

# Successful Innovations in Educational Leadership Preparation

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*The purpose of this study was to identify and describe successful innovations in educational leadership preparation programs. Professors of educational leadership from across the nation nominated innovations of 12 programs. Based on review of descriptions of the innovations provided by nominees, further documentation on the innovations was requested from the programs. Various stakeholders in the programs with the most promising innovations were interviewed to gather additional data on those innovations. Data analysis in relation to three criteria for selection—fidelity of implementation, positive student learning outcomes, and adaptability to other programs—resulted in the identification of six successful innovations.*

Research studies and reviews of research have concluded that school leaders have significant direct effects on teacher performance and significant indirect effects on student learning (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNutty, 2005; Orr, 2006; Orphanos & Orr, 2013). According to Orr (2006), “Evidence suggests that, second only to the influences of classroom instruction, school leadership strongly affects student learning” (p. 3). Moreover, despite the need for more research on the relationship of school leadership preparation with the leadership capacity of program graduates, “Available research has been promising, showing positive relationships between innovative, research-based leadership preparation approaches and graduate outcomes (Orphanos & Orr, 2013, p. 3). One problem that educational leadership preparation as a field needs to address, however, is the reality that there still are many programs that are not “innovative and research-based.”

Reformers recommend that innovations be incorporated across at least seven components of traditional educational leadership preparation programs, including (a) recruitment and selection procedures (Green, 2013), (b) program structure (Everson, 2006), (c) curriculum (Perez et al., 2010), (d) instructional strategies (Doolittle, Stanwood, & Simmerman, 2006), (e) field experiences (Perez et al., 2010), (f) student assessment (Knoepfel & Logan, 2011), and (g) school-leader induction (Daresh, 2004). McCarthy and Forsyth (2009), however, conclude that the field lacks any “systematic research examining the recruitment and admission of school leaders” (p. 89), the leadership preparation curriculum has been “relatively stable since the 1970’s” (p. 91), and leadership programs “often lack focus and relevance for particular leadership positions” (p. 94). According to McCarthy and Forsyth, instructional delivery in educational leadership preparation programs, is “as traditional as instruction in other university departments” (p. 97), there has been “little credible research on field learning and preparation of school leaders” (p. 99), and the research that is available indicates that field experiences have been “seriously flawed” (p. 99).

### **Relevant Literature**

Despite the concern by many policy makers, scholars, and practitioners that educational leadership as a field has not been open to change, Orr (2006) maintains, “We have compelling evidence that significant innovation exists in the field and positively influences graduates’ leadership practice” (p. 493). Orr concludes that these innovations are grounded in new conceptions of educational leadership and leadership preparation by the programs that are adopting the innovations. The reconceptualization described by Orr has led to a variety of innovations, including those described below.

#### **Partnerships**

Darling-Hammond and associates cite university-district partnerships as an important feature of the exemplary programs they studied (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Benefits of university-district partnerships include linking theory and practice, meeting specific needs of the partner district, combining expertise of university faculty and practicing administrators, and a maintaining a pipeline for successful school leadership (Brown-Ferrigno, 2011; Gooden, Bell, Gonzales, & Lippa, 2011; Simmons et al., 2007).

In authentic partnerships the partners are considered equals, respect each other, assume a moral commitment to the partnership, and share accountability for the aspiring school leader’s

success. Furthermore, in true partnerships collaboration takes place at each level of the university and school district (Simmons et al., 2007). Browne-Ferrigno (2011) notes, “A partnership typically has well defined organizational structures, established practices and procedures, and parity among partners—all of which can take considerable time and effort to achieve” (p. 736).

Davis and associates report that in successful partnerships the university and district collaborate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the leadership preparation program, with district administrators serving on the program’s advisory board, assisting in recruitment and selection of students, sometimes teaching courses, mentoring students, and participating in student assessment (Davis, Darling Hammond, LaPointe, & Myerson, 2005).

### **Innovative Recruitment and Selection**

Many educational leadership preparation programs are developing new, rigorous selection criteria, and asking school districts to assist in identifying and recruiting potential educational leaders who appear to meet those criteria. Criteria might include not only successful teaching experience, but also successful experience as an instructional leader (Darling Hammond et al., 2007). Some programs now are including critical thinking, problem-solving skills, civic engagement, an orientation toward social justice, and a commitment to educational change as selection criteria (Bartee, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2008). Increasingly, programs are adopting a two-phase selection process, with phase one a review of application materials submitted by the candidate. In addition to traditional application materials, the application packet might include an autobiographical essay, philosophy statement, or written reflection on a critical incident. Review of the application packet, often accompanied by rating on an assessment rubric, leads to the selection of a subset of candidates for phase two of the selection process. Phase two, often referred to as an assessment center, typically includes an interview as well as a variety of performance-based activities such as role plays, simulations, and group discussions on educational issues. A team of assessors that includes both faculty members and practitioners usually rates phase-two candidate performance on the various assessment activities, with selection for the program based on that performance (Darling Hammond et al., 2007; Gooden & Gonzales, 2015)

### **Cohort Model**

The cohort model is the most widely adopted innovation in recent years—presently used by so many programs that it is quickly losing its status as an innovation. Cohorts have the potential to become strong learning communities focused on specific goals throughout the program, promoting long-term group and individual development in relationship to those goals (Griffin, Taylor, Varner, & White, 2012). The mutual support provided by cohorts in traditional classes can extend to internships and even into networks of school leaders providing support to one another (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Simmons et al., 2007).

### **Content**

The content of educational leadership preparation is in the midst of a shift from content based on management and social science to emphases on instructional leadership, school improvement, and social justice. Professors and practitioners identified as experts on instructional leadership

have recommended instructional leadership functions that should be addressed in leadership preparation, including professional development, curriculum development, clinical supervision, action research, teacher evaluation, and group facilitation. Another suggested content area is school improvement, built around the study of educational change, capacity building, and sustainability, and including the examination of specific school improvement models that have led to positive change (Backor & Gordon, 2015).

Furman (2012) proposes that content be taught across the personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological dimensions of social justice. Theoretical perspectives needed for learning about social justice, according to Brown (2004), are adult learning theory and development, transformative learning theory, and critical social theory. Three social justice content areas suggested by McKenzie et al. (2008) are critical consciousness, knowledge and skills regarding teaching and learning “that reach beyond the traditional notion of instructional leadership” (p.124), and the capacity to both eliminate systemic and structural barriers to student learning and create new systems and structures that promote learning for all students.

## **Pedagogy**

Innovative pedagogy in educational leadership preparation is centered on facilitating active learning, collaboration, reflection, and dialogue (Orr, 2006). In a recent survey of graduate students by Gordon and Oliver (2015), the respondents expressed little value for traditional lecture, but did perceive class discussions to be of value, including those that alternate between small and large-group, allow students to share personal experiences, allow every student to have a voice, focus on the extant research on a particular topic, and discuss how to apply the topic to practice. The students valued other in-class activities like problem-based learning, simulations, sharing of personal and professional stories, and case method. Along with the aforementioned emphasis on social justice content comes new pedagogy on social justice. General strategies recommended by Brown (2004) include critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis. Specific classroom activities focused on social justice include activities like guided discussions, diversity panels, and role-playing; and assignments include cultural autobiography, readings on social justice leadership, and research on cultural groups other than the student’s own (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012).

Innovation in pedagogy is also concerned with course-embedded field experiences. Field experiences connect theory to practice, make coursework more relevant, and allow the student to develop as a reflective practitioner (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Course-embedded field experiences include inquiry activities like observations, interviews, and action research as well as leadership activities such as coordinating professional development or curriculum planning. The emphasis on social justice in content and pedagogy extends to course-embedded field experiences, with activities such as neighborhood walks, cross-cultural interviews, equity audits, and equity-oriented action research (Brown, 2004; McKenzie et al., 2008; Furman, 2012).

## **Internships**

Internships connect theory to practice, allow students to work and learn in an authentic setting, provide a protected transition from preparation to practice, and build students’ confidence as leaders (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008). Because of the power of the internship, many leadership preparation programs have extended them from a semester to a year or more. Some

programs have procured external funding or made arrangements with school districts to allow full-time internships, and some have integrated coursework and the internship throughout the program so that course learning is applied immediately in internship activities (Bartee, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Some programs follow a medical model, with interns rotating to multiple sites, one of which may include the central office (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Successful internship programs require an equal partnership between the university and district, with collaborative planning and coordination, and a clear understanding of each stakeholder's role and responsibilities. Quality internships also provide for individual reflection on internship activities, and group reflection among those assigned to the same university supervisor (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008). The mentor is a key player in the internship. In the best mentoring programs, an effort is made to find a good personality and leadership match between the mentor and intern, the mentor and intern make a mutual commitment to a successful internship, and there is ongoing communication between the mentor and the university's intern supervisor (Bartee, 2012; Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; Davis et al., 2005).

### **Portfolios**

Although the precise purposes of portfolios vary from program to program, general purposes include student reflection, student evaluation, providing feedback to students to promote student growth, and providing feedback to faculty to improve the program. Programs that require portfolios typically use them as part of the program's comprehensive examination, and rate portfolios and portfolio presentations based on rubrics designed by the faculty (Hackmann & Alsbury, 2005; Janosik & Frank, 2013; Knoeppel & Logan, 2011). Portfolios typically include artifacts of and reflective writing on learning activities and outcomes (Hackmann & Alsbury, 2005). Knoeppel and Logan (2011) argue that for a successful portfolio component, all faculty members must be committed to the portfolio concept and engage in collaborative planning and implementation of the portfolio system, with one person assigned to coordinate portfolio review. Janosik and Frank (2013) maintain that students need orientation sessions on portfolio requirements as well as ongoing feedback and assurance as they develop their portfolios.

### **Principal Induction**

Preparation programs can facilitate cohort support groups, provide professional development, or contribute to mentoring or coaching programs for new principals (Authors, 2014). Consistent with our earlier discussion of internships, the type of beginning principal support most often discussed in the literature is mentoring. Daresh (2004) argues, "Mentoring is an absolutely essential part of socialization and professional formation" (p. 502). Mentors of new principals can assist the beginners to develop, implement, and assess professional growth plans; engage in two-way shadowing followed by reflective discussion; participate with new principals in collegial learning groups or workshops; and provide ongoing consultation (Palmer, 2007).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe successful innovations in educational leadership preparation programs so that information on those innovations can be shared with the

field. We believe that making descriptions of these programs accessible may encourage and assist program improvement across the nation.

### **Research Methods**

Data gathering and analysis were guided by three criteria we established for the selection of successful innovations, including the following:

1. The innovation, as described by the program, is being implemented with fidelity;
2. There is evidence that the innovation is making a major contribution to positive graduate student learning outcomes; and
3. The innovation can be adapted to other educational leadership preparation programs that are based on values consistent with the innovation.

We initiated the research by contacting members of various associations and groups of professors of educational leadership, providing them with a brief description of the project and criteria for successful innovations, and asking them to nominate programs with outstanding innovations that were already in place. Twelve programs were nominated for the study. Data gathering and analysis were iterative and focused on determining whether the aforementioned criteria were present. We established contact with a representative of each nominated program and asked them to provide us with descriptions of the program in general and the innovation in particular. Initial review of the material the programs sent us allowed us to determine what additional information and materials to request. Based on additional review, we selected programs with promising innovations to move on to the next stage of the process, a series of interviews with program stakeholders. For each program we selected for interviews, we interviewed multiple stakeholders in various roles inside and outside of the program. The specific interviewees depended on the nature of the program and the innovation under study. Interviewees included faculty members, students, graduates of the program in school leadership positions, and district administrators who mentored or supervised students or graduates. The interviews were individualized, not only for each program, but also for each type of interviewee (faculty member, student, graduate, etc.). The purpose of the interviews was to gather additional data to assist with (a) making a final decision as to whether the component met all criteria, and (b) developing full descriptions of selected innovations for dissemination.

We analyzed program documents and artifacts by reading through those data several times while writing analytic memos, developing diagrams, and building matrices summarizing the data and comparing them to the selection criteria. We analyzed interview transcripts, first through line-by-line open coding to identify basic concepts, then through axial coding to identify categories and themes. As we analyzed the transcripts, we continued to create memos, diagrams, and matrices to summarize the data and relate it to selection criteria. We carried out two types of triangulation of the data on each innovation: (a) triangulation of interview data from different stakeholders within a given program and (b) triangulation of themes running through interview data with data from documents and artifacts provided by the program. Based on data analysis and comparison with the pre-established criteria, we selected six successful innovations.

### **Findings**

In general, most of the six innovations we describe below can be classified within one or more of the broad categories of innovations found in the literature and discussed earlier in this article.

However, specific aspects of each of the program components we report on are unique, and thus we judge all of the following to be authentic innovations.

### **The University of Alabama: Course-Embedded Field Experiences**

The University of Alabama's educational leadership program has made a commitment to integrate theory and practice through a three-phase field component. Phase one involves embedding field experiences in traditional coursework throughout the program, phase two consists of a two-semester internship, and phase three is a full-time residency of at least ten days. By tying coursework to field experiences, the faculty aims to make their curriculum more relevant. And integrating coursework with field experiences ensures ongoing input from the practitioners who are involved in the field experiences.

Courses in the new curriculum at UA were co-designed by UA faculty and practitioners. The design teams decided that both coursework and field experiences would shift from an emphasis on management to instructional leadership, and that courses would be co-taught by professors and practicing administrators. Examples of embedded field experiences include the following:

- School/Family Partnership Plan and Sociological Inventory
- A Plan for an Effective Professional Learning Community
- Clinical Supervision
- Professional Development Activity
- Personal Code of Ethics
- Management of the Learning Organization
- School Cultural Analysis and Action Plan

The two-semester internship builds on the earlier course-embedded field experiences, but allows for long-range, integrative field experiences. The internship experiences are more individualized than the course-embedded activities, and are based on an individualized needs assessment completed by the student as well as the needs of the school where the internship is taking place. The residency typically is 10 full days, with students who are teachers encouraged to complete their residency in a school other than the one in which they teach, allowing total immersion in leadership activities in a novel setting in which the resident is viewed and treated as a novice leader rather than a teacher.

The course-embedded field experiences are preceded by learning activities designed to prepare the students for those experiences. For example, a faculty member discussed how students are prepared in class for leading a professional development activity in a school:

The content taught in the class would include information on adult learning strategies, high-quality professional development, and strategies for tying professional development to student learning.... And then in their field experiences they each design a professional development experience for a school, based on a needs assessment.

For another example, class activities preceding the student providing cognitive coaching to a teacher in a school setting include discussing the underlying theory and the structure of the coaching cycle, viewing a video of a coaching cycle, and practice coaching in the university classroom. Faculty members, fellow students, and the school mentor are available to assist students as they carry out their embedded field experiences. A graduate of the program

explained, “We all kind of talked about these things and supported each other and got support from the professors as we went through these experiences.”

A variety of student products result from various embedded field experiences, including recordings, reports, planning documents, and written reflections. After students have completed an embedded field experience they typically debrief that experience in their graduate class. During these debriefings, a student noted,

We could learn from each other; learn what worked and what didn’t work. Everybody was in a different setting; some were in high schools, some were in elementary schools.... We had the benefit of a different lens for the same experience.

Stakeholders who we interviewed agreed that the field experiences help the program to successfully integrate theory and practice, demonstrate rigor, and provide authentic learning for aspiring school leaders. Stakeholders also agreed that the field experiences, in combination with other program components, result in graduates with high capacity for instructional leadership, reflective practice, collegiality, and collaboration.

### **The University of Washington: Competency-Based Guarantee**

The goal of the Danforth Educational Leadership Program at the University of Washington is to prepare leaders who will provide equity to every student. Cohorts complete the program in one year of study, which integrates coursework with a 1000-hour internship. A key feature of the program is a guarantee to superintendents that, if they are not satisfied with the performance of a graduate in a leadership position, the program will provide assistance to raise the leader’s performance to an acceptable level. The performance guarantee is based on the concept of reciprocal accountability: the university believes that, just as principals are accountable for teacher performance and the superintendent is accountable for principal performance, so the university should be accountable for the preparation of competent educational leaders. Although the program is prepared to offer special assistance to graduates experiencing difficulty, the real power behind the guarantee is the competency-based design of the program and the quality learning experiences aligned with core competencies.

All of the archival data we reviewed and stakeholders we interviewed agreed that the cornerstone of the program is equity for all K-12 students. With that cornerstone as a starting point, experts from around the nation, local superintendents, and university faculty were called together to develop a set of six core competencies:

- Building Instructional Capacity;
- Marshaling Resources and Improving Systems;
- Advocating with Students, Families, and Communities;
- Committing to Ethical Practice;
- Driving Improvement with Data; and
- Shaping Culture and Leading Change.

Once the six competencies were established, an advisory board including educational leaders from local school districts and faculty was formed to continue program development. Based on the extant research on the competencies, and state standards that the advisory board needed to enfold within the competencies, the board developed specific elements for each competency. The advisory board also developed four performance levels for elements within



each competency: knowledge, application, collaboration with others, and cultivation of leadership with others. Rubrics for each competency were developed and are available to assist in the evaluation of course products, internship observations, and student portfolios.

With the core competencies and performance measures in place, the advisory board began to design other program components that would support the university's guarantee. The guarantee for the competency *building instructional capacity* was the only one that had been operationalized at the time of our study, thus our examples focus on that competency.

The first program component supporting the guarantee is the recruitment and selection process. Teams of faculty members, educational leaders associated with the program, and current graduate students review application materials and interview applicants. The applicants are asked to discuss their experiences as instructional leaders, including observing and providing feedback to teachers. Applicants also are asked to view a video of a teacher's lesson and write a response to the lesson, with the response assessed by reviewers for the applicant's use of data, feedback focus, quality of communication, and suggestions for professional development. Applicants who do not have strong potential for instructional leadership are less likely to be admitted to the program than those with a strong background in improving instructional practice and student learning outcomes.

The required 1000-hour internship includes 400 hours of instructional leadership. To find the time to complete the internship, most students are either provided leadership positions by their district (as instructional coaches, academic deans, curriculum developers, and so forth) that include flexibility for intern activities, or shift to part-time teaching for the year with a reduced salary. A variety of learning experiences have been developed to help students achieve the competency on building instructional capacity. Students visit cohort members' schools to do learning walks and analyze the instruction they have observed. Students regularly observe classroom lessons, videotape themselves giving feedback to the teacher they have observed, and share their videos with a critical friend who provides feedback on their performance. Each student is required to complete an inquiry project with colleagues in their school focused on a learning problem being experienced by students. The project involves gathering classroom data on the problem, determining how changes in teaching practice can improve student learning, and presenting results. Mentoring by the principal is a critical aspect of the Danforth program. A graduate of the program and new principal described her internship mentor: "She just made sure I had every opportunity to be there with her during the process.... I was essentially like her shadow."

All of the stakeholders we interviewed agreed that the rigorous selection process, clearly defined competencies and performance measures, strong partnerships with local districts, intensive coursework and internship, and expert mentoring made the competency-based guarantee a strong one. However, provisions are in place to provide support to any graduate who experiences difficulties in her or his leadership role. If a complaint is received from a superintendent, the first step is an individual needs assessment to identify the specific elements of a competency that are absent. A personalized support plan might consist of visits to the leader's school, learning walks, one-to-one consultation, readings, or attendance at university classes. Despite the provisions for individualized assistance, stakeholders agreed that the most important aspects of the new program were the partnerships, curriculum, pedagogy, and field experiences in place to support the guarantee.

## The University of Tennessee: Recruitment and Selection

The University of Tennessee's Center for Educational Leadership has developed leader preparation partnerships with a number of area school districts, and the leadership preparation program coordinated by UT and Knox County Schools is the focus of this report. The Leadership Academy is a competency-based principal preparation program that admits a new cohort of students each June who complete a 33 credit-hour program over a 15-month period, with courses co-taught by UT faculty and Knox County school administrators. Students in the program are placed in the position of assistant principal and provided an appropriate salary. During the school year, the academy includes a four-day-a-week residency, with classes every Friday. Students also take classes during the summers before and after their residency. Additionally, students attend an "aspiring leaders seminar" in which they complete and report on an online personal learning portfolio, a capstone project, and an action research project, as well as prepare for Tennessee's School Leader Licensure Assessment.

The component of the leadership academy that we examined in-depth was the program's recruitment and selection process. The university and school district share responsibility for recruitment. The recruitment effort is intense, with wide distribution of information on the program throughout the district and personal recruitment efforts by current students, alumni, and Knox County administrators. At the same time, communication concerning the academy makes it clear that the university and school district are looking for candidates with instructional expertise who have already demonstrated a capacity for leadership. The excellent reputation of the program within the district and the 100 percent placement rate for graduates are compelling reasons for applying to the academy.

Approximately 100 educators apply to the academy each year, and its acceptance rate is approximately 10 percent. The admissions criteria reflect the competency-based nature of the program, with application materials and activities used to determine the applicant's capacity to develop or enhance the desired competencies. In addition to the traditional application materials, applicants must complete an essay addressing the following questions:

As a principal, what would your role be in supporting teachers to improve their instructional practice? How would you do this effectively? How would you determine if you have been successful in these efforts?

Applicants also complete the online version of the Gallup Principal Insight, which is based on characteristics of outstanding principals related to achievement drive, planning, and relationship building.

Based on the candidates' application portfolios and Gallup Principal Insight profiles, approximately 45 candidates are selected for a two-day selection process. At the beginning of the two-day process, a team consisting of UT faculty and Knox County administrators interviews each candidate individually. The interview questions are structured around McREL's 21 leadership responsibilities (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003), and ask candidates how they would address specific situations. The interview team listens for particular indicators of McREL's *balanced leadership* in the applicant's response to each question.

The rest of the first day consists of the first part of NASSP's *Selecting and Developing the 21st Century Principal Assessment Center*. The assessment center is intended to measure the candidate's potential in the areas of educational leadership, communication, and development of

self and others. The first day of the assessment center includes an in-basket activity, a role-play, and a group activity—all providing the selection team with indicators of the applicant’s potential. The second day consists of the applicants receiving individual feedback on their performance on the previous day’s activities.

The final part of the selection process for those who remain in the applicant pool after the assessment center is a personal interview with the district superintendent and the director of the Center for Educational Leadership, followed by a decision on whether to select the applicant for the next cohort. Due to the popularity of the program, those who are not selected the first year they apply often apply again in the future. A faculty member commented on the expected relationship of those selected with those who are not:

One of the things that I really stress with those who are selected is that it’s your job—among your colleagues who have not been selected—to coach them, to mentor them, to give them feedback and to help them along. We have applicants who have applied three years in a row and, you know, that third year, they’re selected.

Although all of the stakeholders believed that it was the quality of the overall program that was responsible for numerous positive outcomes, they agreed that the recruitment and selection process contributed to a number of positive aspects of the academy. Those we interviewed agreed that the recruitment and selection process contributed to:

- Students responding positively to rigorous coursework, and supporting each other through that coursework;
- A high level of individual assistance from faculty based on the small size of each cohort and diagnostic information about each student developed during the selection process;
- The ability to explore educational issues from different perspectives, based on the diversity of students selected for the cohort;
- Considerable “outside-the-box thinking” by students;
- Willingness and ability of students to engage in collaborative learning; and
- Students focused on high levels of achievement.

Stakeholders we interviewed also reported that the recruitment and selection process contributed to academy fellows and graduates being respected by their colleagues in the district, the academy fellows’ chances of being hired as administrators, the ability of academy fellows and alumni to network across the district, and a stronger focus on curriculum and instruction in the district. The stakeholders also agreed that the recruitment and selection of the type of educators completing the program was in part responsible for improved student achievement in the schools where graduates of the program were serving as school leaders.

### **California State University Fresno: Equity Audit**

Many graduates of California State University Fresno’s (CSUF) Educational Leadership Program serve schools with high numbers of students of color, low SES students, and English language learners (ELLs). The program integrates equity and social justice throughout its coursework. Students have already studied extensively about equity and social justice when they enter the course Instructional Systems and Equity, which serves as a vehicle for them to apply learning from earlier courses. According to the course description, all of the assignments in the

course are based on the premise that “All students are entitled to a quality education that provides them with the opportunity to reach their fullest potential, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.”

During the course each student conducts three related audits, at the school, subgroup, and student level. The audits thus move from the macro to the micro level. The purpose of assigning the three audits is to help the student to develop generic skills for conducting an equity audit as well as an understanding of the relationship of the school and subgroup systems to the treatment and learning of the student.

The school-wide audit consists of three steps, including auditing teacher and instructional quality, programmatic equity, and achievement equity. The purpose of the teacher and instructional quality audit is to determine how teacher quality is distributed within the district or school. Data is gathered on teacher educational level, experience, mobility, and certification. The data is disaggregated by courses taught, academic level of courses taught, academic level of students taught, and so forth. The program audit seeks to assess the quality of programs and whether certain student groups are under- or over-represented in particular programs. Examples of programs examined include bilingual education and limited English proficiency, special education, gifted and talented, advanced placement, student discipline, and alternative education programs. The student disaggregates the populations of these programs by gender, ethnicity, race, and SES, and compares the numbers and percentages of each group in each program to school demographics. In the achievement equity audit the student examines student achievement test scores, dropout rates, graduation rates, and college admissions test scores, and disaggregates those data by gender, ethnicity, race, and SES.

Based on the school-wide audit, the student next identifies a subgroup for the next audit. In the subgroup audit, the student (a) develops a set of guiding questions, (b) gathers data on the subgroup beyond the data gathered in the school-wide audit (thorough surveys, observations, interviews, review of assessment data, mining of documents and artifacts, and so forth), (c) analyzes and triangulates the data to identify inequities based on race, ethnicity, gender, language, and so on, (d) identifies necessary instructional or programmatic improvements, and (e) develops an action plan to increase equity.

For the individual audit, the graduate student uses the subgroup data to identify an at-risk student (based on academic achievement and/or behavior) for study. The graduate student develops guiding questions for the audit, gathers data by observing and interviewing the student and reviewing student records, and analyzes data for relationships between and among the student’s gender, race, ethnicity, SES, coursework, participation in special programs, academic achievement, behavior, and so on. Based on the data analysis, the graduate student then identifies the student’s individual needs and designs an action plan to meet those needs. The stakeholders we interviewed agreed that this is the most compelling of the three audits for the graduate students because it brings the process to a very personal level and also illuminates the relationship among inequity at the school-wide, subgroup, and individual levels.

We asked Isabel, one of the program graduates we interviewed, to discuss the value of doing the equity audits. She responded that the audits allowed her to look at school systems through a critical lens, and helped her and others to identify biases of which they were previously unaware. Isabel also reported that the audits had caused her to become a more reflective educator. We also asked Isabel if completing the audits had influenced her as a new principal. She responded that she focused on matters of equity in her classroom observations, and that she believed she had helped the teachers at her school to become more culturally aware.

A faculty member shared a variety of positive outcomes of the equity audits. She stated that most of the aspiring principals in the program are teachers, and that as result of the preparation program in general and the equity audits in particular, they begin to change their approach to teaching, becoming more culturally responsive to their students. Also, the graduate students begin to discuss matters of equity with their principals and other teachers in their school, and they become more vocal about the need for equity. Students in the program also begin to visit the communities their schools serve, and to develop partnerships with parents. These new perspectives and behaviors can then be incorporated into leadership for increased equity when the students graduate and become school administrators. The faculty member summed up her perception of the value of the equity audits as follows: “Once you’ve gone through this, you can’t look at students the same way.”

### **Manhattanville College: Peer Coaching Certification Program**

The Educational Leadership Program at Manhattanville College offers a 15-credit certification program in partnership with neighboring White Plains Schools for the district’s teachers to become certified peer coaches. The idea for a peer coaching certification program was sparked by changes in New York State’s teacher evaluation system, the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). Through a new agreement with the teachers’ union, school districts were required to develop and implement a system to support teachers functioning at the “developing” or “ineffective” range on the APPR’s continuum of teacher effectiveness. Manhattanville College and White Plains collaborated to address this new requirement by developing a peer coaching program that moved beyond the traditional mentoring program the district already had in place, with an understanding that training would be necessary to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to support other teachers. A professor we interviewed stated, “We felt that if we were going to institute a peer coaching program, we needed to make it much more systematic and provide a foundation for the coaches so that they would feel comfortable conducting coaching.” Though the program was initially conceived as a support for struggling teachers, the key stakeholders involved in its development were clear that they did not want this to be solely a “union issue,” and instead wanted the program to be based on a collaborative coaching model that could support all teachers at all levels of the teaching performance continuum.

The certification program consists of five courses. The first course is focused on basic instructional skills and language about instructional practices. Students completing the course should be able to identify good teaching and use common language that demonstrates their understanding of good teaching. In the next course, students learn how to gather, analyze, and discuss data. This class is intended to help teachers use objective measures to recognize and then bridge the gap between desired outcomes and results. In the third course the students move into actual classroom observations, including observing for the elements of quality teaching. For their first assignment in this class, the students watch a video of a classroom lesson and then rate the teacher in terms of teaching effectiveness on a scale of 1-10. The initial ratings range from 3-8. By the end of the class, the students’ responses are within one place of each other. This class also focuses on how to have conversations with teachers that support their reflection on their teaching practices. Students practice these skills during mock post-observation conferences with each other, and these sessions are videotaped and then reviewed and evaluated.

The fourth course is The Danielson Workshop, based on the Charlotte Danielson Framework, the rubric used during classroom observations. The rubric includes four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Teachers use the Danielson rubric to collect evidence during a classroom observation and reflect on the teacher's performance. The final class in the program is a seminar, during which the seminar instructor observes the peer coaches doing actual observations and conferences at their respective schools, and then holds discussions with the coaches about those experiences.

Current students in the program who we interviewed explained that one of the most important things they had learned was how to construct and deliver authentic feedback by having nonjudgmental, data-based conversations with teachers to draw the teachers' attention to things they might not otherwise have realized about their teaching practices. Having concrete evidence of what occurs in a classroom is "really helpful for the teachers because when you're in the moment and you're teaching, you're not always aware of how it's coming across." Reviewing videotapes of mock conferences helped the students to hone their conferencing skills. The students we interviewed also highlighted the importance of gathering objective data during classroom observations. By practicing how to gather objective data on what the teacher and students say and do, the coaches learn to observe without bias. A graduate student stated, "There's nothing about, 'I think,' or 'I feel,' or 'I would've done this.' You remove all of that from the equation."

Although the students we interviewed had not yet completed the program, they had already experienced some coaching successes. During the coursework, one student worked with a teacher with over 25 years of experience who had never been particularly effective. As a result, the teacher began to implement new strategies that the teacher and coach worked together to develop, and the teacher saw growth in her students that she had never seen before. Another student in the program worked with a strong teacher who asked for help to implement some new strategies, and the student was thrilled to help an already proficient teacher to expand her repertoire. The student believed that she and the teacher she was assisting both grew in the process. The students reported that peer coaching provides them with an avenue to learn new things, share their expertise, and help motivate and inspire people, and they appreciated the sense of community that this program was providing for them. The risk-free, supportive atmosphere of the program was allowing them to share ideas and offered a great opportunity for growth.

### **The University of Pennsylvania: Mid-Career Doctoral Program and Lifetime Support**

The University of Pennsylvania's mid-career doctoral program in educational leadership has set up a dynamic interaction of networking opportunities that provide people with resources and support to make direct impacts on the educational landscape. The program addresses the ongoing transformation of public and private educational organizations from a leadership perspective by focusing on four core areas: instructional, organizational, public, and evidence-based leadership. The curriculum emphasizes inquiry-based leadership for educational leaders at all district and organizational levels.

The mid-career doctoral program is highly selective, admitting twenty-five students each year. Students attend coursework three days each month in the fall and spring semesters and one week during the summer. The faculty fosters a reflective and collaborative learning community of students within a cohort model. These collaborative learning communities enhance students'

ability to problem solve as well as to create and implement innovative, research-based educational approaches.

The mid-career doctoral program faculty considers how graduates can contribute to the communities they serve and the wider field of education. From the beginning of the program, students consider important issues and problems in education, and consider how they could contribute plausible solutions through their dissertation research. The program structures the curriculum in ways that provide mid-career professionals with new capacity building skills as well as support from other educational leaders to examine and address issues of practice. The faculty is very intentional about supplementing what the university can provide by creating a dialectic relationship between the university and the larger educational community. The program director stated, “We provide students with a wide range of educational contexts and take advantage of expertise embedded in various leaders.”

The program views students as generators of knowledge in their practice, and thus is purposeful in its facilitation of collaboration among students, the university, program alumni, and the community to generate appropriate solutions to educational problems. The program takes a collective approach to developing educational leaders by supporting both student and alumni efforts to impact the wider field. Alumni serve as clients for mid-career doctoral students’ dissertation research, and the mid-career doctoral students serve as clients for educational leadership master’s students’ applied research. The program emphasizes developing and sustaining supportive learning environments for students while they are in the program and after they graduate. The specific innovation we reviewed was the lifetime support the program provides. The lifetime support includes a number of specific structures that we describe below.

**Cohort support.** With each new cohort the faculty spends a significant amount of time creating an environment grounded in trust, support, and collaboration. A student commented on the effects of developing a collegial cohort:

Every single person in the program—I know all 25 of them—I know them really well, and I know I can call them any time and say “Hey, what do you think of this?” or “Can you help with this?” or “Can I use you as a reference?” There’s just a whole bunch of time put in at the beginning to make sure that the human aspect of it is really strong, and then that is nurtured throughout.

The cohort model helps students embrace shifts in their learning and practice, and creates a level of camaraderie that facilitates ongoing critical feedback from colleagues and professors. Students reported that the cohort model helped them to become better informed, more confident, and more engaged as leaders because they were gaining a global perspective on education rather than a narrow, insular focus supported solely by individual practices and beliefs. Students shared that this global perspective was paramount in conceptualizing their dissertations.

**Dissertation support.** Students are able to complete their coursework, state certification requirements, and dissertation within 36 months. The dissertation is grounded in the students’ program of study and their use of their workplaces for applied study and data collection. Upon entering the program, students identify an issue that is of interest. From that moment on, students spend significant time planning for their dissertations in structured and supervised settings, particularly within the applied research sequence that spans the program. This systematic approach to the dissertation allows students to defend their dissertation in their last semester of the program. Students and graduates appreciate that they are allowed to base their research on

problems within their own districts and schools. A student we interviewed stated, “I was really impressed with the fact that all of the research that we did was job embedded, so I was able to answer some of the questions I had about our district.” A graduate of the program shared, “I wanted my dissertation to focus on something that would directly impact my job and the issues I saw in schools.”

**Coaching and mentoring.** A writing coach provides assistance with academic writing throughout the student’s doctoral program. A research coach assists students and alumni with research design, data gathering, and data analysis. An innovation coach delivers workshops and provides individual assistance to help students and alumni develop skills in social media. Additionally, alumni volunteers serve as mentors of current students.

**The Saturday Commons.** During monthly cross-cohort meetings, students and alumni engage in focused discussions of work-based questions and discoveries, including live cases from practice, mentoring around career decisions and trajectories, and ideas for networking between current and former mid-career students. The program provides support through web interfaces allowing remote participation of alumni and invited guests.

**Innovations lab.** The Mid-Career Innovations Lab is geared to assist doctoral students and alumni to become proficient with the latest innovations in social media. The lab is also a vehicle for students and alumni to disseminate their experiences, ideas, and research to the larger educational world. A doctoral student discussed learning in the lab:

It’s helped me with hard and soft skills—hard skills being my ability to negotiate a blogosphere, Twitter, Facebook, and social media. I now understand what everything is.... And I know when and how to use it for different things.

The student also described benefits of the lab that went beyond personal learning:

It benefits children and families and communities because they are able to use the technology that I learned directly as part of the Penn program.... [For example,] at all my school board meetings we do Google Hangout, and the community member who is sitting in their living room at home can type in questions when we have an open forum.

A faculty member reported that the lab has enabled reflective conversations among doctoral students, alumni, and the communities they serve.

**Simulations program.** The Penn Educational Leadership Simulations Program (PELS) is a researched-based collaboration between the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and three major professional associations for K-12 school leaders (AASA, NAESP, and NASSP). The PELS program works to capture knowledge of experienced practitioners, alumni, and others through web-based multimedia simulations. The goal of PELS is to develop human capital in school leadership through blended peer-to-peer professional development. Specifically, PELS trains school and district leaders to author computer-based simulations, drawing out each leader’s own experiences to tackle real-world challenges. Each scenario requires decisions on how to react to daily challenges, as well as consideration of the consequences of those decisions. The program is cost-effective and highly scalable, with the potential to reach thousands of principals and superintendents. A faculty member stated, “PELS works to build the complexity of leaders. It attempts to actually build in event-based situations that can help educational leaders recreate the experience of that human situation.”



**Fellowships.** The purpose of the Alumni Fellowship Program is to keep mid-career graduates involved with the program and provide them support for their personal leadership initiatives. The program offers a forum for dialogue among students and alumni on educational issues and best practices, professional development and mentoring for both students and alumni, and support for entrepreneurial and research projects. Each year, the program offers two alumni fellowships for service to the Mid-Career Network in the form of research, instruction, or coordinating a network conference, and mid-career doctoral students are often involved in the resulting projects and events.

## Discussion

We begin this discussion by reflecting on the unique aspects of each innovation, and then identify themes shared by the six innovations. Although there are calls in the field for full-time internships, they are not possible for many aspiring principals with families to support. The University of Alabama's three tiers of field experiences address this problem. Each tier provides experiences unique to that tier. The course-embedded field experiences allow just-in-time, in-class preparation for field activities, with those field activities then followed by in-class debriefing. The two-semester internships allow for long-range development matched to both individual and school needs. And the 10-day residency is an affordable way for working educators to get a taste of full-time leadership in a school other than their own.

The University of Washington's competency-based guarantee is a groundbreaking and perhaps trend-setting innovation. Also unique is the way that the guarantee is aligned with other aspects of the program. Indeed, the guarantee is the natural outgrowth of a whole series of developments in the program, beginning with the commitment to equity and including the development of six core competencies, district partnerships, performance measures, coursework, internship, and mentoring—all supporting the equity goal. Should a graduate of the program serving as an educational leader need support in order for the guarantee to be upheld, the assistance offered is also aligned with the goal of equity and corresponding competencies.

The University of Tennessee presents a unique combination of recruitment and selection strategies: massive recruitment efforts involving faculty, students, alumni, and district practitioners leading to a very large number of applicants, combined with an extremely rigorous selection process resulting in the admission of a small number of new students. The selection process integrates a number of standard selection instruments and activities that, considered individually, are not unique, but when used in combination with each other and with considerable time and energy of faculty and practitioners create a complex and comprehensive selection process that is truly impressive. The feedback and support given to applicants who are not selected in the hope that they will be admitted to a future cohort is also unique to the Tennessee program. All of the stakeholders we interviewed agreed that the recruitment and selection process contributed to the program's rigorous coursework, student collaboration, individualized assistance, diverse perspectives, creative thinking, and high achievement levels.

Although a number of educational leadership preparation programs require their students to complete equity audits, the three-tiered nature of California State University Fresno's equity audit is novel. Equity audits are complex undertakings, and completing the general process three times develops the students' question asking, planning, data gathering, data analysis, and reflective skills. Additionally, the movement from the macro to the micro by doing audits at the school, subgroup, and individual student levels reveals the relationship of the three levels and the

ultimate effects of inequity on students that a single, school-level audit is less likely to do. Finally, while students in many programs complete equity audits and report results, the students in the CSUF program also develop an action plan for increasing equity in their schools. The CSUF equity audit clearly has had the intended effects on students who complete it: the graduates we interviewed were committed to leadership for equity and social justice, and credited the equity audit with inspiring that commitment.

A number of educational leadership preparation programs in the U.S. offer programs in teacher leadership that are distinct from their principal preparation programs, but Manhattanville College's program is unique in its concentrated focus on peer coaching. Given the popularity of peer coaching in school districts across the nation, it will be interesting to see if more partnerships between higher education and school districts develop around the preparation and certification of peer coaches. The 15 credit hours of coursework in the program provide more content on effective teaching, classroom observation, and conferencing than most principal preparation programs do, and the Manhattanville-White Plains partnership, although still in its early stages, has the potential to serve as a model for preparing and supporting peer coaches.

The University of Pennsylvania's mid-career doctoral program provides myriad supports for both students and alumni, including a number of creative formats for students and alumni to support each other. Although, for the purpose of discussion, we described the different types of support—cohort support, dissertation support, coaching and mentoring, Saturday Commons, the innovations lab, the simulations program, and the alumni fellowship—separately, in fact these structures are interactive and synergistic in their support of mid-career doctoral students, alumni, and the school districts that both mid-career doctoral students and alumni serve. Moreover, several of the supports have the potential to develop networks and assist educational leaders at the regional, national, and global level.

Although at the start of this study it was not our intent to identify themes cutting across the very different innovations we examined, we were struck by several broad themes that are present in the findings. All of the innovations were based on university-district partnerships. Student or applicant assessment associated with the innovations was primarily performance-based. Five of the six innovations included field experiences that assisted the integration of theory and practice. Mentoring or coaching by practitioners was associated with most of the innovations. Each of the innovations included a focus on instructional leadership, and the gathering and analysis of data in support of instructional improvement. Finally, authentic learning, inquiry, reflection, collaborative learning, and peer support were fostered by all of the innovations.

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