspiring leader alike. There are advantages for the novice leader to receive constructive feedback and leadership-focused coaching from the supervising principal and university professor (Bickman, Goldring, De Andrade, Breda, & Goff, 2012; Gray, 2016). Practicum candidates would benefit from critical criticism from the leadership-focused coach (university faculty) and school level mentor (principal or assistant principal), allowing for a variety of perspectives, resources, and information (Bickman et al., 2012). Further, candidates would be encouraged to shift their thinking from that of a classroom teacher to considering the whole school and district.

	During Coursework	**During Practicum**	**Once in Leadership Position**
Role of Candidate	• Participates in early field experiences within each course with cooperation from principal • Writes reflections to connect theory to practice based upon early field experiences • Benefits from interaction with classmates in small learning communities	• Develops plan for practicum activities with supervising principal and university profession (LFC) • Completes field-based experiential leadership tasks under supervision of principal • Writes reflections to connect theory to practice based upon practicum field experiences • Benefits from interaction with classmates in small learning communities	• Applies theoretical and practical knowledge from Master's program in daily leadership skills in the field • Receives support from principal mentor • Requests support from university faculty as needed (part of warranty agreement) • Participates in professional development offered by district and/or university
Role of Faculty	• Teaches courses and designs early field-based and experiential learning activities • Ensures field experiences are authentic and tied to national and state standards within courses • Helps candidates in connecting practical to the theoretical	• Helps with development of practicum plan • Monitors candidate's progress in completing plan • Provides learning-focused coaching throughout practicum semester (feedback, observations, planning, etc.) • Provides access to small learning communities • Offers constructive, formative feedback • Shares effective decision-making models	• Provides mentoring support to graduates in the field as requested (part of warranty agreement) • Develops and provides professional development for experienced and novice leaders in the field in partnership with districts • Consults with districts about best research-based practices as requested

Role of Principal/ School District Leader	• Cooperates with students completing early field and experiential learning tasks in schools • Advises university to ensure tasks are practical and aligned to national, state, and district expectations	• Helps with development of practicum plan • Monitors candidate's progress in completing plan • Provides support and advice to practicum students • Shares constructive, formative feedback • Communicates concerns to university instructor	• Strategically matches novice leaders with principal mentors • Requests professional development from university faculty as needed • Seeks mentoring support from university faculty as part of warranty agreement

Figure 4. Roles and responsibilities of candidate, faculty member, and district leader

As a part of the partnership with local school districts, leadership-focused coaches (faculty members) could provide professional development sessions for mentor principals and leaders in the local districts. Professional development needs might vary from district-to-district, based upon instructional or leadership needs or trends. Many school districts have adopted a 'grow your own' approach to recruiting by encouraging teacher leaders into administrative roles. So, there could be a need for teacher or instructional leadership professional development sessions to be provided by the university instructors.

Mentoring Support

The final part of the model is mentoring support, which is provided for new leaders by their districts once hired in a leadership position. Ideally, the district will have small communities of practice for novice school leaders, so they do not feel so isolated in their new roles, which is often what is experienced by new leaders. The districts would be responsible for matching school principals to act as mentors for novice leaders. There would need to be consideration of grade level (elementary, middle or high), personality compatibility, and leadership styles when pairing novices with mentors.

University educational leadership faculty would cooperate and collaborate with school district mentors, providing ongoing support and professional development about mentoring best practices (Best, 2006; Bickman et al., 2012; Cheney et al., 2010; Lochmiller, 2014; UCEA & New Leaders, 2016). A recent Wallace Foundation report concluded "principals suggest that induction and mentoring are critical to the successful improvement of leadership practices" (Cheney et al., 2010; Lochmiller, 2014, p. 62; Gray, Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2007).

There are numerous advantages to mentoring aspiring leaders for districts, schools, and mentors. Support for novice leaders can be viewed as "an investment in retention, integration, and continual growth" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. x.). Effective mentoring programs allow districts to: "improve instructional performance, transfer the district policy, procedures, and educational philosophy, frame the professional learning journey, and promote norms of learning and collaboration" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. xii). There is also reciprocal learning and growth for the protégé and mentor, as well as emotional security and support for the protégé (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

Mentor principals can share advice and support for novices, based upon their years of experiences in the field (Schleicher, 2012). Mentoring can "empower and enhance practice . . . and unblock the ways to change by building self-esteem, self-confidence and a readiness to act, as well as to engage in constructive interpersonal relations" (Fletcher, 2000, p. xii). By sharing what he knows and why things are done, the mentor makes the implicit explicit to the novice leader (Fletcher,

2000). By providing support and advice to the novice, the experienced principal scaffolds the learning of the novice who develops and hones his leadership skills (Díaz-Maggioli, 2004). When engaged in mentoring relationships, novices are more likely to "increase their efficacy as instructional problem-solvers and decision makers, engaging in collaborative exchanges regarding improving practice, [and] remain in the . . . profession" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1). The mentor should be willing to challenge the novice to grow and improve professionally as a leader and help him to develop a professional vision and goals (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

Implications for Practice

The model proposed in this paper is supported by the research about leadership preparation, leadership coaching, mentoring, and experiential learning. There has been much discussion in the literature for the need of this type of redesign and improvement of leadership preparation programs, especially in regard to the major aspects of this model (Campbell & Gross, 2012; Cheney et al., 2010; Crow & Whiteman, 2016; New Leaders, 2011; Schleicher, 2012). Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship of Integration* establishes the foundation for this study, built upon adult learning theory (Knowles, 1990), theory of situation learning (Lave & Wenger, 1984), organizational change theory (Lewis, 1951), and continuous school improvement model (Orton & Weick, 1990). We can bridge theory from different disciplines and create new frameworks for our research. This study is offered as a new model for addressing 'old' problems within our school systems and leadership preparation programs.

Exemplary leader preparation programs should "feature close integration of course-work and fieldwork, using such techniques as case method, problem-based learning and journaling to encourage continuous reflection about the connections between theory and practice" (Mitgang, 2008, p. 6). The Urban Excellence Framework (New Leaders, 2011) describes an approach to leadership preparation in which universities and school districts partner to develop more selective processes for recruiting and more supportive networks for retaining leaders via mentoring, coaching, training, and networking opportunities (Campbell & Gross, 2012; Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Schleicher, 2012).

Authentic assessments can be integrated to engage aspiring leaders, university leadership-focused coaches, and school district mentor principals in effectively preparing and supporting of novice leaders, as suggested by the model of this study (New Leaders, 2012). In having more early field experiences and experiential learning during coursework, aspiring leaders are more engaged in their learning, as well as educated about what will be expected of them in their future roles. During the practicum, candidates receive feedback that is constructive, formative, and non-evaluative with the purpose of honing and refining leadership skills and strengths (Gray, 2016, 2017).

Further partnerships between universities and districts lead to better communication about expectations for both organizations. In the end, educational leadership programs must develop and prepare instructional leaders who are prepared to perform well and work toward continuous improvement in our schools (Schleicher, 2012). It seems wise to do so in conjunction with school districts. Both the university and districts benefit from such partnerships over time. The model proposed is the type of redesign and improvement needed in our programs to meet the current and future needs of our school districts.

For Future Studies

This model needs to be researched further and evaluated after implementation. A quantitative study could be conducted to determine candidates' perceptions about each phase of the model, as well as the importance of coaching and mentoring of aspiring and novice leaders. More information is needed about building stronger university and district partnerships. There are questions remaining about the importance of delivery of instruction. How are traditional face-to-face and online preparation programs different in their effectiveness and support of candidates? Can coaching and mentoring be as effective in online learning environments as in traditional face-to-face settings? All of these topics could be further developed in future studies using the model suggested in this paper.

Conclusion

Rather than having principals work in isolation, this model promotes networking opportunities and support for aspiring and veteran school leaders. Schleicher asserts "effective leadership development programs often also include networking among participants, which can help to foster collaborative problem-solving and alleviate the sense of isolation that some school leaders feel" (2012, p. 22). Aspiring and novice leaders would certainly benefit from greater coaching, mentoring, and collaborative support from both university faculty members and school district leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Gray, 2016, 2017). We believe leadership-focused coaching provides a viable framework for aspiring leaders and promotes stronger partnerships between school districts and universities.

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Appendix A – Sample Observation/Evaluation Rubric

(Name of University) (Course Prefix/#) Principalship Practicum Observation Form

Practicum Student _____ Time (Start) _____ (Stop) _____

School/District _____ Date _____ Observation # _____

(It is possible that all competencies will not be demonstrated during one observation.)

#	Professional Standards for Educational Leaders Competency	Highly Effective	Effective	Developing	Novice	Needs Improvement	Not Observed
1	**Mission, Vision, and Core Values** Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
2	**Ethics and Professional Norms** Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
3	**Equity and Cultural Responsiveness** Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
4	**Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment** Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
5	**Community of Care and Support for Students** Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
6	**Professional Capacity of School Personnel** Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
7	**Professional Community for Teachers and Staff** Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
8	**Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community** Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
9	**Operations and Management** Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
10	**School Improvement** Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

Comments (strengths or areas for improvement): _____

_____

Signature of Leadership-Focused Coach (University Instructor) _____

Signature of Practicum Student (Aspiring Leader) _____

Signature of Supervising Principal (School Leader) _____

Appendix B – Sample Practicum/Internship Plan

(Name of University) (Course Prefix/#) (Semester/Year)

This is a planning document for the practicum candidate/intern to use to plan how each PSEL standard will be addressed. Each PSEL standard has a variety of activities from which to choose. The candidate is responsible for demonstrating how learning has occurred for each PSEL competency. This plan must be approved of and signed by the candidate, supervising principal, and University Leadership-Focused Coach.

Candidate's Name: _____

Standard 1

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 2

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 3

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 4

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 5

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 6

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 7

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 8

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 9

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 10

Performance Activity 1 _____
Performance Activity 2 _____

Intern Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

By signing below, I agree to coach or provide support to the candidate for the completion of these activities.

Supervising Principal Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

University Representative Signature: _____ **Date:** _____