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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses two important elements in the preparation of K-12 school leaders: (1) role transformation through clinical practice during administrator preparation programs; and (2) reconceptualization of traditional internship experiences to enhance role transformation. Data analyzed for this study originally were collected in doctoral studies of cohort learning, socialization, and leadership preparation. Data sources include students' responses to reflective writing prompts, pre- and post-surveys, and interview questions. Students in this comparison study were enrolled in three different closed cohorts within an educational leadership development program at one urban university. Findings suggest that readiness to assume a principalship following completion of an administrator preparation program depends upon: (1) an individual's prior leadership opportunities and experiences within K-12 education; (2) encouragement from and mentoring by practicing principals; and (3) personal issues such as family responsibilities and career goals. Two important implications, namely, that educational administration preparation programs need to decrease reliance on traditional course- and campus-based preparation models and focus squarely on problems of practice in schools, are discussed. (Contains 24 references.) (Author/RT)

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BECOMING A PRINCIPAL: ROLE TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CLINICAL PRACTICE

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Abstract

This paper discusses two important elements in the preparation of K-12 school leaders: (a) role transformation through clinical practice during administrator preparation programs and (b) reconceptualization of traditional internship experiences to enhance role transformation. Data analyzed for this study originally were collected in doctoral studies of cohort learning, socialization, and leadership preparation. Data sources include students' responses to reflective writing prompts, pre- and post-surveys, and interview questions. Students in this comparison study were enrolled in three different closed cohorts within an educational leadership development program at one urban university. Findings suggest that readiness to assume a principalship following completion of an administrator preparation program depends upon (a) an individual's prior leadership opportunities and experiences within K-12 education; (b) encouragement from and mentoring by practicing principals; and (c) personal issues such as family responsibilities and career goals. Two important implications, namely, that educational administration preparation programs need to decrease reliance on traditional course- and campus-based preparation models and focus squarely on problems of practice in schools, are discussed.

BECOMING A PRINCIPAL:
ROLE TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CLINICAL PRACTICE

This paper focuses on two elements essential to preparing school leaders for the diverse schools of the future and the harsh realities of being school principals. In particular, we focus on the transformative nature of clinical practice in preparing preservice personnel to undertake the rigors of school leadership (Crow & Glascock, 1995; Daresh & Playko, 1997) and ways to reconceptualize clinical experiences to enhance transformations and decrease the disadvantages of traditional internships (Lumsden, 1992; Milstein & Krueger, 1997).

Nationally, school districts face shortages of quality personnel to lead their schools (ERS, NAESP, & NASSP, 2000). In particular, Colorado school districts, especially those in the Denver area, have a crisis of unusual proportions because of an inadequate supply of well-qualified replacements for the estimated 450 principals who will leave area schools over the next 5 years for retirement (often early) or less-stressed lifestyles. Current programs might meet the need, but many of those who complete principal preparation programs choose not to take administrative positions (Playko & Daresh, 1992) or are not hired following program completion (Crow & Glascock, 1995). Anecdotal evidence suggests that thousands of teachers have completed educational administration programs and degrees in the last 20 years but have never practiced school administration. While such "reluctant warriors" may never enter administrative life, they are enriched by their preparation experiences and their schools and districts are strengthened through their acquired knowledge and skills. The crying need for school-

level leadership, however, remains under addressed, and considerable resources have been expended to limited effect.

Further, preparation programs fundamentally are about role transformation (Crow & Glascock, 1995), that is, socialization to administrative culture from teacher culture (White & Crow, 1993). This transformative process focuses on learning new language, concepts, and skills and preparing to change from one educational orientation to another. Hence, opportunities to view the principalship through work with practicing and aspiring principals (Lumsden, 1992; Milstein & Krueger, 1997) are essential. Research shows that strong internships increase role clarification and technical expertise (Daresh, 1987; Daresh & Playko, 1997), change conceptions of the principalship (Milstein & Krueger, 1987; White & Crow, 1993), and help develop important skills and professional behaviors (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995; Lumsden, 1992).

Data Sources and Analysis

This study used a multimethod strategy (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) and draws on data collected originally for other purposes (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985). Data came primarily from doctoral studies of cohort learning, socialization, and leadership development. Specifically, three cohorts in metropolitan Denver provided periodic feedback about their program experiences through online and in-class surveys, designed originally as "temperature" checks of cohort progress for students and faculty. Participants in one of the three cohorts provided expanded data sources over a yearlong period through a series of intensive personal interviews and a closing, focus group interview.

Context: The Licensure Cohort Program

Following the state adoption of professional standards in 1994, the educational administration faculty at the University of Colorado at Denver (UCD) progressively revised its principal licensure program to be problem-based (Ford, Martin, Muth, & Steinbrecher, 1997), oriented to active learning (Muth, 1999), and portfolio-assessed (Muth, Murphy, Martin, & Sanders, 1996). The leadership preparation program was transformed over time from a series of on-campus courses into off-campus cohorts developed through school district partnerships. Each closed cohort begins its program together as a learning community and remains together throughout all coursework and field experiences. This standards-driven program (Ford, Martin, Murphy, & Muth, 1996; Murphy, Martin, & Muth, 1994) seeks to endorse graduates as competent professionals who are ready to assume roles as licensed school leaders as they depart the program.

The current UCD preparation program uses a sequence of four learning "domains" that concentrate on specific areas of school administration and connect concurrently to field applications. Each domain usually spans an entire semester. Individual and group activities within the domains or "content umbrellas" (Muth, 2000, p. 60) center on four broad knowledge and skill areas: (a) educational leadership, (b) school environment, (c) supervision of curriculum and instruction, and (d) school improvement. Topics within the domains of study overlap both to integrate subject matter across domains and to take advantage of cycles of events in schools relevant to the domains and standards to be met. Domain content is presented through team-teaching efforts by both university professors and K-12 practitioners.

Content learning is balanced with field experiences in order for students to gain clinical and problem-solving skills with problems of professional practice. Each domain has an integrated set of field-based learning activities that connect content to practice. A 135 clock-hour clinical practicum provides additional immersion into practice and experience as a school administrator, usually in summer schools, night schools, or other focused environments in which administrative work is concentrated. Students select different practicing educational administrators with whom to work each semester during concurrent 45-hour clinical practices, varying their locations to gain experiences at all three levels of K-12 schools (elementary, middle, high). Additionally, students identify specific areas of needed growth, contract for their clinical practices between their sponsoring administrators and university professors, record their experiences in logs, write reflections about their learning, and compose professional development plans for succeeding years, based on assessments of areas of self-development that are still needed. Most students assume positions as acting school administrators during partnering district summer school programs for their 135-hour clinical practicum; others design unique clinical practicums during the normal school year under the guidance of school administrators and with approval of university professors.

Because program cohorts are developed through partnerships with local school districts, unique problems of practice emerge as potential projects and learning events (Martin, Ford, Murphy, & Muth, 1998). The curriculum integrates problem-based learning and action research, exploration of problems through group projects, online mentoring and instruction, group discussions following guest presentations, and personal reflective writing (Muth, forthcoming; Muth et al., 2001).

Data Sources: Methodology and Sample

Reflective writing is integrated throughout the preparation program, used both as a learning strategy for focused discussions about problems of practice in educational leadership (Muth, forthcoming) and as a developmental strategy for reflective practice (Schön, 1987). Reflective questionnaires and surveys were introduced to the students in the three sample cohorts early in their studies and continued on a regular basis throughout their programs. Most cohort-based data integrated into this investigation were collected using similar instruments that included the same questions on both pre- and post-surveys. These instruments were administered at nearly the same time in each cohort as students progressed through the licensure program. However, the sequencing of content domains differed, reflecting district opportunities for and perspectives on field-based learning activities.

Cohort A began its studies in late January 2000 and completed its fourth domain by early May 2001. Data were collected at the close of the semester in December 2000 (after completion of the leadership, school environment, and supervision domains) and again at the program end in early May 2001 (after completion of the school improvement domain). Ten of the 18 students had completed their 135-hour clinical practicum at the close of the program; the remaining 8 students completed their practicum that following summer.

Cohort B activities began in early May 2000 and continued through late June 2001. Pre-surveys were administered in mid-May 2001, prior to the fourth domain (school environment); post-survey data were collected at the end of June 2001 at the close of the program. All 18 students in Cohort B reported that either they were currently

engaged in their clinical practicum or had completed the practicum when the post-survey was administered.

Cohort C started in late August 2000 and will complete its fourth content domain (supervision) in December 2001. Students completed two domains of study (leadership and school improvement) by mid-May 2001 when pre-survey data were collected. Twenty-one of the 24 cohort members had finished their clinical practicum when the post-survey was administered in late July (after the school environment domain).

Findings: Demographic Elements

The three cohorts differed not only in their partnering school districts and sequencing of domains, but also in demographic composition, educational work experiences, and purposes for enrolling in the preparation program. Table 1 presents the demographic composition of each cohort (age, gender, and ethnicity). Table 2 displays the range of experience as K-12 educational practitioners, degrees held upon entering program, and desired outcomes from participation in the preparation program.

The two tables indicate that the three cohorts were somewhat similar in size, gender distribution, and ethnic diversity. However, these learning communities differed markedly in features such as age composition, current work responsibilities, prior graduate work, and desired program outcomes.

Table 1: Demographic Composition of Cohorts

Cohort	Total Number Students	Age Range (years)	Age Groups ≤ 40	Age Groups > 40	Gender Female	Gender Male	Number Minority Students*
A	18	25-61	12	6	11	7	2
B	18	28-53	11	7	11	7	2
C	24	29-54	6	18	16	8	4
All	60	25-61	29	31	38	22	8

*Students who identified their ethnicity as African-American, Hispanic, or Pacific Rim.

Table 2: Practitioner Educational Experiences and Goals

Cohort	K-12 Work Range (years)	Current Work Location*				Entering Degree Level**			Exiting Goal	
		ES	MS	HS	DO	B	M	D	Earn Degree	License Only
A	3-28	3	9	3	3	12	6	0	18	0
B	3-30	8	3	3	4	10	8	0	14	4
C	4-33	8	5	8	3	5	18	1	8	16
All	3-33	19	17	14	10	27	32	1	40	20

*Symbols for current work experience: ES = elementary school, MS = middle school, HS = high school, and DO = district office (or work experience with district office).
**Symbols for entering degree level: B = baccalaureate, M = master, and D = doctorate.

Findings: Leadership Readiness

Despite the demographic and experience differences among the 60 students in the three cohorts, similar percentages of practitioners within each learning community responded similarly to two questions. The first question asked, *Within the two years following completion of the cohort, what type of school leadership role will you seek?* Forced choices included (a) school principal, (b) district administrator, (c) classroom teacher, or (d) not sure at this time. Several respondents added "assistant principal" to the first choice and indicated that the assistant principalship was their envisioned position within two years after completing the program. The second prompt (*Are you ready to assume the principalship of a school?*) requested a *Yes* or *No* response and an explanation for the selected answer. Table 3 displays a composite of the anticipated positions that students envisioned holding 2 years after completion of their preparation programs as well as percentages of readiness to assume school leadership responsibilities.

Interesting patterns emerge in further analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data provided by the respondents. Twenty-three practitioners among the 60 students (38%) stated that they were ready to assume a principalship. Fifteen were women and eight were men, comprising percentages almost equal to the distribution of gender across

all of the cohorts in this study. However, interesting findings emerge when the gender distribution is further separated among four age groups, specifically within the ranges of (a) 20 to 29 years, (b) 30 to 39 years, (c) 40 to 49 years, and (d) 50 or more years. Table 4 displays the age and gender distribution among respondents who reported being ready to assume principalships.

Table 3: Future Goals and Leadership Readiness

Cohort	Total Number Students	Anticipated Position Within Two Years*					Ready for Principalship		Percentages Ready to Assume Leadership**		
		P	AP	D	T	Not	Yes	No	P	AP	Total
A	18	7	2	2	0	7	8	10	44%	22%	66%
B	18	6	5	2	1	4	7	11	39%	17%	56%
C	24	10	7	1	0	6	8	16	33%	29%	62%
All	60	23	14	5	1	17	23	37	38%	23%	62%

*Symbols for anticipated position within two years following end of program: P = principal, AP = assistant principal, D = district administrator, T = teacher, and Not = not sure at time of survey.
**Percentage ready to assume leadership includes "yes" responses to being ready for principalship and "no" responses that specifically identified wanting to serve as assistant principal first.

Table 4: Principal Readiness: Age and Gender Distribution

Cohort Participants Separated According to Age and Gender									
20 – 29 Years		30 – 39 Years		40 – 49 Years		50+ Years		Total	
2		7		11		3		23	
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1	1	4	3	9	2	1	2	16	8

Experience, both as an educator and as a leader, emerges as a powerful motivator in the reasons cited by respondents for why they were ready to assume positions as school leaders. A 54-year-old high school counselor with 33 years experience in the field of education stated,

> I believe that with my diverse experience and past leadership responsibilities that I bring a great deal to the role of principal. Along with all that, I have learned in the licensure cohort program and my internship experience. I feel I am ready to take on this leadership role.

Another high school teacher and department chair (age 48) had worked as an educational practitioner for only seven years when she completed the post-survey. She bases her readiness upon prior leadership experience and personal conviction that she can be successful.

> I am prompted to pursue licensure as a school administrator based upon my past experience as an administrator in business and non-profits. My heart is in improving academic achievement in public schools. . . . Undoubtedly I will make mistakes but I am confident I could do a more efficient and compassionate job than some I have observed.

Other respondents linked their readiness for the principalship to leadership opportunities provided by their supervisors that were beyond the scope of the licensure program. A middle school teacher with 14 years experience serves as a member of her school's leadership team. Whenever the principal is out of the building, this 35-year-old teacher assumes the role as the school administrator. Several times during cohort sessions, she shared perplexing challenges she faced as the "acting" principal. Nonetheless, she considers those experiences valuable in her professional preparation.

> For the last two years, I have gained the skills needed to be in the role of an administrator. I use the skills daily in my current job [as "teacher in charge"]. I discipline students, observe teachers, hold meetings, etc.

An elementary school teacher (age 48) with 12 years of experience also shared how her current supervisor supports her professional growth as a future school leader. According to this teacher, her role transformation from teacher to principal actually began the day she was hired.

> My supervisor courted and hired me. From the first day I went to work for her, she has mentored and supported my professional growth in all areas. . . . I started training for a principalship when I started as a classroom teacher. I was asked to do jobs and fill roles from the very beginning of my current position 5 years ago. Now I need the credentials.

In addition to "pushing" by her principal, she receives encouragement and support from her mother (a former school administrator) and the district's director of education. Thus, according to this teacher, "I naturally end up in administrative positions, formal and informal, in every job I have had."

Two remarkable exceptions among this group of practitioners ready to assume a principalship are the voices of the youngest students, both participants in Cohort A. The 25-year-old female teacher completed her third year of teaching at the close of her licensure program. Her youthful self-confidence and exuberance is markedly different from the reticence displayed in comments written by other age-group peers.

> I would accept an offer in a heartbeat because I feel I am ready to begin learning hands-on how to lead a school. My classes have sufficiently prepared me; now I ready to act on my knowledge. I learn by doing, so put me into a true principalship and I feel I will learn more.

The other twenty-something practitioner, a former high school mathematics teacher with six years experience, is an acting school principal of a new K-8 charter school. Prior to graduation in May 2001, he wrote about his readiness for leadership. The respondent provided the italicized emphasis.

> I have a much stronger understanding of my role in educational leadership. I have aspirations for the Superintendency and eventually as a public policy maker. As a result of my licensure program, I gained exposure to the spectrum of perspectives and philosophies regarding educational leadership, which honed my own positions. Granted, I have gained a substantial amount of practical knowledge that enhances by daily practice as a principal; however the larger picture of realizing the current realities in education and *developing a vision for the future of education* is directly related to my growth in the program.

Lack of experience is not perceived as a stumbling block by either of these two young educational practitioners.

Nor was lack of experience a concern for eight other respondents who cited "on-the-job training" and "learning and practicing leadership" as reasons why they are ready assume school leadership positions. One middle school teacher wrote, "Knowledge is good, but the application of knowledge is even better. To be a leader, you have to lead. I look forward to the challenge." Another respondent also shared her expectation of challenge as a new school administrator: "I am an effective learner with a high energy level. Much of a principalship is on-the-job training according to several principal sources. I am up for the challenge." Unlike other peers in the preparation program, these practitioners expressed confidence and competence to assume leadership of schools. They perceive that "learning along the way is inevitable" as one changes roles from teacher to school leader. A high school teacher linked beginning the principalship to his years as a beginning teacher: "If I lack any skills for the principalship, much like teaching, experience will be the best way to learn."

Thirty-seven other respondents (62%), however, reported that they were not ready to assume a position as a school principal at the time the post-survey was administered. Their comments supporting their hesitancies fell into four main categories: (a) need for more experience or skills, (b) desire to serve as an assistant principal first, (c) conflict with family or personal responsibilities, and (d) other career plans or no interest in assuming a principalship. Several responses contained multiple reasons for waiting to assume leadership of a school, and thus, the categories are not mutually exclusive. Table 5 displays the distribution of conflicting issues identified as hindrances to readiness to assume a principalship.

Several students wrote clear and compelling reasons why they were not ready to assume administrative positions. Three students cited other career pursuits; they simply were "not interested in assuming a position as a principal." Two hoped to become district administrators, and another planned to begin doctoral studies following completion of her licensure program. Another veteran teacher simply stated, "I am not willing to devote the amount of time away from my family that is necessary to be successful as a principal."

Table 5: Factors Contributing to Unreadiness for Principalship

Participant Responses Separated According to Categories and Gender							
Need More Experience*		Be Assistant Principals First*		Conflicting Personal Issues		Other Career Interests	
20		14		5		3	
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
7	13	10	4	2	3	3	0

*Nine respondents included both "need experience" and desire to hold "assistant principal" first in their responses.

Other students wrote that commitments to family members and professional responsibilities were reasons for delaying a career change from teacher to administrator. An elementary teacher new to the profession believed that gaining credibility as an educator was an important element of role transformation for her.

> I have much to learn and am in an ideal position [as a teacher member of the school's leadership team] to gain the knowledge and skills I need. With only two years in the classroom and one year as a support teacher, I feel I must prove myself at this level first to gain credibility.

Two other teachers with only four years experience in the classroom expressed the need "to spend more years as a teacher in order to mature in that aspect" of the profession. An experienced middle school teacher did not plan to seek a position until the students in his team progressed to high school: "I would not accept the position because I have made a three-year commitment to the students I have now. We are currently in year two of the three-year plan."

Understanding the remaining students' resistance to assuming principalships is more difficult because of the complex issues they raised in their written comments and the timing of the surveys. Twenty-four responses contain references to needing "more experience" or "on-the-job training." A few expand the notion of gaining experience through an apprenticeship under the guidance of "an exceptional principal" or "an outstanding leader." A youthful middle school teacher wrote: "I think that now with the knowledge gained, I would like to 'try out' what I know in a situation where I am given small administration-based tasks." An experienced high school teacher suggested that he needed opportunities for "more leadership roles" in his school. The perplexing nature of these responses is that only two students in this group had not completed their clinical practicum when they wrote their comments.

The post-surveys did not contain questions directly related to the students' clinical practicum experiences. However, two questions based upon the roles and responsibilities of a school principal (Daresh & Playko, 1997) may provide some insights into this finding about needing more experience.

The final survey includes a description of three types of skills needed by successful school principals. These include (a) *technical and managerial skills* focused on all operational aspects of administrative leadership, (b) *socialization skills* related to membership within a community of practice, and (c) *self-awareness and role awareness skills* connected to role conceptualization as a school leader (Daresh & Playko, 1997). The first question asked students to prioritize the skills, from the most important to the least important, based upon the students' current understanding of the principalship. The

second question asked the students to identify the skill for which they had the least understanding. Responses to these two questions are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Learner Perceptions: School Leadership Skills

Cohort	Perceived Most Important Skill			Identified Least Understood Skill		
	Technical	Social	Awareness	Technical	Social	Awareness
A	5	4	8	11	3	3
B	1	5	12	12	4	1
C	6	10	7	16	4	4
All*	12	19	27	39	11	8

*Totals across both broad categories do not equal 60 responses. Two respondents added "all" as a choice for the most important skills needed by a principal, and two respondents wrote "none" as their least understood skill.

A major focus within the UCD curriculum is the development of students' leadership awareness and abilities through reflective writing about their core values and beliefs that become the foundation for their individual educational platforms. Beginning socialization within the community of practice begins through principal shadowing and interviewing activities, networking during cohort activities, and engaging with clinical practitioners who team-teach with university professors. While students engage in concurrent field-based experiences within each domain and complete a 135-hour clinical practicum prior to finishing the program, opportunities for learning technical skills are limited. Further, technical expertise is best gained through engaging in real work as educational administrators (Capasso & Daresh, 2001).

A student who is ready to assume a principalship wrote an extensive critique of her program experiences and offered suggestions for improvement. All underlined and capitalization emphasis in the quote below are hers.

> Participating in writing a real school improvement plan would be more helpful than an imaginary one. Same for budgeting and other aspects of what we learned. The program would be far richer if we apprenticed as [school administrators] while enrolled in the preparation program. . . . We should NOT have to teach while we're doing this. If the school districts really want to train excellent

> leaders, they need to help fund the program and provide time away from other jobs so that we can get the experience we need. We also need more time for study, mulling [over issues], and discussion during the week. Growth takes time and emotional energy.

Several other students in this sample cited similar concerns and offered suggestions for improving the preparation of future school leaders. Additionally, a few reported that they believed that their teaching suffered considerably, and some expressed concern that their family members—especially young children—did not receive needed attention. Cohort members also expressed concern about the quality of their clinical experiences, especially because they located supporting practitioners on their own and without "structured guidance." An veteran elementary teacher shared an interesting observation: "The quality of our principals has been less than I expect. I am curious if that is a function of their training or district pressure." Data suggest that requiring aspiring principals to balance teaching responsibilities, while simultaneously engaged as learners in an administrative preparation program, may be a hindrance to role transformation and an important reason for the low incidence of principal placement.

What Do These Data Tell Us?

As the literature points out, more attention needs to be paid to creating authentic learning opportunities for administrators in training (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995; Crow & Glascock, 1995; Lumsden, 1992; Milestein & Krueger, 1997), and the UCD program is doing just that. In fact, cohorts developed since Spring 2001 now spend 90 clock hours in clinical activities related to each of their domains and an additional 135 hours in their clinical practicum, raising the total applied-practice hours to almost 500. Doing this is paramount to ensuring that trainees leaving preparation programs are fully acculturated and capable of assuming administrative responsibilities as they leave their

preparation program. This is particularly acute now as an aging administrative population in the Denver metropolitan area is retiring with relief.

Since it is clear that transforming from teacher practices to administrator practices is not universal for students in these preparation programs, the issue, then, is how to consciously design transformative experiences for aspiring administrators that use field opportunities and facilitate more in-depth and authentic hands-on experience. In addition to increasing the focus on transformative processes, data from the cohort studies as well as conversations with principals (not elucidated here) suggest that educational administration preparation programs need to decrease reliance on traditional course- and campus-based preparation models and focus squarely on problems of practice in schools. Doing so immerses aspiring administrators in authentic situations and creates intensive clinical opportunities that prepare them to assume administrative roles with confidence and competence.

Let's now turn to the students' own words to see why this is necessary. First, please recall the categories that students cited for not being ready to assume a principalship directly: (a) need for more experience or skills, (b) desire to serve as an assistant principal first, (c) conflict with family or personal responsibilities, and (d) other career plans or no interest in assuming a principalship. Further, read an example of their words again: "I feel I must prove myself at this level [assistant principalship] first to gain credibility." Others clearly indicated that they did not feel that the principalship was the place for them. In fact, 37 of the 60 indicated that they were not ready toward the ends of their preparation programs, and many indicated that the job simply was not for them.

Now, even though developing the leadership skills and knowledge of teachers is well worth the effort (Dana, 1992; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000), administrator preparation programs appear hard-pressed to find enough qualified people without having more than 50% of those who finish a program not take administrative positions closely following completion of their programs. Further, questions can be raised about those who have no intention of assuming formal administrative responsibilities. Should preparation programs spend precious resources on these learners? What ways exist to identify those who do not aspire to administrative positions, and can preparation programs remain viable without them?

Again, however, we have the words of our students to guide us.

> My supervisor courted and hired me . . . she has mentored and supported my professional growth in all areas . . . I was asked to do jobs and fill roles from the very beginning of my current position 5 years ago.

These words suggest that transformation begins <u>before</u> potential administrators enter formal preparation programs. Clearly, schools and districts need to determine their leadership needs, as did this student's principal, recruit and train people who will make strong administrators, providing them opportunities to learn about and take on administrative tasks to help them see that they can and want to contribute at this level. Then, such individuals can be engaged in preparation programs that assure exposure beyond a single building and a single mentor and include formal knowledge accrual, focused skill development, and authentic assessments.

More insights from our students clarify the need for districts and schools to facilitate their learning:

> Participating in writing a <u>real</u> school improvement plan would be more helpful than an imaginary one. Same for budgeting and other aspects of what we learned.

> The program would be far richer if we apprenticed as [school administrators] while enrolled in the preparation program. . . . We should NOT have to teach while we're doing this. If the school districts really want to train excellent leaders, they need to help fund the program and provide time away from other jobs so that we can get the experience we need. We also need more time for study, mulling [over issues], and discussion during the week. Growth takes time and emotional energy.

To achieve such opportunity and focus, we suggest models that will limit the use of "part-time" models of clinical practice, develop the intensity of field-based experience demanded by national accrediting bodies, and free faculty to work closely with clinical faculty to develop standards- and performance-based programs. Such models draw heavily on applied settings while integrating formal and practice knowledge with skill acquisition and dispositional development. They also can provide schools and districts with transitional plans that ease the shortage of school administrators and ensure that new school leaders are fully ready to pursue their responsibilities.

The models proposed include Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs), job sharing, and "110-day" mentoring. For example, districts would be well advised to seek out and develop teacher leaders through focused TOSA programs that permit teachers out-of-classroom experiences in instructional leadership, working with other teachers to increase their classroom effectiveness, develop new curriculum and assessments, and engage in coaching and other practice-improvement activities. In such roles, identified teacher leaders can test out whether they like being out of the classroom, like working with adults on skill and practice improvement, and like the "administrative" activities that go with such positions. Then, when preparation program opportunities come along, these prospective administrators will be more able to determine both their readiness for other responsibilities and their commitment to leaving teaching.

Another model that can be invoked pre-preparation or during a formal preparation program is the job-sharing model. In this model, a soon-to-retire principal decreases her or his administrative hours, sharing them and classroom duties with an aspiring administrator. This model permits the experienced administrator to be available to help out in a crisis or to perform tasks not permitted to non-licensed personnel such as supervising teachers. This model also allows a budding administrator to test out administrative practice while allowing district and school personnel to determine whether the candidate has the capabilities to be an effective school administrator.

A third model is called 110-day sharing and is analogous to the job-sharing model. In this case, though, the mentoring principal is actually retired but hired back by the district to work an abbreviated year mentoring and supervising new principals, perhaps in several buildings, and conducting workshops for groups of new principals who can profit from group dialogue about problems of practice.

These and other models offer opportunities for greater field involvement, stronger university connections with districts, increased responsibility of districts for identifying and preparing their next generation of school leaders, and greater integration of formal knowledge and applications to problems of practice. Such models can (a) encourage transformative preparation and practice; (b) lead to closer field-university partnerships; and (c) facilitate the recruitment, selection, and preparation of future administrators who are more likely to enter administration and are likely to be better prepared and more confident of their abilities and competent in their practice.

Finally, it is not enough to have districts find and nurture people for leadership positions in their and other districts. Both during and after formal preparation, districts

and universities need to collaborate in the mentoring and support of new administrators. This can be accomplished best by ensuring that multiple performance assessments occur throughout preparation experiences so that less qualified aspirants either are weeded out or provided additional learning opportunities. As well, district-university cooperation and mentoring during the first year or so of a new administrator's tenure can guarantee that the now practicing administrator succeeds and learns effectively during the first years of full-time practice. The essential realization for collaborative partnerships between universities and districts and schools is that transformations from teaching to administration require long-term investments in potential, future administrators, do not happen overnight, and must be developed, nurtured, and maintained.

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