



Research and Best Practices That Advance the Profession of Educational Administration

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A Message From the Editor

Frederick L. Dembowski
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In the first research article, James M. Smith and Connie Ruhl-Smith discuss how schools in America are becoming more corporate in their appearance and actions. They contend that although still very popular with the political right, hundreds of authors have demonstrated the inefficiencies and ethical misapplications of the efforts to “corporatize” our public schools. From an obsession with standardized testing that has culminated in massive numbers of unreported drop-outs in states like Texas, and to charter school data in Ohio that rates overall charter performance worse than most urban public schools, the authors of this work pose two questions with regard to this aggressive move to corporatize America's schools. Is this action fair and balanced for all? Is this action ethical in both design and outcome?

In the second research article, Anna T. McFadden presents an audio-enhanced delivery model for enhancing communication skills in online educational leadership courses. The author argues that as professors of educational leadership make the transition from face-to-face to online delivery, the issue of the need for educational leaders to practice effective communication skills can present a barrier to online instruction. The online audio-enhanced delivery model is designed to answer the following concept question, “How can we teach communication skills in an online environment?” The model, based on experience with two courses, assumes that a variety of communication opportunities must be provided within the online environment. The model includes course components such as the use of audio presentation, audio chat, online group work and discussion, group case study analysis, and audio feedback from the instructor. The article concludes with the author’s analysis of data collected from student evaluations from two courses. Data reveal high levels of satisfaction with the online courses and positive student response to the audio and voice components of the course.

In the third research article, Rose Mary Newton discusses the issue of disproportionate representation of women at the superintendent level in comparison to their numbers in education. Incompatibility between the historical expectations for superintendents and the historical expectations for women may, at least partially, account for the continued underrepresentation. This article explores the research supporting this hypothesis and provides guidance for organizational recruiters and members of search committees seeking to increase the number of women willing to apply for superintendent vacancies.

In the first article of best practice, Sandra L. Harris reports the findings from a study on the best practices of award-winning elementary and secondary principals. The 65 award winners from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASSP), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools, and other programs participated in the study and submitted over 200 best practice ideas and strategies. Harris

discusses six themes that emerged from the responses and concludes with recommendations for university leadership preparation programs.

Finally, Celina V. Echols examines the book, *It Takes A School: Closing Achievement Gaps Through Culturally Responsive Schools*, by Marian Keyes, Rebecca Burns, and Patricia Kusimo. Keys, Burns, and Kusimo borrow this title from the African credo “it takes a village” to demonstrate that it is the active involvement of the schools’ and villages’ constituency which hones students’ cultural and intellectual knowledge. Echols found the authors’ helpful guidelines for the schools, classrooms, and home to be appropriate for many disciplines in colleges of education and human development.

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Examining Ethics in Educational Leadership: Some Basic Thought for Professorial Analysis

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The topic of professional and corporate ethics is one that is discussed frequently in the general media today. With unindicted and unconvicted ethical violators like Kenneth Lay of Enron and Richard Scrushy of Health South appearing as anathemas to those who study and attempt to incorporate ethical tenets into everyday professional life, debates regarding ethics in written form and those played out in reality can and do engender much heated discussion.

As Robert Starratt states so appropriately in his latest text, *Ethical Leadership*, the investigation of ethics involves “underlying beliefs, assumptions, principles, and values that support a moral way of life” (Starratt, 2004, p. 5). Beyer (2004) continues along a similar intellectual line and embellishes Starratt’s definition with a set of enveloping questions that surround the basic definitional frame noted above. These questions, as related specifically to ethical executive decision-making, include the following (Beyer, 2004):

Does it represent truth?
Is it legal?

Is it fair and balanced for all concerned?
Is it profitable and beneficial for all concerned?
Will it pass the test of public scrutiny?
(p. 54)

From a focused public school leadership perspective, The Chief State School Officers’ Interstate Licensure Consortium’s (ISLLC) National Standards also address the importance of ethics with a separate and discrete standard dealing with ethics, integrity, and purpose (Standard Five). Issues relating to self-reflection, feedback loops, organizational dignity, learner-centered ethics, executive disclosure, learning enhancement, and cultural frames for fair and wise planning are openly addressed (see <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/isllcstd.pdf>). However, given the importance of that which has been outlined in this introduction, does it not seem counterintuitive that ethical lapses can be so obviously noted and easily reified by virtually every counter-hegemonic author writing about life in today’s P-12 schools?

Although still extremely popular with the political right, hundreds, if not thousands, of authors have demonstrated the inefficiencies and ethical misapplications of efforts to corporatize public schools (Ruhl-Smith & Smith, 2005). From an obsession with standardized testing that has culminated in massive numbers of unreported drop-outs in states like Texas (Dobbs, 2003) to charter school data in Ohio that rates said charter school performance worse than most urban public schools in that state (Mrozowski, 2005), where is the probative counterbalance that Beyer (2004) suggests in her question: “Is it fair and balanced for all?” (p. 54).

Balanced for all is certainly a topic that the authors of this work have reviewed in many prior writings (Smith & Ruhl-Smith, 2003); is there less concern for balance or, furthermore, for the lack of learning that takes place in many charter schools because of the mission of myriad charters to serve the lowest economic strata of urban populations? Chester Finn (1989) once noted that the “public ... wants ...” educational quality, institutional efficiency, and reinforcement of fundamental societal values” (p. 181). What societal value does specious accounting with respect to drop-out rates reinforce? What type of institutional efficiency is obtained or maintained when public monies are provided to charter schools that cannot perform at even the most minimal of levels?

The ethical implications for current uses of standardized testing results seem to generate the most obvious principled breach or conundrum with regard to educational leadership and educational policy actions. One of the leading testing critics in North America, Alfie Kohn (2000), states: “Research has repeatedly found that the amount of poverty in the communities . . . accounts for the great majority of the difference in test scores from one area to the next” (p. 7). Fortifying the notion that wealth or poverty can be a powerful

predictive measure of outcomes on standardized tests, as well as other elements of academic “competence,” Bradsher (1995) offers the following quotation from MacArthur Fellow, Robert Greenstein, executive director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

When you have a child poverty rate that is four times the average of western European countries that are our principal industrial competitors, and when those children are a significant part of our future work force, you have to worry about the competitive effects as well as the social fabric effects. (p. A1, A4)

Given this data and much more that exists pertaining to the use of standardized testing (Sirotnik, 2004; Smith & Ruhl-Smith, 2002), how does the preparation of school leaders impact this continued practice? Does any course, unit, or subunit of a principal/superintendent preparation program offer insightful examination into these inappropriate practices and, concomitantly, offer further insight for elimination of the harmful practices experienced by youngsters (see ISLLC notations of learning enhancement)? If these harmful practices are commonly known and recognized, as many in the field may argue, why does not an intellectual counter-revolution ensue to halt said practices?

To paraphrase Kohn (2000), what degree of scrutiny is offered to a simple question related to gross family income and the relationship of that income to test scores (i.e., how much does your family earn – when answered, we’ll calculate an approximate standardized test score). As Wildman (2004) posits, via use of correlation analysis, about children in Kern County, California: “the higher the school test score, the lower the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced price lunches. Notice that this inverse

relationship is not ‘perfect’ (in which case the correlation would be -1), but very close (-.934)” (¶ 8).

How does this data appropriately interface with Beyer’s contention that ethical leadership actions must “pass the test of public scrutiny?” There can be no question that the statistical data presented by Professor Wildman coincide directly with the thoughts of Alfie Kohn. Are these data sets and conceptual frames simply overlooked in preparation programs? Or does coursework address these issues and, conversely, no counteraction is ever mounted professionally? These questions are broad-based to be sure but they are also fundamental to and for the future of the educational leadership profession.

Extending this line of incredulous thought is, unfortunately, quite simplistic -- to move from poverty to race while maintaining an identical focus on disparity is a task that requires only momentary investigation. Utilizing data from the state of Florida alone, research indicates that African American students score significantly lower on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT; i.e., the most current version of the Florida Department of Education’s standardized assessment tool) than do Hispanic American students, who likewise do less well than White non-Hispanic students.

As recently as May 2003, more than 12,500 Florida high school seniors, mostly African American and Hispanic American, were expected to leave their respective high schools without obtaining their high school diploma. These diplomas were not withheld due to deficiencies in meeting high school graduation requirements but rather because of failure to “pass” the FCAT (Siegel, 2004). Again, as was queried above, are these data simply overlooked in preparation programs? Or, as has been forcefully asked by Cohen

(2002) in his best-selling popular text, *The Good, The Bad, and the Difference*, has this lack of ethical inquiry resulted from sheer professional incompetence (p. 21)?

Just as medical ethicists are employed by hospitals and large medical centers (i.e., both teaching and nonteaching), educational policy ethicists, it would appear, must now be considered as essential to the advancement of the educational leadership profession. Professor William Ruddick (2001), of New York University, once wrote:

Medical centers are a primary context for medical ethics, as well as medical care. Whether physicians, philosophers, or theologians, most medical ethicists are primarily based in medical schools and teaching hospitals, and their principal audiences are . . . medical students and residents . . . some medical ethicists have forsaken ethical theories that have a single, dominant principle in favor of the jurist’s tactic of “balancing” several unranked principles. Decisions are to be reached by “weighing” for each case the now canonical principles of autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence, and, when appropriate, veracity, sanctity of life, and distributive justice. (p. 1064)

Ruddick’s postulation that working medical ethicists embrace holistic notions of philosophy in order to “balance” a view of what is right and just seems to hold great promise for the field of educational leadership. As colleges and universities begin to examine the dichotomies that exist between what is right or just and what is current policy or practice in P-12 schools, it seems only reasonable that questions regarding distributive justice and beneficence be integrated into preparation programs for all those who aspire to senior

leadership positions in school settings. If the key philosophical phrase “first, do no harm” is a primary corollary to the principle of beneficence, might we not all be interested in the resulting harm of standardized testing practices on low income children? If distributive justice is a concept bound by the parameters of allocated goods via limited supply in relationship to real demand, would it not prove useful to examine issues of wealth and quality education as juxtaposed against the reverse premise of poverty as a determiner of inadequate education? If Wildman’s research holds true for schools outside of Kern County, California, and the authors of this work have every reason to believe that it does, what issues of distributive justice are at work here?

Kozol (1992) offered numerous examples of the disparity between educational “haves” and “have nots” in his work, *Savage Inequalities*. Given the power of those examples, how might an education policy ethicist utilize Kozol’s thoughts to bring light to the axiom of distributive justice to and for a classroom of aspiring school superintendents? And, furthermore, if those concepts were reified for said audience, how might that reification bring about change in state and national policy actions that benefit those with greater access to the supplies (i.e., educational in nature) that are, unquestionably, in great demand?

As employment of educational policy or leadership ethicists is contemplated, the authors of this work feel compelled to present a quote that was utilized as a concluding comment to a related work appearing in the most recent edition of *NCPEA Education Leadership Review* (Ruhl-Smith & Smith, 2005). One can only speculate on the response that any ethicist might offer to the following (Kohn, 2002):

Standard & Poors, the financial rating service, has lately been offering to evaluate and publish the performance,

based largely on test scores, of every school district in a given state – a bit of number crunching that Michigan purchased for more than \$10 million . . . Well, it turns out that Standard & Poors is owned by McGraw-Hill, one of the largest manufacturers of standardized tests. . . With such pressure to look good by boosting their test results, low-scoring districts may feel compelled to purchase heavily scripted curriculum programs designed to raise scores – programs such as Open Court or Reading Mastery . . . Where do those programs come from? By an astonishing coincidence, both are owned by McGraw Hill . . . [There was also a] strong statement of support for test-based accountability in a *Business Week* cover story about education published in March 2001. Care to guess what company owns *Business Week*? (p. 1-2)

This insidious cycle of action and reaction outlined by Kohn is not unlike that presented by other major authors (i.e., Ohanian, Apple, Giroux, Popham) calling for changes in behavior for all those involved with the leadership or management of public school settings. The ethical lapses that allow for these actions to occur are, in the collective opinion of authors like Ruhl-Smith, Smith, Giroux, Apple, and Ohanian, both massive and harmful to the profession of educational leadership as a whole. Values that present a moral way of life (Starratt, 2004) are, without question, devoid here. Rather, we see values that present a purely capitalistic way of life -- one that harms the nation’s most vulnerable youth.

As Wildman (2004) so clearly describes, we must overcome artificial attempts to raise test scores and instead focus on improving the quality of teaching and stimulating a vibrant and diversified curriculum. That type of action does, indeed, meet Beyer’s standard for representing truth

and, likewise, is both profitable and beneficial for all concerned. Then again, that may be the root of the problem -- those with the power of standards, standardized testing, and No Child Left Behind have far too much to lose if a probative focus on excellence in teaching and curriculum development truly did come about. What would an ethicist say here -- what would

graduate students in educational leadership programs say -- how would these two hypothetical sets of responses coincide? It seems that now is the time for these discussions to ensue; otherwise, the harm will simply continue and accountability variables will overcome all that we know as teaching and learning. Or, has that already occurred?

Author Biographies

James M. Smith has served as dean of leadership and policy for Bowling Green State University since 2001. He is a veteran organizational leader, with experience leading educational institutions at both the K-12 and post-secondary levels. Prior to entering university administration, Dr. Smith was a public school administrator in Central and Southwestern Ohio. His research and teaching interests have focused primarily on school reform, school reorganization, and the negative impacts of high stakes testing for at-risk youth. As the author of myriad publications, Dr. Smith continues to lecture and publish scholarly findings targeted toward overall school improvement and school reform. Although the recipient of many community and organizational awards, he considers the West Texas A&M University Distinguished Teaching Award as his most cherished honor.

Connie Ruhl-Smith is the assistant vice provost for academic services and co-director of the office of academic support services at Bowling Green State University. Dr. Ruhl-Smith is an experienced educational leader and has served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, central office administrator, and consultant for school improvement and education redesign. Her research and teaching interests have focused on teacher job satisfaction, school redesign for academic improvement, and the negative impacts of high stakes testing for at-risk youth. As the author of more than 35 refereed publications, Dr. Ruhl-Smith has also played an integral part in the creation of several major grant activities dealing specifically with student enhancement at the university level. Of particular note are two grants, each in excess of \$200,000, that were created for Indiana University in South Bend.

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Enhancing Communication Skills in Online Courses in Educational Leadership

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Introduction

Although American colleges and universities are adjusting to the scholarly and marketing implications of online learning, such adjustments remain tentative. Johns Hopkins University (JHU) President William Brody recently admitted to a previously outmoded view of online learning as a vehicle simply for serving students unable or unwilling to commute to a campus for their coursework. Commenting on his recent observation of online scholarship at JHU's Bloomberg School of Public Health, Brody (2005) now believes that computer networked learning can not only rival face-to-face (F2F) instruction in its own right, but it also offers lessons to enhance classroom-based teaching. As departments of educational leadership deal with the pressures of competition and the push for online instruction, many faculties remain skeptical about the quality of online programs, especially in terms of their capacity to effectively prepare students for the communication skills necessary in school leadership.

The purpose of this paper is to present an audio-enhanced delivery model for enhancing communication skills in online educational leadership courses. As professors make the transition from face-to-face to online delivery, the issue of the need for educational

leaders to practice effective communication skills can present a barrier to online instruction. The online audio-enhanced delivery model is designed to answer the following concept question: How can we teach communication skills in an online environment? The model, based on experience with two courses, assumes that a variety of communication opportunities must be provided within the online environment. The model includes course components such as the use of audio presentation, audio chat, online group work and discussion, group case study analysis, and audio feedback from the instructor. The paper concludes with the author's analysis of data collected from student evaluations from two courses.

Conceptual Framework

A recent newspaper report declares "Face-to-face and online learning are quickly becoming equal and complementary ways of learning, just as newspaper and television have become complementary media of information" (Meyer, 2005). Supporting this perspective, several recent research reports detail uniquely effective online teaching methods not available in traditional classroom settings (Kassop, 2003; Koory, 2003; LeBaron & Miller, 2004; LeBaron & Santos, 2005; McDonald, 2002; Meyer, 2003; Michelich, 2002). Meyer (2005)

suggests that the survival of traditional comprehensive universities will depend on their ability to identify and serve niche markets for their educational services, and to capitalize on worldwide distribution opportunities to confront growing global competition successfully. Several years ago, Carol Twigg (1998) correctly predicted that survivors of the online education “bubble” of the late 1990s would be those institutions committed to scholarly excellence. In a recent doctoral dissertation, Tello (2002) discovered a positive correlation between faculty “presence” and positive student attitudes toward their online study, and a corresponding relationship between positive attitudes and student retention.

Notwithstanding the improving capacities of user-friendly online learning technologies, many university courses still fail to incorporate procedures that capitalize on them for active student engagement. Constructivist online teaching includes multiple activities that promote asynchronous reflection and synchronous conversation. Such courses capitalize on a variety of media to support diverse learning styles. Course designers and instructors are therefore challenged to consider characteristics of engaged learning (such as those described by Jones and his colleagues, 1998), devise deliberate techniques for assuring interaction among course participants to promote purposeful peer dialogue, and establish a sense of belonging where all participants perceive themselves as stakeholders in an online learning community. In the field of educational leadership, Cheryl McFadden (2004) noted that educational leadership programs often are slow to adopt

distance education strategies. She concluded that many faculty are often second-career individuals on a non-tenure track who spent their first career perfecting their communication skills. Killion (2002) cautioned the professoriate about assessing communications skills online. Nutta and Govoni (2002) argued for a model of delivery that draws from the face to face features. Van Patten and Holt (2002) reviewed the variety of delivery strategies appropriate for educational leadership coursework and advocated distance learning for entry level and current administrators. Missing from the literature are specific strategies recommended for enhancing communication skills. Since administrators will be increasing requirements to communicate online, faculty will need workable models for implementation of online instruction in this area.

The Model

The audio-enhanced model presented for online instruction is based on the author’s experience with online course development and instruction with two master’s of school administration courses: Introduction to School-Based Curriculum and Instructional Leadership and School Community Relations. Both classes were taught totally online with no face to face instruction. The underlying assumption is that to effectively teach communication skills, the online instructor must model them, and the students must practice through online discussion and group work. Audio tools such as Wimba can enhance these components of an online course. Wimba is a voice tool embedded in an online course that allows the instructor and students to talk in a “live chat.” A graphic representation of the model is found in Figure 1.

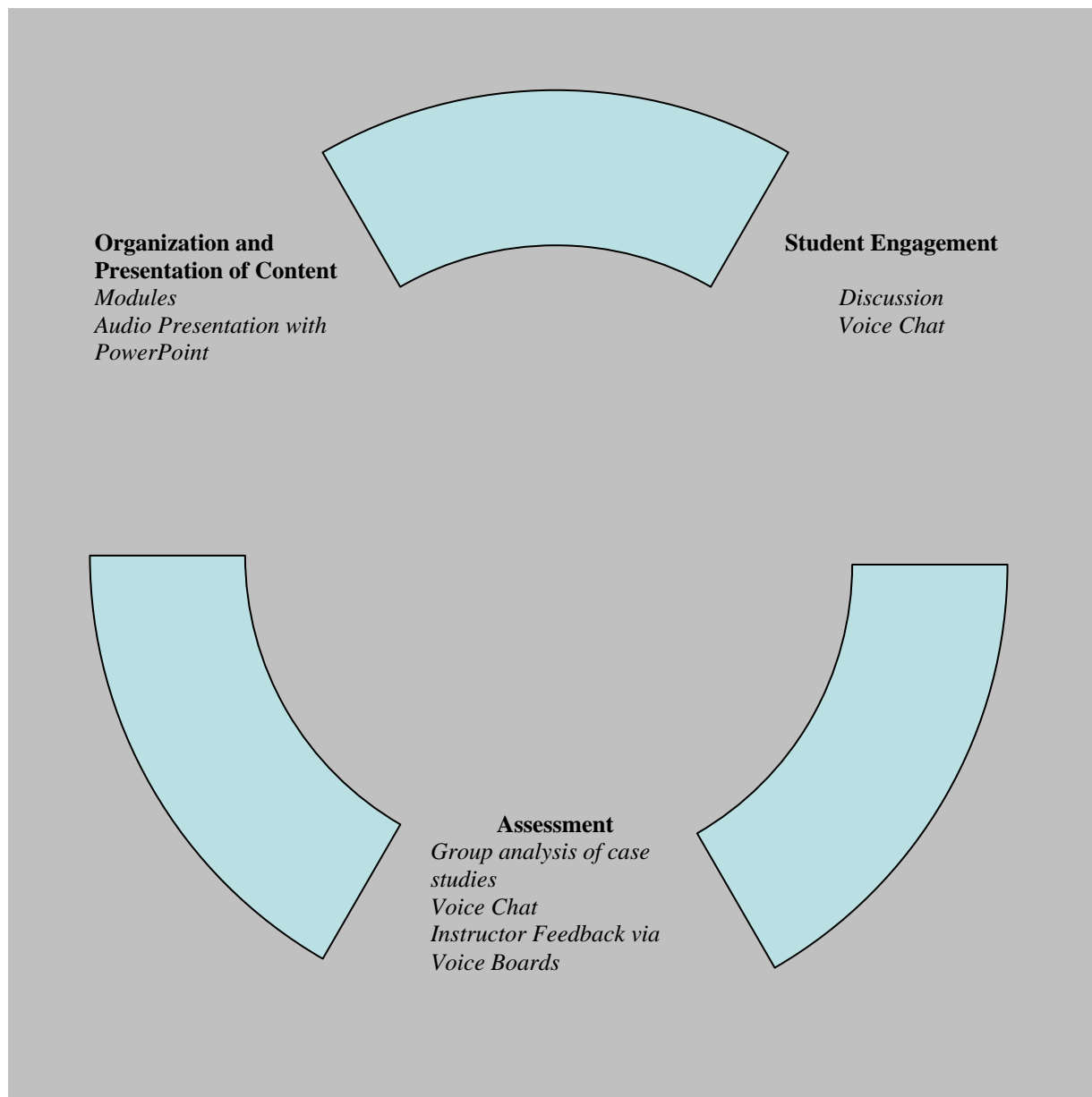


Figure 1: A model using audio to enhance communication skills in online courses

Organization/Presentation of the Content

The success of the audio component of this model must be grounded in strong organization and clear presentation of content and instruction. The shift to an online syllabus for these two courses proved to result in a less

comprehensive document. One difference was that the course outline shifted to a list of weekly modules. Specifics were then shifted to the online modules themselves. A sample course topics and outline from the School community relations syllabus is included below:

Assignments are found within modules on WebCT with due days in the drop box.

Week One January 10	Introduction to the Course Module Public Relations Module
Week Two January 17	Interpersonal Skills Module
Week Three January 24	Understanding the Community Module
Week Four January 31	Policies and Administration of School Community Relations Module
Week Five February 7	Communication Module
Week Six February 14	Working with the Press Module
Week Seven February 21	Internal and External Publics Module
Week Eight February 28	Spring Break
Week Nine March 7	Midterm
Week Ten March 14	Crisis Management Module
Week Eleven March 21	Angry and Violent Students Module
Week Twelve March 28	In Basket Module
Week Thirteen April 4	Conducting Campaigns Module
Week Fourteen April 11	Time for work on environmental scans
Week Fifteen April 18	Final

Modules

All modules follow a similar format. The student is provided a purpose and outcomes for the module. Then readings follow which may be from textbook, articles, or both. All supplemental readings are on electronic reserve through the library. Students then access a PowerPoint lecture outline and are asked to print this out. They then go to a Wimba Voice Board where the instructor has recorded a 30 to 45 minute presentation that builds on the PowerPoint with examples, stories from her

own principal experience, and instructions for continued assignments. Such assignments may include small group discussions and written work.

Audio Component

The model makes extensive use of Wimba Voice Boards. These are used not only for the audio portion of PowerPoint but also for feedback. For instance, if an instructor has graded an assignment and given individual feedback, the voice board can also be used to

give general feedback to the class. Also, if students have completed a written analysis of a case study, the instructor can then provide her own analysis on the case via the voice board. This method not only personalizes the online environment, but allows the instructor to model strategies for approaching students, parents, colleagues, the media, and the community. In addition, voice board instruction itself saves a great deal of time for the instructor as an alternative to long, written explanations.

Student Engagement Discussion

Another audio component is Voice Chat. Voice Chat can be used in two ways. First, the instructor may use it for virtual office hours. At the designated time, students and the instructor may chat as long as each has a microphone. In addition, voice boards may be set up for discussion groups as an alternative to online chat. Because this component is in real time, students often use it for major group assignment planning and then do the rest through regular online discussion.

Independent Work

Independent work in both courses takes the form of case study analysis where students assume the role of administration to analyze and solve problems, keeping in mind the need to focus on the best interest of the student, collaboration with all stakeholders, and communication. Other work involves extensive projects such as creating an environmental scan of a school which requires the student to communicate with many individuals inside and outside the school to create a written “picture” of the school for purposes of strategic planning. In this assignment, students also explore publication software and techniques to enhance visual communication. In yet another major project, students must partner with a novice teacher to plan a unit of instruction based on student test data and aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The student

assumes the role of supervisor and observes a lesson from the unit and conferences with the teacher. In the reflective piece of the project, the student analyzes how he or she communicated with the novice teacher.

Assessment

To effectively assess the work of students in an online educational leadership course, it is important to provide authentic group experiences. Since most decisions in schools need to be made collaboratively, this model of instruction requires that students work in groups for the midterm and final to analyze a case study using instructions provided in the course. Using a case study analysis model developed for teacher problem solving developed by Rita Silverman and modified by the instructor, students may work through online or voice chat to complete the task. Some groups opt to meet face-to-face if they happen to live close to each other. In the instructor’s experience, only two small groups of ten met face-to-face over the academic year. In the case of one, the group’s grade was no higher than others’ in the class, and in the other group, the grade was lower. Each student is asked to assess how well the group worked and communicated with each other. All assignments in the online course have rubrics attached to the instructions. Groups receive written and audio feedback on each assignment.

What the Data Reveal

As our department in a regional comprehensive university embarked on our online adventure, we found our current faculty evaluation instruments inadequate for online instruction. We therefore developed our own instrument looking at course specific questions, teaching specific questions, and questions concerning the online learning environment. The data should be interpreted in terms of student satisfaction. The author analyzed the quantitative data over two semesters and two

courses, calculating frequencies and percentages. (See Table 1.)

Table 1.

Student Responses to Course Evaluation Questions

N= 21, Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Applicable

Question	SA	A	D	SD	NA	SA+A
1. This course will be useful in attaining my professional goals.	17	3	1	0	0	21
	81%	14%	5%	0%	0%	95%
2. This course is important in meeting my program goals and objectives.	18	2	1	0	0	20
	86%	9%	5%	0%	0%	95%
3. The course syllabus was helpful in learning course objectives, expectations, and procedures.	17	4	0	0	0	21
	81%	19%	0%	0%	0%	100%
4. The organization of online course resources (e.g., lecture notes, readings) helped in learning course material.	17	4	0	0	0	21
	81%	19%	0%	0%	0%	100%
5. Course resource content <i>as such</i> contributed to my learning.	16	5	0	0	0	21
	72%	24%	0%	0%	0%	100%
6. Course objectives contributed to my learning.	18	3	0	0	0	21
	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	100%
7. The online course setting featured diverse communication strategies to capture the interest and attention of students.	14	7	0	0	0	21
	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	100%
8. The course stimulated my thinking.	17	3	1	0	0	21
	81%	14%	5%	0%	0%	95%
9. I learned a lot in this course.	17	3	1	0	0	20
	81%	14%	5%	0%	0%	95%

10. The instructor made effective use of the online resources linked from inside the WebCT course.	18	3	0	0	0	21
	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	100%
11. The instructor communicated information clearly.	18	3	0	0	0	21
	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	100%
12. The instructor facilitated peer student learning effectively (e.g., in threaded discussions, chat, e-mail, WIMBA).	18	3	0	0	0	21
	86%	14%	0%	0%	%	100%
13. The instructor was available for students via chats, e-mail, discussion boards and/or other online methods.	20	1	0	0	0	21
	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%	100%
14. The level of intellectual challenge was appropriate for a course of this level.	18	3	0	0	0	21
	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	100%
15. The instructor was enthusiastic about the course.	19	2	0	0	0	21
	90%	9%	0%	0%	0%	99%
16. The instructor had high academic standards for the students in the course.	18	3	0	0	0	21
	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	100%
17. Student assessment procedures were appropriate for course objectives.	17	4	0	0	0	21
	81%	19%	0%	0%	0%	100%
18. Evaluation and grading practices were fair.	16	3	2	0	10	19
	76%	14%	10%	0%	0	90%
19. The instructor met diverse student learning needs effectively.	17	4	0	0	0	21
	81%	19%	0%	0%	0%	100%

20. The instructor created an environment conducive to learning.	17	4	0	0	0	21
	81%	19%	0%	0%	0%	100%
21. The instructor exhibited positive attitudes toward students.	19	2	0	0	0	21
	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%	100%
22. Course activities contributed to student learning.	17	4	0	0	0	21
	81%	19%	0%	0%	0%	100%
23. The instructor exhibited a high level of knowledge in the course subject area.	19	2	0	0	0	21
	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%	100%
24. The instructor provided timely feedback on student performance.	20	1	0	0	0	21
	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%	100%
25. The instructor provided <i>frequent</i> feedback on student work.	20	1	0	0	0	21
	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%	100%
26. The instructor provided <i>constructive</i> feedback on student work.	19	2	0	0	0	21
	90%	10%	0	0	0	100%
27. The instructor used a variety of online teaching methods.	17	4	0	0	0	21
	81%	19%	0	0	0	100%
28. The WebCT learning platform was easy to use.	16	5	0	0	0	21
	76%	24%	0%	0%	0%	100%
29. I was able to connect to my WebCT course consistently at will.	15	5	0	1	0	20
	71%	24%	0%	5%	0%	95%
30. Technical help in using WebCT was available from WCU IT Services when I needed it.	14	3	0	1	3	17
	67%	14%	0%	5%	14%	81%
31. Academic help using WebCT was available from the instructor when I needed it.	17	2	1	0	1	19
	81%	9%	5%	0%	5%	90%

32. The academic challenge of this course equaled or surpassed the challenge level of on-site courses I have taken.	15	3	3	0	0	18
	71% %	14%	14%	0%	0%	85%
33. The quality of interaction with the instructor equaled or surpassed the quality of interaction in on-site courses I have taken.	12	8	1	0	0	20
	57%	38%	5%	0%	0%	95%
34. The quality of interaction with my student peers equaled or surpassed the quality of interaction in on-site courses I have taken.	10	8	2	1	0	18
	48%	38%	9%	5%	0%	86%

The author also reviewed the open-ended data, organizing it into common themes.

For purposes of this paper, data concerning communication and interaction are reviewed. One hundred percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed on the following: the syllabus and the organization of the course facilitated learning, the course used diverse communication strategies to facilitate learning, the instructor communicated information clearly and facilitated peer student learning effectively through threaded discussions, chat, email, or WIMBA voice tools. Ninety five percent agreed or strongly agreed that the quality of the interaction with the instructor equaled or surpassed the quality of interaction in on-site courses, with 86% indicating that the quality of interaction with student peers equaled or surpassed the quality of interaction in on-site courses.

A review of open-ended comments concerning components of the course that contributed to student satisfaction revealed several themes. One third of the comments indicated that the element of the course that contributed most to student understanding was the use of WIMBA voice tools. Other comments fell into the categories of the organization and clarity of the course, the use of discussion, the availability of the instructor, and meaningful assignments. In the area of suggestions for improvement, several students

indicated a desire to still meet occasionally with their peers.

Implications and Recommendations

The author's examination of her experience with online teaching and learning reveals several implications for professors of educational leadership. One is that online teaching and learning can be positive, as was revealed in student satisfaction scores. However, such results demand close attention to organization and clarity of the design of the course. In addition, diverse communication opportunities must be an integral part of the course, and voice tools are a popular and effective addition toward that end. Faculty must keep up with the possibilities for improvements in voice tools for online courses.

This author is now experimenting with real media files that combine the PowerPoint and Voice components into one media file. Also, as much as possible, communication opportunities in online courses must focus on the practical application of theory and simulation of the job experience. As the student evaluations in this study indicate, some students miss the face-to-face contact and instructors must be diligent in being sensitive to the need to personalize instruction as much as possible. As universities compete with an increasing online market in school administration preparation, faculty must be innovative while maintaining a commitment to quality and personalization.

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Recruiting Women to the Superintendency

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Although women comprise about 65% of the educational workforce, they occupy only about 14% of the superintendent positions nationwide (Blount, 1998; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1999). In the past, some theorists accounted for the underrepresentation of women by claiming that women were not assertive enough, didn't want the power, lacked self-confidence, didn't aspire to line positions, were unwilling to play the game, and wouldn't apply for the jobs (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Others maintained that members of educational organizations erected barriers limiting the career opportunities for women and, consequently, locked them into low level jobs (Estler, 1975; Kanter, 1977).

A more recent explanation purports that multiple variables such as individual agency, educational structures, professional norms, and the larger sociocultural context converge to perpetuate the demographic profile of the superintendent as male (Tallerico, 2000a). Skrla (1999) argues that practicing superintendents reinforce the superintendent-as-male metaphor by adopting and adapting to

the existing expectations for the role. The cycle is complete when recruitment personnel, headhunters, members of search committees, and so forth design and implement recruitment and selection practices emphasizing the knowledge, skills, and experiences historically associated with men.

The explanation of concern for this paper is whether women, as potential applicants for the superintendency, are likely to self-select out of the process when recruitment-message content emphasizes roles often associated with men (Skrla, 1999; Tallerico, 2000a, 2000b). There is broad agreement in the literature that instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and political leadership represent constant and durable aspects of the superintendent's work (Cuban 1976, 1988; Glass, et al., 2000; Johnson, 1996; Kowalski, 1999).

Although successful superintendents perform all three roles, the relative emphasis placed on each shifts in response to societal, economic, and educational trends. For example, in the early decades of the 20th century (1910-1930) factors such as the rise of scientific

management and increased bureaucracy directed superintendents' attention to the managerial role (Kowalski, 1999).

This state of affairs gave rise to the notion that "men manage and women teach." Educational historians such as Jackie Blount (1998, 1999) and Larry Cuban (1988) assist in understanding the roots of such perceptions. When the percentage of female teachers increased dramatically in the 19th century, the percentage of male teachers declined. Consequently, the duties and expected behaviors for administrators shifted to accommodate societal expectations for men.

By the late 19th century, all superintendencies were filled by men who had separated themselves "socially, intellectually, economically, and politically from the largely feminized profession" of teaching (Blount 1999, p. 56). Consequently, management came to be associated primarily with men and teaching came to be associated primarily with women.

Recent research suggests that incompatibility between the historical expectations for superintendents and the historical expectations for women may, at least partially, explain why women have yet to access the superintendency in proportion to their numbers in education. Compared to male superintendents, female superintendents have more experience as classroom teachers, are more likely to begin their administrative careers in elementary positions, and are more likely to be hired as instructional leaders (Glass, et al, 2000). These data are consistent with interview data (Young, & McLeod, 2001) indicating that the ability to improve student learning is the primary reason women pursue administrative certification for the principalship.

The results of studies examining the recruitment and selection of principals indicate how preconceived notions of what men and women can and ought to do influences who gets hired as principal of an elementary, middle, or high school. For example, when elementary, middle, and secondary teachers reviewed position announcements for the principalship, high school teachers rated those emphasizing school management job attributes more favorably and elementary and middle school teachers rated those emphasizing instructional leadership job attributes more favorably (Winter & Dunaway, 1997). Teachers responded similarly when evaluating applicants for administrative positions (Winter, McCabe, & Newton, 1998).

Whereas, secondary teachers rated applicants preferring to engage in school management more positively, elementary and middle school teachers rated applicants preferring to engage in instructional leadership more positively. It appears that teachers expect principals of larger secondary schools (most often male) to engage in managerial leadership and expect principals of smaller elementary schools (most often female) to engage in instructional leadership. Members of search committees appear to believe similarly. Although they tend to assume strong non-instructional abilities for men, they are less prone to make such assumptions for women (Angula, 1995; Grogan, 1996).

At the superintendent's level, the outcome of a recent restructuring initiative lends support to this line of reasoning (Matthews, 2001). The position of chief academic officer (CAO) arose in response to the tendency for large urban districts to hire superintendents with a background in business, law, or the military. These superintendents, mostly men, devote much energy to the

political aspect of the superintendent's role and largely delegate the instructional leadership role to the CAO, most often a woman. This two-tier structure increases the likelihood that superintendents will continue to be male.

As political leaders, today's superintendents deliberate with educational, state, and professional agencies, build coalitions, negotiate the distribution of resources, and assist constituencies in reconciling differences. Yet, for most of the past century, it was unthinkable that female administrators could or should interact with local businessmen (Shakeshaft, 1999), and even today, some aspiring female superintendents are reluctant to assume responsibility for the political leadership role (Grogan, 1996).

As noted earlier, in some large public districts with both a chief academic officer (CAO) and a chief executive officer (CEO), responsibility for political leadership most often falls to a male superintendent (Matthews, 2001). For women aspiring to the superintendency, this state of affairs does not bode well because the political leadership role of the superintendent has heightened importance in today's educational milieu (Johnson, 1996; Leithwood, 1995; Scott, 1999).

Other evidence runs counter to the notion that engaging in managerial and political leadership is more characteristic of men and that engaging in instructional leadership is more characteristic of women. For example, the results of a survey of 118 female superintendents indicated that nearly all of the respondents rejected the notion that women are weaker than men in areas of management such as school finance and facilities (Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2000). Furthermore, when men and women rated position announcements emphasizing the three key roles identified above, both male and female participants rated

descriptions of the principal's job depicting instructional leadership most positively (Newton & Zeitoun, 2003).

Implications for Recruitment Practice

Historical trends, the findings of recent recruitment studies for the principalship, and the outcomes of recent restructuring initiatives have practical implications for organizational representatives seeking to recruit a diverse pool of applicants for superintendent vacancies. Overall, it is reasonable to believe that recruitment strategies such as announcements of a position vacancy emphasizing experience as a secondary principal, political and managerial skills, budgeting, and expertise in maintaining the physical plant may target male applicants more than female applicants (Skrla, 1999).

Responses to a recent question (Why were you hired?) posed to over 2,000 superintendents lends credence to this line of reasoning. The researchers (Glass, et al., 2000) concluded that boards of education often "expect women to be instructional leaders and strong change agents and, in contrast, expect men to be political leaders and managers" (p. 93).

Organizational representatives desiring to avoid recruitment practices perpetuating the notion that the superintendent's position is "male" would do well to emphasize all major roles of the job in recruitment message content and to place value on a broader array of experiences. Emphasizing all major roles assures that recruitment-message content does not focus exclusively on attributes of the job likely to appeal to either men or women. Placing value on a broader array of experiences such as leadership as a district-level curriculum specialist may encourage more women to apply for position vacancies.

Finally, it is possible that board members and other members of search committees, both male and female, are unaware of their own preconceived notions regarding

what men and women know, are able to do, and ought to be doing. Articles such as this one may promote discussion along these lines.

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Best Practices of Award-Winning Public School Principals: Implications for University Preparation Programs

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There is no doubt that quality administrator preparation is critical because research has documented that successful school leaders have a strong influence on student achievement as they set direction, support and develop effective teachers, and as they implement effective organizational processes (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Yet, it seems that every day the media reports about America's failing public schools. This has caused the "blame game" to be in full swing as everyone seeks to find fault for these failing schools. Certainly, principals end up in this "hot seat" when they are told that if a school doesn't achieve a certain academic rating, they will be re-assigned, if not terminated, from the job altogether.

Most recently however university leadership preparation programs have become the focus of blame with the charge that isolated theories and out-dated management models were not relevant to the primary need of today's schools. In other words, university programs were at fault for failing schools because of improperly preparing school administrators.

Educators (Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2005; Starratt, 2005) have also voiced their concern of graduate programs not bridging the gap between scholarly theory and practice. Organizations, such as the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) and the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) have responded to the criticism and noted that many university preparation programs are already in the process of redefining and restructuring their programs. Generally, this has resulted in coursework to emphasize instructional leadership, school change, democratic community, diversity, social justice, and field-based activities.

Starratt (2004) contends that in this setting, university professors become "bridge scholars who can effectively carry that critique closer to the practice of teaching and learning and the practice of leading schools" (p. 265). However, despite this wide-spread notion of school failure, as a professor in an educational leadership preparation program, I hear stories every day of school administrators successfully influencing our K-12 campus for student success. At the same time, every year when public school report cards are issued, exemplary schools are recognized, and many are awarded No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Blue Ribbon status or recognized for other

prestigious awards. Often their principals are recognized by local, state, and national organizations, such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), for outstanding leadership. While not denying that K-12 public schools may indeed have room for improvement, obviously many schools are flourishing under effective principal leadership. I began to wonder about best practices used by recognized principals. What did they consider the “best practices” that helped them lead their schools effectively? What implications might these “best practices” have for university preparation programs? Therefore this paper is presented in two parts. The first section reports on a recent study which identified “best practices for leadership” as reported by award-winning K-12 school principals. The second part reviews the transfer of learning theory (Caffarella, 2002) and considers the implications that the findings from the “best practice” study might have for university preparation programs.

Methodology

Sample Population

Using survey methodology and emergent design, I conducted a study beginning in 2004 of best practices for leadership implemented by award-winning elementary and secondary principals. I obtained permission from the NCLB, NAESP, and NASSP award programs to contact by e-mail principals who had been recipients of these awards over the last three years. Other award-winning principals were also invited to participate as they were brought to my attention. Through letters and e-mails, over 300 award-winning principals were contacted. Sixty-nine principals participated, of whom 35 were elementary and 34 were secondary principals. Twenty-six males and 43 females responded to the survey. Years of experience as a principal ranged from 3 years

to 31 years with 8 principals reporting 3–5 years, 36 reporting 6–10 years of experience, 14 with 11–15 years and 11 with over 15 years experience as a principal. Participants reported school populations varying from small (220 students) to very large (2,700 students). Twenty-four principals led schools of 220-500 students, 21 led schools of 501-750 students, 11 led schools of 751– 1,000 students, while 13 led schools with more than 1,000 students. All of the schools with populations greater than 1,000 were at the secondary level. Award-winning principals were located throughout the United States with 11 from the east coast, 25 from the south, seven from the north, 19 from the west, and seven from the central states. Thirty-two of the participants had been recognized for leading an NCLB Blue Ribbon school, 29 had been a state principal of the year, four had been recognized with both of these awards, and four had been recognized through other national and state award programs.

Data Collection

Award-winning principals were e-mailed a survey asking them to describe “as a leader the best practices that you follow at your school for it to be most effective.” Participants were then asked to describe the practice specifically so that others could implement a similar practice. Participants were given a variety of leadership topics as suggestions, such as shaping campus culture, communication and collaboration, effective instructional programs, school improvement plans, leadership, at-risk programs, making NCLB work, supervision, professional development, accountability/assessment, diversity, safe schools, and others.

Data Analysis

All submissions were read carefully and then categorized into themes by the researcher and several graduate students who assisted with this

project. When information was missing, follow-up telephone calls and e-mails were used to gather complete information.

Findings

Describing over 200 practices, award-winning principals emphasized leadership aspects that were categorized into the following six themes:

- Leadership with a mission
- Leadership for a positive campus culture
- Leadership to communicate and collaborate
- Leadership for curriculum and instruction
- Leadership for school improvement
- Leadership for diversity.

What is important to note is that all of the 200 strategies submitted reflected in some manner the correlates of effective schools as defined by Lezotte (1991) and Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, and Rodriguez (2002): clear school mission, high expectations for success, effective instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn – using time for instructional purposes, ongoing curriculum improvement, safe and orderly environment, positive environment, and support of home-school relations. Strategies specific to the emergent six themes are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs, however, it is not possible to describe the tremendous variety of the specific strategies that were submitted within the limits of this paper.

(For a full report of the study findings see: Harris, S. (2005). *Best Practices of Award-Winning Elementary School Principals*. Thousand Oaks, Corwin Press and Harris, S. (2006). *Best Practices of Award-Winning Secondary School Elementary Principals*. Thousand Oaks, Corwin Press.)

Mission: Set Direction, Develop People, and Re-design the Organization

Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) identify three categories of transformational leadership practices in schools that include setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. The 23 entries included in this category emphasized all three by being purposeful, having a vision, working toward shared goals, building leadership capacity, and empowering faculty. For example, one principal noted how important it is to “know where s/he is going, be well planned and organized, and build meaningful and caring relationships.”

Her strategy was to establish a governing body of teachers elected by their peers to serve and then to develop the capacity of that group to emphasize leadership qualities. Several noted that the direction must “put kids first” and described ways to involve the staff in analyzing data to develop this accurate direction. Another principal identified one strategy for re-designing the organization to include selecting future staff members (including teachers, secretaries, custodians, food service personnel) with great care since they “may end up being your legacy at the school.”

Campus Culture: Shape and Define a Positive Campus Culture

Embedded within the artifacts, beliefs, rituals, activities, and expectations at the school are evidences of the school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Before principals can improve the tasks of teaching and learning in schools, they must first understand the school’s culture (Matthews & Crow, 2003) and the change process (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Newman and colleagues (1996) attributed positive school cultures to those that emphasize student learning, high expectations, and support for innovation. Likewise, award-winning principals

reiterated the importance of these components in building a positive campus culture with 33 entries.

Principals noted such simple strategies for shaping and defining a positive campus culture as building a trusting culture by “doing what you say you will do” and having a sense of humor. One principal wrote that spending “five minutes in the lobby area of a school can tell you about what that organization values.” Others described continuing student recognitions, promoting citizenship, and social skills in advisory classes, reciting a peace pledge every day, and creating student volunteer and mentor programs.

Communication and Collaboration: With Teachers, Students, Parents, and the Community

Collaborative school cultures value team process skills which require effective communication, trust building, and appropriate decision-making strategies (Maeroff, 1993). In fact, while there are many ways for collaboration within a school and the larger community, it begins with communication which Verdugo and Schneider (1999) identified as one of the top five traits that effective schools have in common. The 41 submissions in this category reflected these strategies. One principal described how surveying parents, students, and faculty for their input and then implementing some of these suggestions enabled him to be seen as a more collaborative leader. He also noted how this improved communication among the school’s constituents.

Another described a morning assembly as a “community-building way to start the school day.” A variety of school publications were reported by principals including weekly/monthly newsletters, school brochures, up-dated websites, and press releases to the local newspaper. One principal reported that he

wrote three notes every day to faculty, students, and/or parents. Several principals noted the importance of listening as a communication tool.

Emphasizing staff strengths, rather than focusing on their weaknesses, was a valuable strategy for one principal in building a more collaborative environment. This resulted in a staff leadership team which provided teacher training and mentors for new faculty. One principal noted how important it was for collaboration to build a supportive relationship with the superintendent.

One principal created an advisory committee that included individuals from the larger community when he was new to the school to “assist me in navigating the politics.” Three years later this group was still meeting regularly.

Curriculum and Instruction: Encourage and Oversee Authentic Learning for All Students

Hoy and Hoy (2003) cited at least six ways that principals influence instruction. These include encouraging academic excellence, supporting faculty improvement, including teachers in instructional improvement, providing resources and materials, sharing best practices with faculty, and recognizing and celebrating academic excellence. Thirty-six submissions echoed these strategies.

Several contributors noted that looping, a strategy to provide continuity in instruction, had been implemented. This process was credited with allowing teachers to concentrate on student achievement, increasing a feeling of shared responsibility for students, as well as creating a “smooth transition from middle school.” Other principals reported programs where teachers made themselves available for extra help and enrichment before and after school on a daily basis. Several principals described celebrations, such as Homework

Heroes, a parent-sponsored activity which brings back former high school Homework Heroes. Another wrote about award days using state testing results, while another described Readers Are Leaders, a reading incentive program.

School Improvement: Implement Student, Learning-centered School Improvement

Building leadership capacity fosters school improvement through establishing a culture of inquiry (Lambert, 2003; Southworth, 2005) that emphasizes the following practices: encourage individualized instruction, look at the data, consider new configurations for school scheduling, focus on curriculum articulation and alignment, improve student-centered strategies, and involve parents (Bushman, Goodman, Brown-Welty, & Dorn, 2001). At least 38 suggestions with the theme of improving the school were identified by participating principals.

Ideas for improving the school ran the gamut from understanding data analysis to providing training for bus drivers. One principal described a program she created called SUCCESS which provided individualized instruction to improve deficit areas for students unsuccessful in the regular classroom. This same principal reviewed teacher lesson plans for alignment with the state standards. Another principal started the first day of school by reminding all faculty members that “we are all responsible for the successes and failures of our students all the way through their educational careers.” One framework for school improvement was emphasized through a TEAMS cycle which included five components to improve student learning: target opportunities, examine past practice and current research, apply new knowledge, modify as necessary, and share evidence of improved learning.

Several principals reported on their mentoring programs for teachers. Another principal described a detailed plan for book studies to provide faculty benefit, while another pointed out the benefits of participating in a formal award process as a school improvement strategy. One principal supported faculty in developing a program that allowed a two-week break between grading periods every nine weeks. During one of these breaks an intersession remedial program to help students “catch up” without missing any regular class work was implemented.

Diversity: Personalize the Learning Environment for All Students

While nearly 40% of U.S. students are non-White, only 14% of elementary teachers, 10% of secondary teachers, 16% of principals, and 4% of superintendents are non-White (Hodgkinson, in Owings & Kaplan, 2003). Yet the achievement gap along racial lines continues to exist. Culturally proficient teaching that includes recognition of how culture influences education must be supported by principals (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2002).

The 34 entries emphasized the school as a welcoming center for diversity, providing programs such as Reading Recovery and Early Literacy for at-risk elementary students, reminding everyone that “all students belong,” and providing services for struggling students in the form of tutoring, counseling, instructing in social skills, utilizing preferential seating, providing resources, and many more ideas. One principal described restructuring programs by developing a set of beliefs that better served the growing at-risk population. This principal wrote that “we stopped making excuses for children’s inabilities and focused on building children’s strengths.” Another noted how his faculty added to their vision statement of believing that all children can learn that “it is

our responsibility to ensure that they do at high levels.” Another principal described implementing Building-Based Intervention Team (BBIT) which used one single committee to deal with all aspects of students having problems.

One principal reported that his district developed an individual graduation plan for each student in the high school. This required an advisor-advisee program and parents were required to meet with staff at least once a year. In the three years this has been in place, the school’s drop-out rate has dropped from 6% to 2%. Several other principals described strategies to motivate students to attend college and provided ACT tutoring, double promoted at-risk students who had previously failed, organized a retreat for parents to learn more about how to obtain college information, and provided students with sessions on test-taking strategies.

Discussion and Implications for University Leadership Preparation Programs

The first part of this paper reported a study that surveyed 69 award-winning principals and categorized over 200 “best practice” strategies into six leadership themes all of which were consistent with the literature on effective schools. This suggests that award-winning principals are implementing effective leadership practices in K-12 public schools to increase student learning and supports their value as a training source. The second part briefly reviews transfer of learning theory and considers how identifying best practices in use by award-winning principals can strengthen beleaguered administrator preparation programs.

Transfer of Learning: Theory Explanation

As educational leadership programs are being restructured to better balance the role of scholar

and practitioner, strategies for transfer of learning must be integrated into university programs. Transfer of learning occurs when learning in one context enhances (positive) or undermines (negative) a related performance in another context (Perkins & Salomon, 1992).

The importance of the transfer process is critical because positive transfer often does not occur without a purposeful focus on connecting the new learning with changed performance (Barnett, 2005; Guskey, 2000; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Perkins and Salmon (1992) define two broad instructional strategies to foster transfer: hugging and bridging. Hugging encourages reflexive transfer which occurs when an instructor simulates an activity rather than just talking about it. Bridging escalates transfer when instruction encourages thinking abstractly, identifying possible connections, being mindful, and analyzing metacognition. Caffarella’s (2002) learning transfer framework incorporates these strategies into three teaching components: timing, activity selection, and the individuals who oversee the learning.

According to Barnett (2005) timing includes such strategies as connecting course content with practices in school settings by collaborating with field-based mentors. (See Barnett’s full article for a more thorough discussion of transfer of learning). Activity selection focuses on reflection as an important strategy for helping learners understand new ideas and applying them in the workplace through four ways:

- recounting their own past experiences
- reviewing other peoples’ experiences
- practicing skills and receiving feedback
- integrating theory and practice by comparing new understandings with a student’s workplace practice.

Finally, Caffarella's (2002) third component of transfer of learning includes collaboration among the several individuals who oversee student learning. These individuals include the professor of record for the course being taught, supervisory faculty, university faculty mentors, school campus mentors, and other campus and district officials (Barnett, 2005).

Framing Best Practices within Transfer of Learning Theory: Implications for Universities

Earlier I asked the question: Are there implications for universities when 69 award-winning principals have identified 200 leadership strategies they believe have made their schools more effective? I believe there are clear implications for university programs when study findings are considered within the parameters of transfer theory. The survey of "best practices" by award-winning principals identified six leadership themes with over 200 specific strategies.

These leadership strategies focused on the school mission, shaping a positive campus culture, communicating and collaborating, leading curriculum and instruction, leading school improvement, and providing leadership for diversity. Framing this study's "best practice" themes with their identifying strategies in Caffarella's (2002) transfer of learning theory, the following suggestions are made for university preparation programs to consider when restructuring for improvement.

Timing

Because university faculty have considerably more influence over the content of their program design than they have over the actual educational context where school innovations will be implemented (Caffarella, 2002), it is important for universities to integrate these themes *connected with their strategy*

descriptors purposefully within the pre-determined course of study.

Involving the campus mentor or district contact with a timetable, of sorts, when topics will be discussed should also improve transfer. Thus, as programmatic changes are made, faculty should analyze course content for the authentic presence of these topics. For example, just as mission-driven leadership is discussed in the university classroom, campus mentors will extend the conversation to the campus.

Activity selection

Students in preparation programs should be encouraged to thoughtfully consider and to share their own past experiences in light of the "best practices" reported in this paper. For example, if focused on shaping a positive school culture, they should consider (through reflective writing or in small and large group discussion) their own experiences in consideration of emphasizing student learning, high expectations and supporting innovation. Instructors should lead students to observe if these strategies are happening on their campuses and to explore what students have done in the past that serve as examples of shaping school culture.

Universities should provide opportunities for students to review award-winning principals' "best practice" experiences. Using the positive school culture again as an example, they should analyze strategies reported specifically to understand how principals emphasized student learning, how they implemented high expectations, and what they did to support innovation. This can be done in journal reflective writing and in small and large group discussions. A sample activity could require students to contact an award-winning principal for an in-depth interview about strategies implemented to shape a positive school culture.

Universities should provide opportunities for students to practice award-winning principal “best practices,” and they should give timely, appropriate feedback. A sample activity would be for students to role play a trust-building conversation. Another activity would be to work in small groups to construct a plan for implementing an innovative idea, such as creating a mentor program at their school. Instructors should provide opportunities for learners to address “what if” situations since implementing a variety of settings for practicing “best practices” is especially important, and promotes wider transfer of learning (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999).

When integrating theory and practice, it is critical to provide students with opportunities to connect the theory with the practice and be able to recognize the theory in action on a campus. For example, faculty members should provide opportunities for students to discover what theory on shaping campus culture has to say about student recognitions. Considering the theory in the literature and the practices described by the study participants, the instructor then encourages the student to actually create an effective student recognition program on their campus as a field-based activity. Students should be encouraged to revise the strategy described by the study participant so that it has a best fit for their campus.

Individuals who oversee student learning

University personnel must be actively engaged in communicating and collaborating with other faculty members, students, campus mentors, and school/district personnel to integrate strategies identified in the “best practices” study throughout the coursework. In other words, there should be a focused purpose to support the transfer of learning, which in this

case is learning about leadership best practices of award-winning principals.

This also suggests that training programs should be offered, if not required, for campus personnel who work with the university to prepare effective principals. This collaboration of effort is an important component in increasing transfer of learning from the isolated theories presented in the classroom to actual implementation on a school campus.

Conclusion

Today, many universities are engaged in restructuring principal preparation programs with the goal of placing more effective leaders in our K-12 schools. This is being done in several ways including an increased use of problem-based learning, cohort groups, collaborative partnerships between the university and the school district, internships or field experiences, better use of technology in program delivery and content (Jackson & Kelley, 2002), mentoring (Mullen, in press), and reflection in action (Barnett, 2005; Harris, 2005). This paper has suggested that studying the work of effective principals, in this case, award-winning principals, has important implications to university preparation programs, especially when appropriate transfer of learning components are included in the teaching delivery model.

A further recommendation to universities to strengthen the connection or bridge from theory to practice would be to continuously evaluate each component of the preparation program for praxis. In other words, there must be a constant going back and forth from university classroom to K-12 campus to critically examine *reflecting* on “best practices” and *acting* on “best practices.” Brown (2005) notes that to foster learning that changes practice there must be a new way of seeing. It

is this new way of seeing that leads to action and to more effective schools.

I am not suggesting that the only way to improve university administrator preparation programs is through examining “best practices” for leadership of award-winning principals, although it is one way. Rather, I believe that using this study as a model framed in transfer of learning theory supports a much larger possibility suggesting that there are important implications for preparation programs when “best practices” such as these are examined

appropriately. Three things must be in place for this to happen: 1) “best practices” must be examined within the K-12 campus context, 2) appropriate transfer of learning strategies must be applied in university classroom course content and delivery that extends into the work site, and 3) each of these components must be evaluated continuously for praxis. When this happens, the connection between the classroom and the campus will become a “best practice” bridge that results in strengthened preparation programs and ultimately, successful schools led by well-prepared school administrators.

Author Biography

Sandra Harris is associate professor at Lamar University where she is director of the Center for Doctoral Studies in Educational Leadership. Dr. Harris has published many articles in professional journals on research topics that emphasize leadership in education and is author of several books, including *Changing Mindsets of Educational Leaders to Improve Schools* (Rowan and Littlefield Education), *BRAVO Principal* and *BRAVO Teacher* (Eye on Education), and *Best Practices of Award-Winning Elementary Principals* and *Best Practices of Award-Winning Secondary Principals* (Corwin).

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It Takes A School: Closing Achievement Gaps Through Culturally Responsive Schools

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This book is a four-chapter, culturally responsive reader. Included is an appendix of supporting data based on 10 years of research in the midwest. A companion CD-ROM is also included that contains sample lesson plans for grades 1-11 to help teachers facilitate students' culturally responsive learning.

Currently, students exist in a world that looks different from the world of yesteryear. Mentors and facilitators of the school village face the challenge of preparing youth to make decisions in all aspects of their school lives as well as their lives beyond school. No Child Left Behind legislation had not yet been passed when the authors were asked to work with a West Virginia school district to help improve the academic achievement of African American students who made up only 12% of the district's 43,000 student population.

Although African Americans did not represent a very large portion of the Kanawha, WV, school district, the senior leadership of the district recognized that the conditions

associated with this at-risk population, if unattended, could considerably worsen.

In this light, the authors engaged the works of multicultural researchers such as Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1994) *The Dreamkeepers*, Geneva Gay's *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (2002), and Lisa Delpit's (1998) *What Should Teachers Do?* These multicultural authors' theories and practices are supported by Keyes et al. (2006) and their examination of variables that influence academic achievement such as drop-out rates, standardized test scores, graduation rates, and advanced placement courses. These authors also reveal many things, including the perception that African American males score lower than all other groups at every grade level and students' academic achievement tends to decline after middle school.

The beauty of this reader is that it discloses the passion and emotion from school constituents as they problem solve issues of race, poverty, and academic achievement. It

also exposes the fact that learning often occurs in the midst of conflict and unsettling situations, be them orchestrated or naturalistic.

The authors creatively designed a title that borrows from the African credo “it takes a village” to demonstrate that it is the active involvement of the schools’ and villages’ constituency that hones students’ cultural and intellectual knowledge. The authors clarify this perspective within the chapters that focus upon traditional school practices, culturally responsive curricula, constituency training and involvement, and resources and activities.

The authors are very candid in acknowledging the browning of America. At the same time, they promote the idea that

educators must strive to create culturally responsive learning environments where all students, regardless of ethnicity or socio-economic status, have the chance to learn while also maintaining high academic expectations. This reader is an attempt to offer helpful guidelines for the schools, classrooms, and home. It also reflects the renewed and caring commitment of West Virginia to address tough issues head on, even when many school constituents resist and must be empowered to embrace the issues of culturally responsive teaching and learning.

The book is appropriate to many disciplines in colleges of education and human development but is particularly key to the area of multicultural education.

Reference

Marian Keyes, Rebecca Burns and Patricia Kusimo. (2006). *It Takes A School: Closing Achievement Gaps Through Culturally Responsive Schools*, Charleston, WV: EDVANTIA, 208 pp. with index, \$29.00, softcover. To order contact EDVANTIA, 304-347-0400 or 800-624-9120; e-mail: patricia.hammer@edvantia.org.

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