



*Research and Best Practices That Advance the Profession of Educational Administration*

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## A Message From the Editor

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This issue contains one research article, four best practice articles, and one book review. The research article focuses on the interview process. Interviews, even in view of known limitations, are the most widely used decision-making step in school principal selection procedures. Although some measures have been developed to enhance the scope of interviews, few have linked information gleaned from those sessions with observations of how candidates interact with the staff, students, and culture of the school buildings in which the vacancies exist. Including purposefully designed tours in those sites as integral components of interview processes may provide interviewers/decision-makers with additional insights about how candidates may actually behave as school leaders

The first best practice article provides a description of the collaborative efforts of a number of Missouri education organizations to offer educational leadership that will lead to improved student learning in the schools of Missouri. This collaboration has led to programs such as a backward mapping project, a statewide mentoring program for new principals and superintendents, and problem-based vignettes and case studies for professors of educational administration to use in their classes. A strong partnership and continuous dialogue between the Missouri Professors of Educational Administration and the state education agency has led to these new programs and other programs that are on the drawing board.

The second best practice article discusses a mentoring system established in North Carolina. Disheartened about the number of African American males referred for discipline infractions at Brogden Middle School in Wayne County, NC, Principal Earl Moore, Jr. targeted 10 seventh grade African American males with the highest number of discipline referrals. He then set up a program that provided the 10 students with successful African American males as mentors and models. He also educated the faculty about behaviors in the African American culture, utilizing Ruby Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. The results were successful for the targeted students and the entire school.

The third best practice article discusses the processes involved in scale development: adopting a framework; developing items; providing evidence of content validity; conducting a pilot study; and analyzing data (DeVellis, 2003). Projects from an applied statistics course are discussed, which serve as a means to model and teach best practices in scale development.

The fourth best practice article focuses on several key concepts related to the school administrator successfully utilizing appropriate interviewing techniques and practices to enhance leadership skills and overall employment and personnel decisions. The article identifies how to effectively plan the interview, conduct the interview, and evaluate the interview. Additionally, the article notes several implications for practice as related to teacher quality and administrative leadership behaviors.

Lastly, a book review of *Handbook of Test Development*, edited by Steven M. Downing and T.M. Haladyna, and reviewed by Karen Cicmanec, highlights many assessment issues that influence administrators, policy makers, practitioners, and test developers. It would be difficult to find a contemporary assessment topic that is not thoroughly addressed by the editors of the *Handbook's* 32 chapters.

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## Considering the Inclusion of Building Tours as Integral Elements of School Principal Selection Interviews

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What was recognized as important decades ago, “having the right principal for the right school” (AASA, 1967), remains relevant today. When vacancies occur, school district leaders have been reminded of their responsibilities to ensure that the principals selected match the schools’ requirements rather than leaving outcomes to chance (Anderson, 1991).

School district leaders have been encouraged to develop comprehensive selection processes (Richardson & Prickett, 1990) that encompass both the means by which they are conducted (McIntyre, 1966) and the particular needs of the schools in which vacancies exist (Albright & Nottingham, 1989; Hertling, 1999; Heikkila, 2005). Those procedures should identify the optimum attributes principals need for success (Rebore, 1995) and result in the appointment of principals who will “mesh with the personalities” of the schools (Lashway, 1999).

Principal selection procedures have been well documented (Gagnon, 2003; Reynard, 1962; AASA, 1981) and their major components widely described (Anderson, 1988; Fliegner, 1987; Gagnon, 2003; Hassenpflug, 1994; Raisch, 1993; Reynard, 1962). Selection processes leading up to formal appointments

characteristically include seven steps generally used in the following order: (1) developing or reviewing/modifying job descriptions/duties; (2) advertising and/or recruiting; (3) screening applications; (4) checking references and backgrounds; (5) identifying applicants for interviews; (6) conducting initial and final in-person interviews; and, (7) selecting finalists (Gilvar, 1992; Morford, 2002; Whaley, 2002).

Of these steps, interviews have been the most prominent factor used to make hiring decisions (Anderson, 1988; Richardson & Prickett, 1990; Lashway, 1999). They remained so in spite of recognized weaknesses (Baker & Spier, 1990) and histories of low reliability and validity (Arvey & Campion, 1982), given predominantly by “untrained interviewers” (Wendell & Breed, 1988, p. 36), and of being poor predictors of principals’ performance (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

District leaders have mitigated some deficiencies by expanding interviews to gather additional candidate information. For example, data from assessment centers have been used for objectively determining candidates’ leadership skills (Anderson, 1988; Steller, 1984) and for making “decisions that help ensure best-fit placement and selection”

(Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004, p. 146). Test instruments have been administered to help determine if alignments exist between the philosophies of candidates and districts (Richardson & Prickett, 1990).

Other measures to address limitations include designing and executing rigorous interviews (Baltzell and Dentler, 1983; Schmitt & Schechtman, 1990), structuring and standardizing the format, content, and application of questions (Tekeste, 1996), making selection criteria “visible” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1997), and providing specific interviewer training, especially for teachers (Winter, McCabe, & Newton, 1998). The scope of interviews has been broadened by incorporating situational exercises (Anderson, 1988), in-basket activities (Fliegner, 1987), and simulations to assess the “observed behaviour (sic) [of candidates’ performances] in realistic work tasks” (Morgan, Hall, & Mackay, 1984, p. 49). While such techniques have been identified and described in the literature, indications therein of whether they are incidental or widespread are lacking as is empirical data pertaining to how district leaders plan, implement and evaluate selection processes (Heikkila, 2005; Jaeger, 2001; Schmitt & Schechtman, 1990).

In view of data deficiency, and because interviews remain as the most significant selection implements (Jaeger, 2001), studies should be pursued of the viability of using information that may result from additions to them to help make selection decisions. Two concepts presented separately in the literature may, when combined, form the basis for one such investigation. Specifically, this involves considering a connection between what candidates perceive about their potential jobs and what interviewers/decision-makers know about those applicants. The initial part of this linkage is derived from Baltzell’s and Dentler’s (1983) reasoning that principals obtain “their

sense of mission in significant degree from their selection process” (p. 16). Baltzell and Dentler (1983) concluded that their “study places the role of the principal in the context of terms and conditions of selection for the role” and that “this picture depends for its meaning on who was chosen for the job [and] what the principals think they were selected to do” (p. 48).

The second part of the connection, the knowledge about candidates that interviewers/decision-makers carry with them into interviews, comes from Jaeger’s (2001) reference to Dipboye’s Multiple Phases of the Selection Interview Model (1992):

Prior to the actual interview, the interviewer’s own experiential background and perceptions interact with the initial information available to the interviewer about the applicant (obtained through examination of a resume and reference letter, for example), resulting in an initial impression of the applicant’s qualifications for the position. These initial impressions contribute to the interviewer’s conduct of a subsequent interview, as well as to the interviewer’s processing of new information gathered from the applicant’s performance during the interview (pp. 217-219).

Linking these two concepts may provide a foundation for developing a source of additional information for use when making selection decisions. This could occur by merging what is already known about candidates from other steps in selection processes with observations and analyses of candidates’ behaviors during interviews. Further consideration could be given to examining candidates’ behaviors in the schools in which the successful applicants will actually serve as principals. Investigating this latter

component could be pursued by incorporating purposefully designed tours in those buildings as integral parts of final interviews.

Because principals work in school buildings, observing candidates in those settings while selection determinations are being formed may provide further decision-making data. Observing candidates' behaviors during tours, including their interactions with and reactions to the surroundings, students, and staff, could support and/or to bring into question information obtained during other parts of selection processes.

For example, are candidates' actions during tours consistent with what they provided in application materials and/or stated as responses to interview questions? When assessed in concert with responses and comments made at other times, scrutinizing candidates' tour behaviors may provide better previews of what to expect from them in the schools if appointed than would data obtained only from interviews.

References have been made to tours used in combination with superintendent selection interviews as ways to help orient candidates to districts, but not as sources of information used to assist with selection decisions (Boring, 2003). Similar mention exists regarding teacher selections (Peterson, 2002). Based on the present review of the literature, tours have not been identified as connected elements of principal selection interviews.

Principals set the tones for their buildings and their actions do not go unnoticed by staff and students. Deal and Peterson (1999) commented on the "powerful symbolic messages [and the] meaning and values" (p. 65) principals send "as they tour the school, talk to students, share ideas with teachers, and visit classrooms" (p. 66). It follows that

interviewers/decision-makers, staff and students should also notice messages sent by potential principals during school tours. What meanings and connections do candidates create and convey as they tour the schools in which they may work? Should reactions, opinions and input be obtained from staff and students who meet candidates, and, if so, how? What weight should be accorded to that information? How could it be put into perspective and used with other data when selection decisions are made? The implications of answers to such questions should be considered.

Integrating tours as essential interview components would require additional planning by those responsible for conducting selection processes. This would include, for example:

- determining and understanding the specific leadership needs of the schools in which vacancies exist;
- recognizing what is already known and perceived about candidates' leadership potentials;
- using specific questions during tours that are coordinated with those asked during interviews;
- determining who will conduct tours and ask questions; and,
- identifying what data to collect and how to do so.

Information obtained during tours should be considered in association with all other candidate data. It should also be assessed in relation to the leadership qualities identified as essential for the selected principals if they are to successfully address the requirements of the positions for which they are being interviewed.

Another planning element should focus on conducting post-tour debriefings between interviewers/decision-makers and candidates. These would create opportunities for obtaining further candidate information in at least two ways: First, by eliciting their opinions about the job requirements and performance expectations that lie ahead; and, second, by listening to candidates' perceptions about the schools in which they may work. During debriefings, interviewers/decision makers would judge the depth and quality of candidates' perceptions and understandings about the positions and the schools based upon their interview and tour experiences.

As candidates describe their interpretations, interviewers/decision-makers would determine the extent to which that information aligns with the leadership qualities and skills required of the new principals and the work they will be expected to successfully accomplish. Insights identified and described by candidates of what they believe their new jobs will entail could promote better alignments between the attributes of those hired and the specific leadership requirements of the positions in which they will serve.

The literature reviewed for the present article focused on interview elements of principal selection processes. Of interest was whether school building tours were evidenced as integral parts of interviews. No connections were found. The present narrative suggests that including purposefully designed and conducted tours of the schools in which successful candidates would actually work may provide further data for use in making selection decisions.

The lack of research on this topic presents opportunities for study, including, initially, whether district leaders employ tours in principal selection interviews and, if so, whether as incidental or as connected

components. It is possible this may happen, but that data have not been collected and analyzed. If tours are used, identifying and documenting the extent to which they occur could include demographic information about interviewers and candidates, at what building levels tours are used and in what geographic locations. More in-depth investigations could determine how tours are designed and conducted, what types of data are obtained, and how they are used to make selection decisions.

Research and study could also focus on the extent to which tours may provide valid and reliable data about candidate potential for job success. Would collecting and analyzing candidates' responses, comments and behaviors during tours predict alignments between their leadership and district leaders' expectations for principals' performance? Such findings would be of interest to district leaders, instructional personnel, boards of education and, perhaps, parents and other citizens.

From another perspective, research could be undertaken to determine if tours may be used to ascertain whether candidates' perceptions of the schools' cultures match district identified leadership needs. Effective principal leadership has been positively correlated with school success and student performance (Steller, 1984; Fiander, 1986; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Van de Water, 1988) as well as with school and instructional changes (Carter, Glass, & Hord, 1993; Riordan, 2003).

The significance of principals being able to recognize and assess school culture has been reported. According to Deal and Peterson (1999), the connection between effective leadership and school culture is clear: "To be effective, school leaders must read and understand their school and community culture" (p. 86). Investigations could examine if, and to what extent, tours provide practical

means for district leaders and selected principals to begin their professional working relationships with common understandings about the cultures of their schools and the styles of building level leadership that are expected and required.

Interviews are the tools of choice for selecting principals. Besides using information collected apart from the context of interviews

to assist with making selection decisions, data obtained from elements that are carefully planned and included within them should also be considered. Studying the existence and/or feasibility of including deliberately designed and conducted tours as integral interview components may provide school district leaders with additional relevant candidate data as they endeavor to select the right principals for their schools.

### Author Biography

Gene Spanneut retired from public education after 34 years of service as a teacher, elementary principal, and, for 25 years, as a superintendent of schools. He immediately began a second career as an assistant professor of educational administration at the State University of New York College at Brockport. He appreciates the privilege of being able to positively influence the next generation of educational leaders.

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## **A Statewide Collaborative Effort to Create School Leadership That Supports Learning**

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The literature strongly supports the concept that effective leadership can substantially boost student learning (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2004). There is a substantial amount of qualitative data, primarily in the form of case studies of exceptional schools, which provide evidence that school leaders influence learning “by galvanizing effort around ambitious goals and by establishing conditions that support teachers and that help students succeed” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 3). Leithwood and Riehl also conclude, from their examination of numerous quantitative studies, that “the effects of leadership on student learning are small but educationally significant . . . contributing nearly one-quarter of the total effect of all school factors” (p. 3).

The research indicates that the influence of leaders on student learning is mostly indirect and is evident in helping to promote vision and goals and ensuring that resources and processes are in place to enable teachers to teach well (Leithwood & Riehl). Waters, Marzano, and

McNulty (2004), in their meta-analysis of 70 studies published since 1978, reported that 21 leadership factors had an average positive correlation of .25 with student achievement.

The state and national environment is such that school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn. A report from the work of the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) made a number of recommendations related to the improvement of educational leadership preparation programs (Hull, 2003). The primary recommendation generated by NCAELP was that “preparation programs should continually develop their programs around the rigorous standards and learning processes that develop leaders who can support the learning of all children” (Hull, p. 3). Another recommendation that came out of the NCAELP work was the involvement of multiple stakeholders in program development and licensure policy.

With the evidence that improved leadership in schools produces increased student learning and with the accountability demands of No Child Left Behind and the Missouri School Improvement Program, it is imperative that school leaders in Missouri be prepared to support student learning at its highest level. Therefore, Missouri has made a substantial effort to pull many of the stakeholders together to work collaboratively in providing support for school leaders that will positively impact learning for all students (Manford, 2004).

This collaborative effort is largely a result of efforts by the State Action for Education Leadership Project, Missouri Consortium (SAELP). The consortium was funded through a grant from the Wallace Foundation and began its work in 2001 under the coordination of the Leadership Academy, a division within the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The primary responsibility of the academy is to coordinate professional development activities for preK-12 leaders through nine Regional Professional Development Centers around the state.

The vision of SAELP was “to collaboratively create the future for school leaders” and the mission was “to positively impact student performance by inspiring and developing highly effective school leaders” (Manford, 2004, p. 1). As a result of the work of this consortium, several key groups have been involved in the planning and implementation of projects aimed at improving school leaders. The stakeholder groups contributing to this effort have been the Missouri Professors of Educational Administration (MPEA), the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Missouri Leadership Academy, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), the state

administrator associations, the Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA), and local school districts. These groups are working together on a number of projects to strengthen the recruitment, preparation, induction, and support of school leaders in Missouri and the efforts of these groups have contributed to several policy decisions that are having an impact on the quality of school leaders in Missouri.

### **Professional Learning Community**

One could make the argument that this level of collaboration at the state level in Missouri for the purpose of improving the impact of school leadership on student learning is in keeping with the tenants of a professional learning community.

Fullen (2005) proposes a tri-level solution to continuous school improvement on a large scale. He argues “that if we do not examine and improve the overall system at three levels, we will never have more than temporary havens of excellence that come and go” (p. 210). Those three levels are school/community, district/regional, and state/province. Missouri’s collaborative efforts to improve school leadership through SAELP and its associated activities provide one leg of this tri-level solution. The following sections of this paper will provide many of the details of this statewide learning community for the preparation and support of school leaders.

### **Partnership Between MPEA and DESE**

One of the more unique partnerships that has evolved over the last three years is the relationship between the Missouri Professors of Educational Administration (MPEA) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. MPEA, with a current membership of 45 professors of educational leadership, applied for and was awarded a professional development grant from DESE for the purpose

of improving the preparation of school leaders in the state. A number of initiatives for improving school leader preparation have evolved from this grant. Of note are the following:

#### ***Problem-based vignettes and case studies***

Members of MPEA were invited to submit vignettes or case studies aligned with one or more of the ISLLC standards. The vignettes and case studies were peer reviewed and, if accepted, were posted on the MPEA website.

The writers of the successful vignettes and case studies were paid a small stipend from the grant. These problem-based modules were intended to support improved teaching in the school leader preparation programs and can be accessed by going to the *Instructional Materials* section of the MPEA website at <http://www.mpea.org/index.html>.

#### ***White papers***

In 2003, four different task forces from within the MPEA membership researched and developed white papers on the following topics with the hope of influencing program planning and state policy related to the recruiting, retention, support, and preparation of school leaders: (a) internships, (b) mentoring, (c) alternative preparation and certification, and (d) social conditions impacting administrative practice.

The white paper on mentoring has resulted in a statewide mentoring summit and a task force to develop a statewide school leader induction/mentoring program. This mentoring program will be explained in more detail in a later section of this paper.

#### ***Backward mapping project***

At the spring conference in 2004, the MPEA began a backward mapping project aimed at learning from highly effective school principals how Missouri institutions can improve their

school leader preparation programs. Eight school principals were selected from schools that had demonstrated significant improvement in student achievement over the last few years.

They were invited to the spring conference and participated in a panel discussion with the goals of learning how their preparation program helped them become effective principals and what preparation programs could do to better prepare principals. Their superintendents were also invited as special guests. The principals were awarded a framed certificate for being selected to participate in the project.

Additional research is being done by a team of MPEA members who will visit the principals' schools. Principals are observed on the job and interviews are conducted with various members of the school community, looking for the characteristics that make these principals effective instructional leaders. MPEA's goal in this backward mapping project is to identify areas that can be emphasized in improving school leader preparation programs.

#### ***Mentoring program***

On September 23, 2004, MPEA convened a mentoring summit involving various stakeholders from around the state for the purpose of collaborating to develop a plan for the induction/mentoring of new school leaders in the state. The stakeholder groups represented at the initial meeting of this group were MPEA, DESE, Leadership Academy, Missouri Elementary Principals Association, Missouri Secondary School Principals Association, Missouri Association of School Administrators (superintendents), and Missouri School Boards Association.

The Regional Professional Development Center directors were added later. The group met monthly throughout the 2004-2005 school year and agreed on a name

(Missouri Partnership for Mentoring School Leaders), a goal statement, and developed an action plan.

The goal statement agreed on is as follows:

*The undersigned have formed a statewide partnership to plan, implement, and evaluate a Missouri Mentoring Program for school leaders that enhances leadership skills and improves student performance.*

A statewide mentoring plan was completed in the spring of 2005 and presented to the Missouri State Board of Education. The plan was fully implemented in the fall of 2005 with 299 trained mentors and 111 principals, 40 assistant principals, 16 special education directors, 4 career education directors, and 69 superintendents being mentored.

On December 14, 2004, the state board of education adopted rule changes for the certification of school leaders. One new component of the certification requirements was the requirement that new principals and superintendents participate in a mentoring program, two years for principals and one year for superintendents. The mentoring program developed by the Missouri Partnership for Mentoring School Leaders is recommended by the new rule.

### **Ongoing Dialogue**

One of the unique features of Missouri efforts to improve school leaders is the ongoing dialogue between higher education faculty and DESE, largely through the Leadership Academy and MPEA. The director and assistant director of the Leadership Academy have an open invitation from the MPEA Executive Board to attend all board meetings and regular meetings. Other DESE personnel, such as representatives of the educator certification department and the department

responsible for accrediting the school leader preparation programs meet often with the MPEA board. This dialogue tends to keep lines of communication open concerning policy and quality issues related to preparation of school leaders.

### **Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

DESE and the state board of education have played a significant role in the collaborative efforts to improve the preparation and support of school leaders both through certification policies and professional development for school leaders. One of the more important contributions was the adoption of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) assessments for the certification of school leaders. This information may be found at the following website:

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/leadership/isllc/testdates.html>.

In addition, DESE has mandated that the ISLLC standards are a part of the accreditation process for school leader preparation programs.

### **Satellite Academy**

The Leadership Academy within DESE sponsors a regional year-long Satellite Academy in cooperation with regional school leadership preparation programs and Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC). Further evidence of the statewide collaboration is the team of facilitators for the Satellite Academy composed of a college professor, an experienced practitioner, and a representative of the RPDC. These facilitators provide ongoing professional development for school principals participating in the academy.

This regional program is coordinated with four state-wide three day experiences where the regional satellite academy groups come together for additional learning about instructional leadership.

### ***Performance-based principal evaluation***

In 2003, after a two year collaborative effort of 29 representatives from various stakeholder groups, the state board of education adopted a model for Performance-Based Principal Evaluation with an emphasis on leadership for student learning.

The three primary components of the model are the ISLLC standards, the School Improvement Program (SIP) and the principal's own Professional Learning Plan (PLP) (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003).

### **Missouri Leadership Academy**

The Leadership Academy, a department within DESE with the primary purpose of coordinating and providing professional development for K-12 leaders in the state, has been a key player, and maybe *the* key player, in the collaborative effort to improve school leadership in Missouri.

Probably the three most important contributions of the academy were the writing of the SAELP grant, the coordination of SAELP activities, and the funding of much of the work of MPEA over the last three years through a professional development grant. Academy personnel have provided much of the leadership, and certainly many of the funds, to get the key stakeholders to the table to work collaboratively toward the improvement of school leadership in Missouri.

### **Summary**

Extraordinary demands have been placed on school leaders today. Principals bear the brunt of these demands. Hessel and Holloway (2002) support this fact when they write, "Now, it's agreed that the principal is ... in charge of learning. Traditional management and discipline duties, however, have not disappeared" (p. vi). It is imperative that the education community recruit, prepare, and support effective school leaders. The efforts to do this must be coordinated among the many stakeholders.

This article seeks to document the efforts Missouri is making to collaboratively improve school leaders in the state. Through difficult work and targeted funding, the Leadership Academy (within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) has joined all of the major public education stakeholders together in the SAELP project and has provided both financial support and grants to stakeholders, especially the Missouri Professors of Educational Administration (MPEA).

By sharing the structure of this Missouri effort, we provide information as to how the different educational groups in a state can come together to improve the quality of our present and future school leaders. We look forward to sharing future data, as it is gathered, on how this collaborative effort to improve school leadership is impacting Missouri children.

### Author Biographies

Jerry Waddle is a 31-year veteran of the Missouri public school system where he served as a science teacher, principal and 19 years as superintendent. He is currently an associate professor of educational leadership at Southeast Missouri State University and serves as coordinator for the cooperative doctor of education degree program with the University of Missouri at Columbia, MO. His primary research interests are school improvement and professional development.

Carole Murphy is a 20-year veteran of the Texas public school system where she has served in a variety of teaching and administrative position. In addition, she has worked as an administrator in the American International School of Johannesburg, South Africa. For the past seven years, she has been the chair of the Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and holds the rank of associate professor with tenure at the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

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## Decreasing Discipline Referrals for African American Males in Middle School

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According to Geneva Gay's (1994) synthesis of scholarship in multicultural education, many people in the United States still believe that there is a single acceptable way to live, look, and behave as Americans and human beings. Anyone who deviates from these standards is subjected to isolation and is denied equal access to institutional opportunities. Similarly, educators commonly believe that there is one single acceptable way to behave. When a student's classroom behavior does not hold true to the standard, the student is judged accordingly.

To serve all students, teachers need to understand first their own cultural experiences and how those experiences influence the teaching and learning process in their classrooms. Also, teachers must increase their knowledge of the students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds and, more importantly, what

children bring to school: their communities' cultural models, the educational strategies, and the social systems that are used by their families and communities (Ogbu, 1988). As principal of Brogden Middle School in Wayne County, North Carolina, Dr. Earl Moore, Jr., became more and more disheartened as discipline referrals for African American males continued to climb, and he became convinced that teachers needed a better understanding of the culture that African American males bring with them to school. In addition, he recognized his duty to help the boys understand and adapt to the expectations of the larger culture.

Brogden Middle School (BMS) is located approximately 15 miles south of Goldsboro, North Carolina, a city of approximately 40,000 citizens and the home of a military base. In this small community, the

majority of students' parents work in the manufacturing business. Of the student population of approximately 550, the ethnic composition of the school is 21% Caucasian, 59% African American, 17% Hispanic, and 3% other. The teaching staff is composed of 56% African American, 33% Caucasian, and 11% other; gender representation is 31% male and 69% female.

To decrease the number of discipline referrals of African American males, 10 students who had the most frequent discipline referrals during their seventh-grade year were targeted. Administrators, teachers, parents, peers, social workers, and guidance counselors made referrals for the intervention. The targeted students had frequent infractions of (a) fighting, (b) insubordination, (c) disruption of school, (d) extortion by force or threat, (e) intimidation with threat of bodily harm, (f) damage to property, (g) stealing, (h) physical injury, and (i) excessive truancy.

Even though there had been a decrease in discipline referrals for the entire school body over the three years before this intervention, there remained a disproportionate number of discipline referrals of African American males as opposed to their White counterparts. The three years prior to the implementation of the mentoring program and cultural diversity awareness training, African American males in the school received 54%, 49%, and 49% respectively of the discipline referrals in the school; whereas, they made up 31% of the population.

Even more alarming, the 10 targeted eighth graders, who comprised 2% of the population, received 32% of all discipline referrals during their seventh grade year, 42% in the sixth grade and 25% in the fifth grade. These boys were often out of class due to in-school or out-of-school suspensions; not

surprisingly, they were below grade level on state and local academic assessments. Dr. Moore's hope was to reach these boys while there was still time to turn them around. All were the appropriate age for their grade except one who turned sixteen while he was in the eighth grade.

According to data compiled in a study prepared in 2001 by the Justice Policy Institute, *Cellblocks or Classrooms: The Funding of Higher Education and Corrections and Its Impact on African American Men*, there were 791,600 Black men 17 years or older in jail or prison and 603,032 enrolled in colleges or universities (Hocker, 2002). This study reported that the imprisonment ratio for Black males compared to their White male counterparts was 28:1. The 10 targeted boys could well end up in prison if something was not done immediately to divert them.

The underachievement of African American males is a problem that is not unique to Brogden Middle School. Based on disaggregated data from the state's ABC Accountability Model (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1997a) in 1996 95.6% of White males met the gateway and were promoted and 85.7% of the African American males met the gateway and were promoted. African American males were 3-to 4 times more likely to be promoted without meeting the gateway requirements than were White students. This pattern has continued throughout the years.

As the leader of the school, Dr. Moore believed that teachers needed to better understand their students. He contracted a university professor and middle school consultant to work with the staff for one year. At the first meeting, the workshop presenters pointed out that young African American males shoulder many problems that occur in their

home life. The students bring these problems with them to school and often demonstrate a generalized anger toward society. As a result of the anger, African American males get into trouble and, consequently, miss class time and instruction that are vital to their academic performance and their futures. These troubled students could not learn if they were not in class on a regular basis.

### **Need for Role Models**

The absence of male role models in today's single-mother households has hampered the young African American male's opportunity to enter into adolescence and adulthood in a healthy environment. BMS' demographics showed that 55% of the African American males in the school were products of single-parent (female) homes. For the target group, 90% lived in single parent, female homes. They experienced few positive male role models in their lives.

While it is true that there are many women who run households alone and raise fine young men, boys need male role models in their lives. African American boys have many temptations in society to distract them; they particularly need positive male role models.

### **Boys to Men Mentoring Program**

In order to combat this problem, Dr. Moore solicited the support of his fraternity brothers, members of the local chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity established for African-Americans. These successful gentlemen became a part of the Boys to Men Mentoring Program at the school. All were trained and met weekly with their students. In addition to being positive role models for the African American males in the school, they provided assistance with homework, served as motivational speakers, and became study buddies for their assigned students.

### **Parental Involvement**

Parental communication and commitment was a key to the students' success in the program. Before their agreement to let their sons participate, most parent visits were for the purpose of discussing behavior problems. After the program was implemented, parents/guardians openly communicated with the school about seeing a change in their sons at home and with their schoolwork. The mentor of the boy who turned sixteen during his eighth grade year was responsible for securing a job for him, which was much appreciated by his mother. As the boys began to improve in their behavior and academic performance, an atmosphere of trust grew between the parents and the school staff.

### **Cultural Diversity Awareness Training**

To expand the faculty's awareness of varying cultures, a professor at a local university, along with a trained consultant for Ruby Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (1998), worked with the staff throughout the year. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* teaches the hidden rules of economic class and spreads the message that despite the obstacles poverty can create in all types of interaction, there are specific strategies for overcoming them.

The sessions were introduced in building block stages. In the first session, the staff received general strategies that allowed them to recognize any biases or stereotypes that they held. They also received rules for treating students as individuals and respecting them for who they were. Additionally, language patterns and case examples that excluded or demeaned any groups were discussed. In the second session, the staff gained a better understanding of how to recognize the complexity of diversity and how to acknowledge all students' work in the classroom. Staff members committed

themselves to creating an inclusive curriculum that honored all students. Efforts were made to select texts and readings whose language was gender-neutral and free of stereotypes. Discussion strategies capitalized on students' needs and motivated them to get better acquainted with one another. The result was more congenial classrooms where students better understood each other.

### **Two-Pronged Approach**

The implication of the findings of this study is that decreasing discipline referrals of African American males must be attacked from more than one angle. Teachers had to learn about the students' culture, its rules, and behaviors, and they had to learn specific classroom strategies for working with the students. The other angle of attack was utilizing mentors who could serve as role models and work with the students themselves. These students learned appropriate classroom behaviors and focused their energy on participating in the lessons instead of disrupting them. Because of the

implementation of the Boys to Men Program and cultural diversity training, there was an overall 59.7% reduction in the discipline referrals for the 10 targeted African American males during their eighth grade year. All 10 boys passed the eighth-grade gateway assessment and were promoted to the ninth grade. At the present time, nine of the boys are rising 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and doing well in their studies. Due to unfortunate circumstances, the young man who turned sixteen in the eighth grade dropped out as a ninth grader, but he is holding down a full-time job.

In reviewing their accomplishments with these students, Dr. Moore and his staff have decided to expand their efforts for at-risk youth. They have begun a similar program for at-risk girls entitled "Sister to Sister." Their hope is to keep more students in school and to enable them to master the behaviors and academic knowledge that will carry them successfully into high school and opportunities beyond.

### **Author Biographies**

Earl W. Moore, Jr., received his undergraduate degree in business education from Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC, in 1977, a master's degree in School Administration from East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, in 2002, and a doctorate in educational leadership from Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, in 2005. He is a 30-year public school educator, who currently serves as the principal of Brogden Middle School, Wayne County Public Schools, Dudley, NC.

Vicky F. Ratchford received her undergraduate degree in English education from High Point University, her master's degree in curriculum from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and her doctor in educational leadership from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is retired from Lincoln County Schools where she served as a high school principal and as the director of secondary education. Currently, she is teaching in the masters and doctoral programs in school administration at Gardner-Webb University.

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## Scale Development for School and University Administrators

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As a result of the “No Child Left Behind Act,” there is increased emphasis on assessment in P-12 schools today (Center on Education Policy, 2002). School administrators are responsible for assessing student achievement, teacher and staff effectiveness, school climate, and graduates’ perceptions of school programs. At the university level, organizations, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), require administrators to assess programs to meet accreditation standards (Mitchell, n.d.). Because of these demands, school and university administrators need to know the processes involved in developing sound assessment instruments.

In my applied advanced statistics course each spring semester, educational administration doctoral students work together to develop and validate an assessment instrument. The projects serve as a vehicle to model and teach best practices in scale development as well as address a local need for program assessment. Using examples from the course, this article will discuss the processes involved in scale development: adopting a framework; developing items; providing evidence of content validity; conducting a pilot study; and analyzing data (DeVellis, 2003).

### Adopting a Framework

The first step in the scale development process is adopting a framework, which serves as the blueprint for item development. In the development of instruments to measure educators’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions, we used professional standards as frameworks. For the Teacher Dispositions Index (Schulte, Edick, Edwards, & Mackiel, 2004) and the College of Education Follow-Up Survey (Schulte, 2006), we used the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) (1992) principles as the framework for item development.

For the Administrator Dispositions Index (Schulte & Kowal, 2005), we used the Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003; National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2002) as the framework for item development. In the development of instruments to measure students’ and teachers’ perceptions of school climate for elementary and secondary levels (Keiser & Schulte, in press; Schulte et al., 2002), we used five ethical principles: respect for autonomy; nonmaleficance; beneficence; justice; and fidelity (Kitchener, 1984, 1985) as the framework for item development.

## Developing Items

We used the frameworks to develop items that operationally define the scale constructs. We were very fortunate to have students and other professionals in our community who were willing and had the expertise to serve as the item development panels for the instruments we developed in the class. To develop the items for the College of Education Follow-Up Survey (Schulte, 2006), I gave an overview of the INTASC (1992) principles and corresponding knowledge and skill indicators and modeled the item development process for Principle 10 (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Example Framework with INTASC Principle 10 Knowledge Indicators*

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**Principle #10: The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.**

**KNOWLEDGE INDICATORS**

The teacher understands schools as organizations within the larger community context and understands the operations of the relevant aspects of the system(s) within which s/he works.

The teacher understands how factors in the students' environment outside of school (e.g., family circumstances, community environments, health and economic conditions) may influence students' life and learning.

The teacher understands and implements laws related to students' rights and teacher responsibilities (e.g., for equal education, appropriate education for handicapped students, confidentiality, privacy, appropriate treatment of students, reporting in situations related to possible child abuse).

**Example Item – I understand laws related to students' rights and teachers' responsibilities.**

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Then, the members of the item development panel, the eight students in the statistics course and five other professional educators, broke into three small groups.

Each group brainstormed and developed items for three of the INTASC principles. Through the item development process, the item development panel generated 100 items that were reviewed for content validity. For each instrument created in the class, the item development panel members were given the item response format, which was a 5-point Likert-like scale with words describing each number (e.g., “1” rarely or never true to “5” usually or always true).

### **Providing Evidence of Content Validity**

To provide evidence of content validity, at least 10 professional educators were recruited to review each of the items created by the item development panels for each of the instruments we developed. The members of the content validity panels rated each item on a 3-point scale (1 = not appropriate, 2 = marginally appropriate, and 3 = very appropriate). They were asked to provide suggestions for improving items they gave ratings of 1 or 2.

For the College of Education Follow-Up Survey the content validity panel also circled the items that best captured the essence of an INTASC (1992) principle (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Example Content Validity Form for the College of Education Follow-Up Survey*

**Principle #1: The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.**

**KNOWLEDGE INDICATORS**

- The teacher understands major concepts, assumptions, debates, processes of inquiry, and ways of knowing that are central to the discipline(s) s/he teaches.
- The teacher understands how students' conceptual frameworks and their misconceptions for an area of knowledge can influence their learning.
- The teacher can relate his/her disciplinary knowledge to other subject areas.

**Please use the following scale to rate the appropriateness of each statement in assessing the knowledge items represented under principle #1. If possible, please provide ways to improve the items that you rate “1” or “2.”**

**1 = Not appropriate**  
**2 = Marginally Appropriate**  
**3 = Very Appropriate**

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I understand major concepts and processes of inquiry that are central to the discipline I teach. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. I realize how students' misconceptions of knowledge can influence their learning.                | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. I realize how students' frame of reference can influence their learning.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. I know how my subject connects with other content areas.   | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. I know how to create an interdisciplinary unit.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |

**Please circle the items that best capture the essence of the knowledge indicators under Principle #1.**

This additional step was necessary because of the need to reduce the number of items by about 50%. Then, the members of the item development panels reviewed and made changes to items based on the input from the content validity panels by considering each item's ratings and suggestions for revision.

To provide evidence of reliability and construct validity, the items retained from the content validity process were then pilot tested.

### Conducting a Pilot Study

Over 100 people, who were representative of the final proposed respondents, served as participants in the pilot tests for each instrument developed. We used a variety of methods to collect the data for the pilot tests, which included surveying:

- undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in classes at our university for the Teacher Dispositions Index (Schulte et al., 2004), Administrator Dispositions Index (Schulte & Kowal, 2005), and College of Education Follow-Up Survey (Schulte, 2006);
- university graduates by mail for the College of Education Follow-up Survey (Schulte, 2006);
- practicing administrators using an online survey for the Administrator Dispositions Index (Schulte & Kowal, 2005); and
- students and teachers at elementary and secondary schools in our metropolitan area for the School Ethical Climate Index (Schulte et al., 2002) and Elementary School Ethical Climate Index (Keiser & Schulte, in press).

The data collected from the pilot studies were then analyzed by the students as part of the final examination in the course.

### Analyzing Data

For each instrument developed, factor and reliability analyses were conducted to provide evidence of construct validity and reliability (Kachigan, 1991). For example, factor analyses conducted on the pilot data for the Teacher Dispositions Index (Schulte et al., 2004) and Administrator Dispositions Index (Schulte & Kowal, 2005) indicated that two-factor solutions best fit the data with both instruments measuring a dominant student-centered dimension.

The secondary factor for the Teacher Dispositions Index was a professionalism, curriculum-centered dimension. For the Administrator Dispositions Index the secondary factor was a community-centered dimension. Based on these analyses, items were retained that loaded on one and only one factor because the goal was to create relatively independent composite scores for further statistical analyses.

Reliability analyses for the factors of all the instruments developed indicated that participants were consistent in their responses across items that measured the same construct with reliability coefficients above .90 for all factors (Crocker & Algina, 1986). Other statistical analyses, such as t-tests, analyses of variance, and correlation analyses, were conducted to determine if participants' responses were related to their demographic characteristics.

### Conclusion

The educational administration doctoral students have used the scale development information from the course to create assessment instruments for their dissertations and P-12 schools (Goeman, 2006; Keiser & Schulte, in press; Luo, 2005; Pawloski, 2003). The processes used to develop and validate the instruments in the course projects have

provided psychometrically sound assessment instruments that are being used to assess climate, professional dispositions, and the

effectiveness of school and university programs.

### Author Biography

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## Leading by Interviewing

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“Is this a matter of the head or the heart?”

– Janet Theusen

The most frequently utilized job predictor continues to be the selection interview (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Author & Goldsmith, 2008; Webb & Norton, 2003). However, interview formats are as varied as the day is long and as a result, many interviews resemble free-wheeling discussions that fail to isolate specific and relatable topics, and thus, are often considered extremely poor forecasters of future job performance (Bretz & Judge, 1998).

While the interview remains the most relevant process by which information about an applicant can be obtained, the effective school administrator (for purposes of this article, an administrator is an educational leader who holds a directive position in a school system - principal or associate superintendent for personnel, for example - and thus presides over the interview process relative to the recruitment and selection of quality teachers) must recognize that the interview process is much more than exploring an applicant's qualifications, skills, and experiences.

The interview must also be utilized as a means of leading. In other words, the interview process – when appropriately incorporated – can enhance the leadership capabilities of not only an individual, but an entire organization, by seeking more than the usual confirmation of job-related expectations and overall position-oriented requirements.

Today, interviews must incorporate opportunities for revealed leadership – leadership for meeting the issues and problems regularly faced by school administrators, especially in the area of identifying those potential candidates for employment who will meet and exceed the job-related behaviors and performance outcomes associated with an organization (Norton, 2005). School administrators would most certainly agree with the age-old adage: “You hire a problem, you'll fire a problem.”

Before hiring a problem, it is well advised to take appropriate actions by

interviewing for a solution to the personnel needs, as opposed to simply filling a position. Effective interviewing requires effective leadership.

Listed in Table 1 are several leadership traits that ensure the appropriate selection of personnel, and the successful development of an educational organization.

Table 1

*Assessing Leadership Skills*

***The School Administrator as the Effective Interviewer***

- Communicates a vision of organizational goals and priorities.
- Provides assurance of organizational support and commitment.
- Establishes a climate and spirit of trust, which is conducive to teaching and learning.
- Attaches value to high standards of employee performance.
- Identifies expectations for continual improvement that is based on the concept of lifelong learning.
- Provides assurance that the leadership team within the organization will make necessary sacrifices for the good of the organization.
- Provides a clear understanding of the leader-follower relationship within the organization.
- Establishes the idea of individual contributions as well as team-oriented performances.
- Communicates job responsibilities.
- Disseminates useful and necessary information about the organization.
- Recognizes, praises, and reinforces previous performance efforts.
- Acts friendly, reveals consideration, and is supportive of the applicant's personal and career-accomplishments.

Sources: Adapted from Yukl, G. A. (2001). *Leadership in organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; Hogan, R. T. (1992). The view from below. In *The Future of Leadership Selection*, chair, R. T. Hogan. Symposium conducted at the 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Psychology in the DOD Conference, United States Air Force Academy; Hughes, R. L., Ginnett, R. C. & Curphy, G. J. (2002). *Leadership: Enhancing the lessons of experience*. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill Higher Education; and Sashkin, M. & Huddle, G. (1987). Recruit top principals. *School Administrator* 45(2), 8-15.

Today's school administrator must do the preliminary work essential to laying the groundwork for an effective interview. Preliminary interview functions include (1) a careful examination of the application file, (2) the elimination of those individuals in the applicant pool who do not meet the position profile or fail to possess the appropriate qualifications, and (3) meticulous consideration of potential interview questions (Fear & Chiron, 2002).

By incorporating these functions, the effective school administrator can expect to begin the selection process in a manner that is not only competent (of the head), but also considerate (of the heart). Additionally, the school administrator must utilize appropriate interviewing techniques and practices that enhance one's leadership skills, as well as overall employment and personnel decisions.

School administrators, when attempting to select the best possible candidates to meet the varied needs of an organization, should follow four essential steps to successful interviewing.

### **Plan the interview**

Planning for any interview should always include a careful review of all pertinent materials within the applicant's personnel file. Attention must focus on clearly defined criteria which will identify the potential interviewee's areas of personal strengths, areas to be targeted for professional growth, as well as specified needs for organizational improvement.

Recording of this information can be done by listing in short phrases, bulleted comments, or condensed statements, any specified dimensions of strength such as having effective interpersonal skills which reveal, for example, that an applicant is caring, rational, flexible, cooperative, and sensitive. Targeted growth dimensions might note that the

applicant is working on being less impatient with colleagues, and becoming a better listener when interacting with others.

Organizational improvement components might focus on increased productivity, enhanced communication, improved decision making, curricular design and development, individualized performance expectations, autonomy with accountability, effective teaching and learning strategies, and sustainable leadership, for example.

At this time, the review should be more factual than evaluative. This pre-interview process helps determine what relevant and job-related interview questions need to be developed. In fact, many school districts utilize pre-interview planning forms to record applicable criteria and questions for consideration prior to the interview itself.

### **Conduct the interview**

The structured interview has been found to be a format that eliminates the problem of information incomparability, as this type of interview utilizes a set of prescribed questions which measure the knowledge and skill components associated with job performance (Dipboye, 1992).

Additionally, all applicants are assessed utilizing an interview matrix. This process can be completed in either a dyadic or committee design. In other words, in dyadic interviews, one interviewer assesses the applicant; in committee interviews, multiple contributors to the interview are involved. The committee design or structure is often associated with the site-based decision making process whereby the old adage "all of us are smarter than any one of us" is applied (Miller-Smith, 2002; Author & Goldsmith, 2006).

The physical setting of any interview strongly correlates with the quality of

information obtained from an applicant. The face-to-face interview process continues to be the most common and preferred form of conducting an interview. The interview should always be held in a private location (preferably a quiet office) where distractions will not interfere.

Additionally, the private office also supports the idea of confidentiality and open communication. School leaders often inquire as to where to sit in relation to the applicant. Side by side on a sofa is not recommended for obvious reasons, i.e., the slightest suggestion of any inappropriate action or less than impeccable business behavior. Sitting across the desk from the applicant may be the only manner, for logistical reasons, in which an interview can be conducted; however, at a table with comfortable chairs and at a right angle to the applicant is an interview practice often recommended (Martin, 1993).

Author and Goldsmith (2008) have identified several “do’s and don’ts” as leadership behaviors and interpersonal indicators that can affect the quality of the interview, and just as important, the quality of information gained during the interview process.

### *The Do’s:*

- Minimize the applicant’s stress level by being open, friendly, attentive, and nonjudgmental.
  - Show understanding and attentiveness during the interview by observing and by actively listening. This includes making regular eye contact, concentrating on the answers to the questions posed, listening until the entire response is delivered, and negating nonverbal behaviors or barriers such as the crossing of the arms, checking the clock, or yawning during the interview.
  - Take quality notes that can be referred to at a later time when assessing the applicant’s responses. Always take time immediately after the interview to evaluate the applicant. Too often, especially when several candidates are being interviewed during the course of a day, the interviewer(s) can easily confuse one applicant’s answers with those of another.
  - Utilize effective questions that are job-related and ensure consistency and fairness in the questioning process. Such questions should be carefully constructed based on a set of criteria representing organizational needs and expectations.
- Consider, for example, the four question types as identified by Carrell, Kuzmits & Elbert (1992) that should be asked during any interview:
- 1) *Situational* – “How will you assign daily work when two students are absent: one illness related, the other, on a trip to Disney World?”
  - 2) *Position-Knowledge* – “What areas of basic and fundamental skills would you expect a student to have when entering (grade-level assignment)? What skills would you expect the student to possess when exiting (grade-level assignment)?”
  - 3) *Simulation-Oriented* – “What steps or techniques would you employ to motivate student learning in your history class?” – or – “Here is a book. Teach me to read.”
  - 4) *Employee-required* – “Are you willing to participate in a six-month professional development program to become ‘highly qualified’ as defined by the

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act?”

Moreover, ask questions that are open-ended and reflective; that is, ask the “right” questions (see Appendix for personnel selection).

- Again, interview questions should always be developed on the basis of criteria representative of organizational needs and expectations.
- Strive to ensure that the experience for the applicant is both positive and non-threatening, yet at the same time, an opportunity for the applicant to realize that the interview process provides for both personal and professional development.

#### ***The Don'ts:***

- Avoid frowning and exhibiting an authoritative manner.
- Avoid glancing at a wristwatch or clock, looking out a window, or examining papers on the desk – even when a negative decision is obvious.
- Avoid “cutting off” an applicant by anticipating what is being said. Be an active and purposeful listener by not intruding upon the applicant’s responses.
- Avoid the “similarity attraction.” Tollerico (2000) describes this interviewing pitfall as giving an interviewee a well-meaning, yet unfair advantage as a result of some aspect of the applicant’s life being similar to that of the interviewer(s), e.g., belonging to the same church, engaging in the same hobby or similar sport activity, attending the same high school or college, or simply knowing a

mutual acquaintance. Such “attractions” can very well slant an interviewer’s evaluation of the qualifications possessed by an applicant, and thus deprive an organization of the very best candidate selection (Robbins, 2004)

#### **Evaluate the interview**

The complete interview process should be regularly evaluated to determine methods for improving candidate selection. A perfect technique, readily available, for accomplishing such an important task is the comparison of performance appraisals of candidates employed with the interview or screening evaluations/matrices to determine degrees of agreement.

For example, consider a scenario whereby a principal employs a teacher for possessing strong organizational skills. However, later walkthroughs, lesson plan examinations, and performance appraisals reveal the opposite to be true. The principal has an organizational obligation to conduct a careful analysis of the screening process to determine how the interview led to a selection problem. School administrators must learn from their past experiences to make the necessary adjustments critical to the elimination of reoccurring interview and selection errors.

#### **Lead by interviewing**

Recruiting and selecting the most appropriate individual for employment in a school system is a complex task which requires the implementation of a consistent method of interviewing. Such a system permits applicants the opportunity to demonstrate what they can offer an organization.

This process must go beyond simply confirming employment or job-related expectations. The interview process involves effective school leadership that focuses on the real needs of the organization.

To lead by interviewing, the school administrator must have interview questions prepared in advance; ensure consistency and fairness in questioning; focus on the real needs of the position; ask relevant questions to gain the necessary information essential to employee, organization, and student success; focus on the selection criteria; assess all information (application form, resume, references, etc.); distinguish between essential criteria (those that the candidate must satisfy to perform the job) and desirable criteria (those that will aid in completing the tasks as related to the position);.

Finally, the school administrator must be prepared to provide constructive and justifiable feedback to unsuccessful applicants as related to their performance in the interview (Payne, n.d.).

### **Implications for Practice**

Interviewing and employment decisions must be more than assessing with the heart. Interviewing must involve thinking with the head, the utilization of thought processes that incorporate leadership skills, if school administrators intend to make those effective and critical employment decisions that will have serious and long-lasting impact on the vitality of the organization, on the success of the individual employed, and on the achievement of the students served.

The following implications for practice serve to effect, through the interview process, the quality of teacher recruitment and selection (O'Laughlin, 1999; Author & Goldsmith, 2008):

### **Teacher Quality**

The quality of teacher selection, through the interview process, must ensure:

- knowledge of subject matter;
- knowledge of instructional skills;
- knowledge of special populations;
- classroom management skills;
- teacher leadership; and
- teacher retention.

### **Leadership Behaviors in the Interview Process**

The author conducted a research study on leadership behaviors in which data were collected from 129 survey questionnaire participants in six (6) urban school districts within a greater southwestern metropolitan center on the U.S./Mexico border during the 2005-2006 school year.

As indicted in this study, seven leadership behaviors serve as indicators of a greater level of quality teacher selection when the school administrator, during the interview process, initiates each of the following best practice strategies:

1. Communicates school policies and procedures to teacher applicants (96.1% of respondents strongly agreed).
2. Communicates clear expectations to teacher applicants (93.7% of respondents strongly agreed).
3. Recognizes teacher applicants for their individual as well as collective

- accomplishments (85.3% of respondents strongly agreed).
4. Details opportunities by which teacher applicants can collaboratively contribute actively to a school's success (83.0% of respondents strongly agreed).
  5. Establishes an atmosphere of openness, trust, and mutual respect during the interview process. (80.6% of respondents strongly agreed).
  6. Allows for an open, diverse selection process by which teacher applicants from underrepresented (ethnic, racial, gender) groups are encouraged to serve. (79.1% of respondents strongly agreed).
  7. Creates an interview environment whereby teacher applicants feel comfortable raising questions, issues, and/or concerns that are relevant and important to the success of the applicants as well as the organization (78.3% of respondents strongly agreed).

### Author Biography

Richard Sorenson is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at the University of Texas at El Paso. He served the public schools for 25 years as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and associate superintendent. In 2005, Dr. Sorenson was named the UTEP College of Education Professor of the Year. He is the lead author of *The Principal's Guide to School Budgeting* (Corwin Press, 2006), and currently teaches graduate courses in educational administration, specializing in school personnel, educational law, school-based budgeting, and leadership development.

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## Appendix

### Personnel Selection

#### *Asking the Right Questions*

##### General

1. What four words would students use to describe you, your teaching strategies?
2. What is your greatest professional challenge?
3. What rules do you have for your students?
4. What teaching experiences have angered you?
5. You've been with your current district for a very short time. Is this an indication that you will be frequently moving during your teaching career?

##### Dismissed / Terminated

1. Have you ever had your contract non-renewed?
2. Have you ever resigned and received a settlement agreement?
3. Why did you leave your last teaching opportunity?

##### Performance Evaluations

1. How were you evaluated in your last teaching experience?
2. What were the results of your last performance appraisal?
3. What was the worst mistake you made at work? How did that mistake affect the school organization?

##### Interpersonal Skills / Collegial Relationships

1. How do you expect your colleagues to assist you in this teaching assignment?
2. What do you expect from your principal?
3. What kind of colleagues / principals do you find it difficult to work with?
4. Have you ever had a communication problem with a colleague?
5. How do you deal with co-workers who disagree with you?
6. What types of individuals do you have difficulty working with?

##### Teacher / Student Relationships

1. You give an assignment. A student ridicules the assignment, saying it doesn't make sense and it's irrelevant. How would you handle the situation?
2. How would you individualize instruction for students?
3. How would you challenge the slow learner and the advanced student within the same class?

### Teacher / Parent Relationships

1. A parent walks into your classroom before the school day begins, yelling and complaining about something you don't even understand. The parent is obviously very upset. What would you do?
2. What do you feel is the most effective way to communicate with parents? Describe how you have used this/these technique(s).
3. Describe the reasons why you should contact parents.

### Targeted Areas for Development

1. What area(s) of your teaching performance was your previous principal most critical?
2. What do your colleagues consider your weaknesses?
3. What school-related responsibilities do you find most troublesome?
4. What are the problematic areas you have found in teaching?
5. What is something in your last teaching experience that you are not proud of?
6. What are your plans for continuing your professional development?

Sources: Adapted from HR-Guide. (n.d.). *HR guide to the Internet: Personnel Selection: Interview Questions/Difficult Questions*. Retrieved May 8, 2006, from the HR-Guide Web site: <http://www.hr-guide.com/data/G353.html>; Pawlas, G. E. (1995). The structured interview: Three dozen questions to ask prospective teachers. *NASSP Bulletin*, 79, 62, 65; Author & Goldsmith, L. M. (2008). *Everyone matters: Insights for principals on school personnel*. Corwin Press; and Webb, L. D. & Norton, M. S. (2003). *Human resources administration: Personnel issues and needs in education*. Pearson Education.

## Book Review

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### *Handbook of Test Development*

edited by Steven M. Downing and Thomas M. Haladyna

#### Reviewed by

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Like an elephant in the dining room, it is hard to ignore the influence of tests and assessment-related issues on our lives. And while some testing practices appear unchanged, most contemporary issues are shaped by research and public commentary.

The handbook, a comprehensive source of information about assessing knowledge, skills, and ability, was written for test developers and graduate courses. It has also been written to provide useful information to school administrators, department chairs, counselors, local school boards, and teachers.

State-level administrators, for example, will find the chapters on contracting for testing services; technical reporting and documentation; test score reporting; and evaluating tests particularly helpful. Three of the handbook's 32 chapters offer this group of readers valuable information about test production and administration including a checklist for ensuring quality-control; practical scheduling guide for all aspects of test

administration; and considerations for test accommodations.

The contributors to this handbook, 47 scholars and practitioners who address the foundations, content, development, design, production, and administration of tests, offer recommendations based on research and current assessment standards. The scope and size of this handbook (778 pages) lie well outside of the range of reading time available to busy educational administrators. However, the contents offer practical *and* scholarly, research-based information useful to all educators. This review provides a glimpse of some of the issues addressed in the handbook.

The first six chapters focus on general assessment topics: steps for effective test development, testing standards, contracting, design, strategies for minimizing test fraud, and guidelines for preparing examinees for test taking. If readers have a limited amount of time, these six chapters, the foundations, are a "must read." Policy makers, administrators,

department chairs, teachers, and test developers are among those who must share responsibility for documenting all procedures for developing tests, meeting ethical standards, maintaining the integrity of exam administration, and using public resources wisely. Since the use of outcome from tests has become more legislated, these foundations for sound test development practice have become more important. Fortunately, significant progress has been made to support testing practices with recommendations that are based more on research than intuition and opinion.

Clearly, testing in the schools, colleges, and credentialing arena, is a growing enterprise. Who selects the content that appears on a test? Who develops the items? Who designs the tests? Chapters 7-25 address every conceivable issue relating to content selection, item development, and test design. Reliability, validity, scoring, scaling, item analysis, computerized item banking, and recommendations for making sound pass-fail decisions are included among this set of chapters. Each of these chapters offers discussions appropriate for graduate courses or professional development workshops. My favorite chapters focus on the strengths and weaknesses of selected response items,

innovative item formats, editing and review, and fairness review.

Test production, administration, and posttest activities are the theme for chapters 26-32. Here, issues relating to score reporting, technical documentation, test evaluation, and administration and modifications of tests to special needs students are addressed. The authors recognize the large numbers of professional organizations and accrediting agencies that support quality testing and appropriate testing practices. While these seven chapters offer very practical information, the chapter on the roles and importance of validity studies in test development may be too technical to offer immediate practical applications.

The handbook offers readers a four-page preface, a two-page epilogue, 11-page author index, and six-page index. Each chapter is thoroughly supported by references to relative empirical research.

While we may not anticipate that testing, the “elephant in the living room,” will decrease in size, this text helps us to become more familiar with state-of-the art of testing practices.

### Reviewer Biography

Karen Cicmanec holds an advanced professional certificate to teach mathematics and special education in Maryland public schools. Although she has served as a teacher in public and private secondary schools and as a research specialist for a large public school district, she currently teaches assessment-related courses to graduate students and occasionally delivers item development workshops to practicing teachers and administrators. Dr. Cicmanec’s search for a textbook for her courses and her interest in contemporary test development procedures prompted this book review.

### Reference

Steven M. Downing, & Thomas M. Haladyna, editors. *Handbook of Test Development*, Oxford UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; 2006; 792 pp; \$89.95 softcover or \$260.00 hardcover.

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