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## *Sponsorship and Appreciation*

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## **Principal Preparation—Revisited—Time Matters**

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### **Abstract**

There has been both a historic and continuing interest in the preparation process for school administrators (principals and vice principals). Much of the literature has been critical of how school administrators are prepared (Achilles, 1991; Hale and Moorman, 2003; Levine, 2005; Hallinger and Lu, 2013). Although the length of time from graduation to hiring was explored, little attention has been paid to the satisfaction of graduates from principal preparation and the number of years that transpired from graduation to job placement. An unknown outcome in the literature on principal preparation programs is the impact of satisfaction in relation to the length of time in securing an administrative position. This article attempts to provide some insight into the relationship.

### **Key Words**

principal preparation, career satisfaction

## Introduction

There has been both a historic and continuing interest in the preparation process for school administrators (principals and vice principals). Much of the literature has been critical of how school administrators are prepared (Achilles, 1991; Hale and Moorman, 2003; Levine, 2005; Hallinger and Lu, 2013). In instances where the process has been identified as positive, it has been characterized as an outlier under the definition of “exemplary programs” (Orr and Orpanos, 2011; Taylor, Pelleties, Kelly, Trimble, Todd and Ruiz, 2014).

An interesting phenomenon of the preparation process that has not been examined is the elapsed time from being prepared to become a school administrator and satisfaction with the preparation process. Unlike many other professions, being prepared does not necessarily result in securing a position. Gahungu (2008), studying an Illinois preparation program, noted that, from 1995 to 2005, of the 503 students graduated from the program, only 168 of the certified candidates had held administrative positions in public schools by 2007. Bathon and Black (2010) found in their study of Indiana principal placement that 59% of all graduates find employment as either principals or assistant principals (soon after graduation).

Although the length of time from graduation to hiring has been explored, little attention has been paid to the satisfaction of graduates from principal preparation and the number of years that transpired from graduation to job placement. An unknown outcome in the literature on principal preparation programs is the impact of

satisfaction in relation to the length of time in securing an administrative position.

## Literature Review

For the last twenty-five years, there has been the realization that effective principals are an important variable in school improvement (Spillane, 2003).

In spite of that assertion, until relatively recently little attention has been paid to the preparation process and how schools of educational administration have designed their preparation programs (Achilles, 2004; Hale and Morman, 2003; Levine, 2005). The focus has been directed at four aspects of that process; licensure, certification and accreditation, principal preparation and professional development (Beck and Murphy, 1996).

There has also been a concern that preparation programs are too theoretical and not grounded in administrative and leadership reality (Murphy, 1992).

Another study identified several major concerns: the admission process for prospective students with some among the lowest standards in the nation; the lack of clarity of purpose; the absence of systematic self- assessment; the absence of a coherent curriculum; a poorly equipped professorate; a lack of attention paid to clinical education and mentorship; research that is detached from practice; and insufficient funding (Levine, 2005). These areas are similar to the observations of Achilles (1991); Hale and Moorman,(2003) and Elmore (2000) who added to the litany of concerns, the lack of an agreed - upon knowledge base to guide the preparation of school administrators.

On a parallel and connected path, there has emerged a more substantive research base regarding effective leadership practices related to the principal.

One of the more compelling works is that of Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) who examined thirty years of research on the effects of leadership on student achievement. In their meta-analysis they identified two primary variables that determine whether or not leadership will have a positive or negative impact on achievement: the focus of change or whether there is a focus on improving practices directly related to student achievement with an understanding by the leader of the magnitude or order of the change. They further identified 21 leadership responsibilities and associated practices connected to student achievement and organized them into a taxonomy of four types of knowledge: experiential knowledge (knowing why it is important), declarative (knowing what to do), procedural (knowing how) and contextual (knowing when).

Another theme has been to review what principal preparation programs are doing in response to the external criticism. Hallinger and Lu (2013) found that the influence of business practices has become more pronounced with specific alignment to the role of case studies and mentoring programs.

Peck and Reitzug (2012) identified three management concepts that tend to permeate many preparation program designs: management by objectives, total quality management, and turnaround restructuring. There has also been greater focus on field experiences and a direct connection to authentic inquiry (Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, and Basom, 2010). Providing more direct in-school experiences, where prospective candidates could apply the skills

and concepts learned in a classroom setting, became a pivotal focus.

Recently there has been an attempt to connect the role of the principal and their preparation to student outcomes (Orr and Orphonos, 2011; Donmoyer, Donmoyer and Galloway, 2012)). Although much of the work was focused on so-called "exemplary programs" and the results were mixed, the fact that there is now an attempt to determine if there is a connection to student outcomes and principal behaviors in connection with their preparation program is a significant shift in the direction of focus on principal preparation programs.

There has also emerged a collective sense that principal leadership is distributed and its foundation rests on a base of expertise rather than hierarchical authority (Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor, 2003; Kochan and Reed, 2005). Leadership is viewed from the vantage point of interdependence and operates within both a vertical and horizontal continuum depending on the context organizational circumstances. The implications of the new insights emerging regarding leadership are that the profession is nearing the foundation level for agreement on what constitutes a knowledge base for the preparation of school level administrators and the potential for a unifying approach to that process (Brown and Flanary, 2004).

Although much has been written about principal preparation, it has focused on satisfaction as determined by graduates or those who retrospectively evaluate their programs once they acquire an administrative position. Other thematic areas are what programs are doing to "better" prepare their candidates. There has also been an attempt to connect preparation to student outcomes. Missing from the analysis is the relationship between the

length of time that elapses from exiting a preparation program and acquiring an administrative position and satisfaction by graduates with the preparation process. An unknown outcome in the literature on principal preparation programs is the impact of satisfaction and length of time in securing an administrative position.

### **The Study**

To determine if there was a relationship between satisfaction with principal preparation programs and the number of years that elapsed from completing a preparation program and securing an administrative position, a structured questionnaire was developed and sent to 1,583 principals in a northeastern state.

The list was from a database developed by the state education agency and was current for the school year 2014. The survey consisted of a limited number (3) of questions asking respondents to rate their satisfaction with their leadership preparation program using a 5 point Likert rating scale with 5 indicating exceptionally prepared and 1 not prepared at all. Respondents were asked to indicate the length of time that elapsed from receiving their degree and receiving an administrative appointment with choices ranging from immediately on graduation to more than five years later. Respondents were also asked to indicate the institution or program granting them the degree. Two hundred sixty-seven principals responded to the survey representing fifty-seven universities and colleges providing principal preparation programs.

### **The Results**

Although 267 principals responded, the response rate represents only 16% of the population. Caution needs to be taken in the conclusions that are drawn, given the low return rate. Two hundred and sixty-seven is a

number that allows statistical analysis but may represent a population that is not representative of the study group. To determine the significance of the relationship between satisfaction and the number of years elapsing between completion of a preparation program and receiving a principal position, Spearman rho ( $r$ ) was applied to the tabulated results.

There are many cases where dependency between two variables can be observed but where the distribution is unknown (Yamane, 1967; Creswell, 2012). Nonparametric correlation coefficients provide the ability to determine statistical significance in such instances and, therefore, Spearman rho ( $r$ ) was the appropriate application. The outcome revealed a .181 statistical significance between satisfaction and appointment to an administrative position either immediately on graduating or 1 to 2 years later. The outcome is statistically significant but relatively weak in its strength.

### **Discussion**

This study reveals a connection with satisfaction with the preparation process and the number of years it took actually to receive an administrative position.

The sooner an administrative position was secured, the greater the satisfaction. Although caution is needed in generalizing beyond the scope of this study, there are implications for both future research and the designs of principal preparation programs. In terms of future research, a much wider survey of graduates of principal preparation programs would indicate the broader significance of time as a variable in program satisfaction.

More importantly there is a policy issue that needs to be addressed immediately. If there are significant gaps between preparation and

administrative placement and graduates feel less prepared, as a result, what can programs do to address the issue? The response to this question includes both ethical and social responsibility implications.

Principal preparation programs within this context need to go beyond just preparation and graduation but meet the social responsibility to address their graduate's needs.

One possible solution is to allow all graduates to attend any classes they feel a need to attend as a refresher in developing skills introduced in previous classroom settings. These 'refreshers' should be at no cost to the students but become a part of the social, ethical and professional responsibility of the program provider. The idea of "no cost" is not the

financial burden it may appear to be. The refresher could be offered when existing classes are in session. Students who need to be refreshed sit in on the classes and participate in the scope and demand for their specific needs.

A second programmatic response would be to schedule low cost or no cost seminars in areas that improve the management and leadership skills of graduates and keep them up to date on the research on best practices.

These seminars could be scheduled on weekends to allow maximum participation. Another implication of the study is the need to provide counseling and support to graduates as they enter the administrative marketplace. It is not enough to merely graduate students but to also facilitate the employment process.

### **Author Biography**

Daniel Gutmore is a faculty associate at Seton Hall University. He was a teacher and practicing school and central office administrator for over 30 years, all in an urban school setting. His areas of interest are organizational theory, supervision of instruction, ethical decision making and principal preparation process. E-mail: gutmorda@shu.edu

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## **Principal Concerns and Superintendent Support During Teacher Evaluation Changes**

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### **Abstract**

Teacher evaluation is a major reform initiative in public education's high accountability policy environment. Principals' effective implementation of this high-stakes reform is challenged by time management, policy coherence, communication with teachers, district support, and staff development imperatives. Effective implementation requires moving beyond time and management concerns towards collaborative leadership with supervisors. Although teacher evaluation policies are often state initiated, local level superintendents and district leaders must understand principals' challenges to provide useful guidance and support.

Based on a three-year study of a southeastern state's Race to the Top driven implementation of redesigned teacher evaluation policies, this article examines principals' concerns and need for support plus superintendent strategies for addressing gaps that state and federal policymakers may leave during such mandated reform. The Stages of Concern framework from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) was used to examine principals' concerns and superintendents' support. Lessons learned and implications for superintendents are described.

### **Key Words**

teacher evaluation, leadership, CBAM

## **Principals, Reform of Teacher Evaluation, and Need for Support**

Implementing a new and more rigorous teacher evaluation system presents new challenges to a principal's already complex job, particularly in states and districts with redesigned accountability policy mandates. Juggling multiple demands and expectations (Honig and Hatch, 2004; Leithwood, Strauss, & Anderson, 2007) principals are responsible for interpreting and implementing policy designed from afar and making it applicable, relevant, and effective for their teachers (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; McLaughlin, 1987; Park & Datnow, 2009; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Loyiso, & Zoltners, 2002). Consequently, principals are the critical link for successful policy implementation (Datnow et al., 2002). However, they require support as they learn the details of new, more complex policies and more demanding accountability driven expectations.

This article, based on a longitudinal study (Derrington & Campbell, 2015), describes principals' concerns during the implementation of a new reform-driven teacher evaluation policy. After years of infrequent teacher evaluation and generally meaningless consequences, principals were required to quickly learn and implement a demanding, high-stakes evaluation process. This study's results also describes superintendent supportive actions in response to principals' concerns during teacher evaluation implementation.

### **New Evaluation Policies**

In 2010, the state discussed in this article received approximately one-half billion federal dollars as one of the first two Race to the Top (RttT) grant recipients. Terms of eligibility for

federal RttT funding included developing and implementing stringent teacher evaluation policies (McGuinn, 2012; Sawchuk, 2011).

Many significant changes from past practice included requirements for multiple observations of each teacher each year, mandatory use of a detailed rubric of teaching behaviors, quick feedback requirements, and quantitative scoring and data reporting.

For the majority of school districts, interim observation scores were submitted directly to the state's Department of Education. Averages from these observations were used for calculating 50% of each teacher's annual, summative effectiveness rating, with student assessment data comprising the other 50% (Tennessee Department of Education, 2011). While the observation portion was field-tested, the assessment-based portion was not developed until the months immediately preceding the policies' statewide implementation.

School leaders were rapidly trained on the new evaluation system's procedures, which were still being developed as the 2011-12 school year began (Derrington & Campbell, 2013). Adding to the challenge was another break from the past—principals were to be evaluated on the degree to which they faithfully implemented these rigorous new evaluation requirements.

### **Change and Implementation Barriers**

The quick passage of new laws and regulations, followed by equally rapid design and deployment of new high-accountability systems for teacher evaluation can present numerous challenges (Derrington & Campbell, 2013). Yet even if reform procedures are implemented in

the early stages, other issues may interfere with expected educational improvement (Hope & Pigford, 2002). For example, systems that are procedurally cumbersome or time consuming can hinder effectiveness (Lytle, 2012; Kennedy, 2010). In addition, Timperley and Robinson (1997) discussed implementation problems arising when externally designed systems are deployed without collaborating with those who must apply such systems.

Meaningful change more likely results from collaboration between policy makers and practitioners (Hope & Pigford, 2002). Without such collaboration, opportunities may be lost for increasing professional collegiality (Marshall, 2009) and for better identifying shared understandings of what comprises good teaching and support for improved teacher performance (Kennedy, 2010).

Evaluation involves a complex set of human and organizational interactions and transactions and cannot be viewed, for example, as simply a process of observing, rating, and making a retention decision (Petersen, 1995). A principal leading a staff in a high-accountability environment works under personal and professional pressures to perform while executing new expectations to observe and report on myriad individual teacher behaviors.

Thus principals must simultaneously implement accountability-driven evaluation systems while managing complex, interrelated, and sometimes inscrutable teaching and learning variables (Derrington & Campbell, 2013).

As the history of changing approaches to teacher supervision illustrates, altering one part of the process may require other component modification as well (Derrington,

2011). Thus broad, statewide implementation of new evaluation policy demands provokes multi-faceted, contextually varied responses that require the active, collaborative engagement of school leaders at all levels.

### **Principals' Need for Support**

Principals manage from a position between reform mandates and day-to-day teacher supervision when implementing evaluation policies. Consequently, successful policy implementation depends on the principals' ability, authority, and motivation to make both strategic learning decisions and needed changes for staff (Fowler, 2009).

Operating in this challenging, intermediary position, a principal might succumb to resistance or simply work to buffer the staff from external pressures of district, state, and federal policy makers (Adamowski & Petrilli, 2007). In addition, principals work within a district system, which also affects their decision-making. Consequently, district-office expectations and support, especially the superintendent's, greatly affect the principals' authority and school management (Derrington & Larsen, 2012).

Principals report that when demands place them in a clearly subservient policy role, their stress is greatly heightened (West, Peck, Reitzuq, & Ulrich, 2010). Anxiety is further increased as principals attempt to implement or circumvent underdeveloped and unsupported policies lacking well-planned implementation (Derrington & Larsen, 2012). This gap between a principal's desire to exert strong leadership and the weakened position often resulting from policy mandates disconnected from school reality (Adamowski & Petrilli, 2007) further increases stressful and at times unproductive responses to change.

Principals must advocate, nurture, and sustain instructional programs conducive to teachers' professional growth (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) and improved learning outcomes. While providing such support for staff during significant policy change, principals experience the effects of such change as well. Implementing dramatically different policies requires learning many unfamiliar, externally-mandated procedures. Leading the implementation of a new evaluation policy may fundamentally alter the supervisory practice and create substantial challenges in professional practice. Principals consequently are less likely to be effective without essential and timely support.

Superintendents who support their administrators, in part by seeking to understand their experiences, perceptions, and concerns throughout an implementation, are positioned to offer assistance and more likely to ensure beneficial outcomes for teachers and students. Understanding principals' concerns and responding to them allows superintendents and

district supervisors to provide appropriate, timely, and well-received intervention and support throughout the implementation process (Derrington & Campbell, 2015).

### **Need for Addressing Principals' Concerns**

With specific concerns about roles, actions, influences, and effects, school principals are greatly affected by change and are, therefore, among the most important considerations in the change process (Hall, 2013; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). Concerns may be identified as feelings, thoughts, and reactions to the changes affecting their lives (Hall, 2013; Hall & Hord, 2015).

Theoretically, this construct is captured by the Stages of Concerns (SoC) framework in Table 1 (Hall & Hord, 2015), which framed this study of principals' experiences during the first three years of teacher evaluation policy implementation (Derrington & Campbell, 2015).

Table 1

*Stages of Concern*

Focus of concern	Stage	Description
Impact	6 Refocusing	Ideas emerge about improvements or potentially stronger alternatives.
	5 Collaboration	Cooperation with others grows, to better coordinate and enrich implementation.
	4 Consequence	Awareness and concern grows, about the influence and impact of the work upon others.
Task	3 Management	Attention to tasks and processes dominate (e.g., information sources, time management, resource use, efficiency).
Self	2 Personal	Questions about role, competencies, and implications emerge.
	1 Informational	General details about implementation requirements are sought.
Unrelated	0 Unconcerned	Little consideration of the innovation or implementation is evident.

*Note.* Adapted from *Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles, and Potholes* by G. Hall and S. Hord (2015).

Change stimulates individuals' varied concerns, which, in turn, affect implementation. The personal feeling or *affective* dimension of change dominates early in the implementation and surfaces as a concern for the initiative's effects on oneself (Hall & Hord, 2015). For

example, principals' concerns regarding their competence to manage the change might cause self-doubts to surface. Therefore, on-going support and positive interventions for implementers throughout the change process is

critical, though often insufficiently addressed (Hall & Hord, 2015).

### **A Theoretical Lens for Superintendents**

SoC is a component of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2015) and serves as an effective theoretical lens through which superintendents may view experiences and feelings of principals engaged with implementing new evaluation policies. Respected education researchers, Gene Hall and Shirley Hord, have been developing the framework since the 1980's as a way to understand, evaluate, and lead change processes in educational settings.

Viewing principals from the SoC perspective and understanding their need for support offers superintendents, as well as other district leaders, powerful tools for positive results. Hall and Hord (2015) described these supportive actions as “interventions” and found them to be important responses for those working to implement change.

### **Stages of Concern**

Stages of concern (SoC) can be observed as personal and individual manifestations as the implementation progresses (Hall, 2013; Hall & Hord, 2011; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1987).

The stages describe individuals' concerns during all phases of implementation. While presented as a continuum, it is important to understand that the stages may not occur sequentially. Early stages may reappear late in an implementation, some later stages may not be effectively reached, and multiple stages may appear simultaneously, based on such numerous variables as policy details, procedures, contexts, and resources.

In the early stages, an individual is likely to have *self*-concerns. In the SoC framework, Stage 1 is “Informational;” individuals require more information about the change. Questions might be asked to identify the training they will receive and how the change is supposed to work. Stage 2 is “Personal.” Individuals want to know the effect of the change on his/her role during implementation.

Questions of personal adequacy and competence might arise as individuals face new, unfamiliar demands. In Stage 3, “Management,” individuals focus attention on the tasks and the processes of using the change. Such task-oriented concerns include time management and how to allocate resources that facilitate implementation. The goal at this stage might be simply staying one day ahead of the changes required.

As individuals advance in knowledge of the change and become increasingly competent in handling the tasks and processes, they might develop impact concerns, described as Stage 4, “Consequence,” as they examine impacts and ways to achieve improved outcomes. Principals might, for example, evaluate the effect or impact the change has had on teachers or students. A principal might seek to learn what can be done to improve the effectiveness of the program.

Another impact concern is Stage 5, “Collaboration.” Individuals at this stage are considering ways to improve the outcomes of the innovation by working with colleagues to problem-solve and exchange ideas. The final phase, Stage 6, “Refocusing,” occurs when principals are seeking even better ways to use the innovation or devise new forms of the innovation.

They may explore additional benefits that could result from the change. Interestingly, more powerful alternatives might emerge, or proposals might be developed to alter the current state of the change.

### **Studying Principals' Concerns**

The SoC framework was used to examine the perspectives of fourteen K-12 principals and their superintendents in a Southeastern state that dramatically changed its teacher evaluation policies as a condition for winning RttT funding. Specifically, the study investigated the change and implementation concerns of principals over 3 years, while simultaneously examining the supportive actions of superintendents during the implementation.

Located in suburban and semi-rural districts, the participating sites included four high schools, five middle schools, and five elementary schools across four school districts. The schools were demographically diverse, ranging in size from 295 students to 1,486. The percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch ranged from 26% to 81%. These districts, located on the outskirts of a large, metropolitan city, ranged in size from three schools to 21, averaging 10 schools. Principals and superintendent were interviewed annually, over three years.

### **Principal Concerns with Change and Implementation**

The principals in this study clearly exhibited Stage 2 Personal and Stage 3 Management concerns during the first two years of the study. With the speed of statewide implementation, insufficient time was available for principals to sufficiently learn the requirements, procedures, and teacher observation rubrics. Moreover the processes of the new evaluation system, and some program components, were either still in

the design phase as the year began or undergoing revision during the first year (Derrington & Campbell, 2013). The stress of implementing unfamiliar and still developing policies stimulated personal concerns and impacted already limited time. Investments of time required to learn and to adapt to the new policies, and to prepare for the daily work of implementation significantly impacted principals' work. As a result, principals reallocated time spent on informal communication with teachers, being present in hallways and classrooms, and meeting informally with parents, students, and others to more office-bound work, managing the new evaluation system.

Time previously dedicated to daily classroom visits, for example, was reduced to make space for more frequent, formally-scored and documented observations, to scheduling, to working through an extensive rubric to generate feedback, and to data entry. This reallocation placed principals in what they perceived to be an untenable position, choosing to continue with visibility and typical support for teachers and students or to reallocate their time for compliance with policy's demands on their time.

Despite the reallocation of time, principals did not abdicate daily work with teachers and students, opting instead to write observation and evaluations at home or long after the school day ended. As a result, the new evaluation system took a personal toll on principals as well. Some reported dramatically increased workloads on the weekends and after school, in addition to cancelled family and vacation plans.

As the implementation progressed, through year two and three, principal viewpoints on time demands varied. While

some reported time demands decreased, due to routines developed and greater knowledge of the process, half reported that extensive time demands remained the same. In a few cases, time spent on evaluation actually increased. These increases were brought on by either staff turnover (the process is lengthier for new teachers) or by the principals spending more quality time on the evaluations. It appears that greater understanding of the rubric caused principals to spend more time in analysis, though the steps in the process and the number of items in the rubric to be rated was unchanged.

Some principals' Stage 3 Management concerns began to shift in year three. Now more familiar with the rubric and processes, they became aware of troublesome aspects in the application of the new policies. For example, student performance data, comprising half of a teacher's final rating, combined with observation scores, became an issue for teachers in untested grades. The policy stated that these teachers use school-wide measures (e.g., graduation rate) as part of their final, individual summative score. Thus, principals reported that final scores would not accurately reflect many teacher assignments or actual direct influence on students.

Additionally, while principals in year three reported the evaluation system as more familiar and comfortable, they increasingly cited inconsistent and subjective elements. There were concerns about aligned application of rubrics and expectations from school to school, as well as concerns about the quantitative portion of the final rating. The effects of this concern were magnified by a new state policy requiring districts to develop strategic, differentiated compensation plans, based on evaluation results. Management

concerns, therefore, coexisted, to some extent, with early stage personal concerns about being able to expertly implement such a high-stakes process, as well as with late stage, refocusing concerns about fair policy designs.

After three years, principals reported an appreciation for the contributions of a detailed teaching rubric to the effectiveness of instruction and professional collaboration, in addition to their development of routines and organizational strategies to help manage the process and balance their use of time. Demands on time essentially remained high, however, and qualms began to emerge about both the consistency of application and the quantitative ratings formulas built in to the policies.

### **Superintendent Supportive Strategies**

Superintendents, aware of the new time demands on principals and their concerns about implementation, engaged in frequent formal and informal conversations with them to assist with the management of more challenging stressors. Such communication and ongoing contact led to locally supportive solutions. For example, locally designed training augmented state training as superintendents and principals worked together to learn about policy details and potential negative effects.

In addition, responding to principals' concerns, superintendents reallocated some district administrators' responsibilities, assigning them to assist with schools' observation and data entry schedules.

For example, the special education director observed and evaluated special education staff in the schools. Such supportive district interventions were seen by principals as immediate, specific, and appropriate responses to their concerns.

Implementation support from superintendents increased in year two. District actions included professional development to further understand the rubric components, technology-based tools to streamline the cumbersome reporting process, and increased time for dialogue at district level meetings.

District office staff continued to assist with evaluations in year three but the purpose shifted to having a “second pair of eyes,” for fairness in evaluation of below average teachers. This co-observation process was prompted by state incentive grants that encouraged the practice. Conversations about the implementation continued between superintendents and principals but shifted from emphasis on the process and the rubric to focus on the state’s new initiative linking teacher evaluation with differentiated, performance-based compensation. Proceeding cautiously, superintendents initiated committees to study the policy ramifications and delayed rapid implementation of untested or potentially divisive plans. Such collaborative, careful study was acknowledged and supported by principals as a wise way to proceed due to previous unsettling changes in the evaluation system.

### **Lessons Learned**

Superintendents play a significant role in principals’ implementation work. Based on this study’s findings, principals will likely experience personal efficacy concerns regarding their ability to understand and manage the implementation of teacher evaluation accountability policies. Principals may seek support from their superintendents, particularly if these individuals are committed to working with them. Superintendent supportive interventions included frequent, honest, two-way communication, logistical help, instructionally focused dialogue and sensitivity to the new policies’ stressful impact

on principals and their staff. While none of these strategies might appear out-of-the ordinary, their reliable presence is essential and significant, as the relationship between principals and superintendents in this study illustrates. Superintendents supported principals by listening, by arranging discussions at administrative meetings, and by continually communicating about the new evaluation policy’s terms and critical effects. All principals in this study reported district officials’ prompt responses to their concerns, indicating a loosely structured team approach with supervisors playing more of an assistance, rather than a compliance-focused, role (Derrington & Campbell, 2015). Principals highly valued these types of responses from their superintendents.

Misunderstood or unaddressed concerns can derail a change process or degrade potential results. As Hall and Hord (2015) have reiterated, if change is not supported and facilitated, implementers may languish in ongoing personal and management concerns. These concerns may prevent principals from progressing towards more effective teacher evaluation implementation and a deeper understanding of the policy.

This study indicates the importance of district leaders’ supportive interventions, particularly by acting on early attentiveness to relational and operational principal concerns when implementing high-accountability evaluation policies in the schools. Developing and maintaining a close working relationship with principals, aided by open lines of communication and frequent opportunities for collaboration, is essential and should stem from superintendents’ abilities and willingness to understand and appropriately respond to concerns without heavy-handed, compliance-driven tactics. In addition, principals need to

know their supervisors are well-versed in policy procedures and their implications.

Thus, knowledge of procedures, open lines of communication, sensitivity to impacts, and respect for principals' concerns appear to be critical for superintendents to positively manage a similar change process.

Superintendents' support of principals through open, non-judgmental discussion can provide both a support structure and an informal, ongoing assessment of principals' needs during implementation. In addition, knowledge of the terms, details, and potential impacts of new policies allows superintendents to work with principals with a more productive understanding of the implementation experience. Such collaboration, in turn, results in better decision-making and constructive

intervention strategies, leading ultimately to a more positive long-term outcome. Superintendents effectively support principals both technically and emotionally, by serving as attentive listeners, acknowledging the pressure and stress they experience, followed by support specifically designed to mitigate these challenges and concerns.

Principals' responses to change will likely evolve over time—as delineated in the Stage of Concern framework—support from the superintendent must evolve as well. District leaders must stay involved in the difficult work over the long term, maintaining effective support systems as principals continually adjust practices, identify new concerns, and seek more effective ways to influence teachers and generate successful student-learning outcomes.

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## School Administrator Quality in Minority-Serving Institutions

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### Abstract

This commentary brings together the topics of geographically-oriented diversity, minority-serving institutions, and educational leadership programs. The geospatial context for this discussion about school administrator quality focuses on Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States. The authors from representative minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and a predominately White institution focus on the changing demographics in school communities and how this trend can be constructively addressed within public school systems to offer more equitable learning experiences to diverse students. Regarding nationwide demographic shifts, the very real challenge for superintendents is to lead by working constructively with changing student populations and rapid generational fluxes more generally.

### Key Words

minority-serving institutions, diversity, school leaders, superintendents

## Demographic Shifts and the New Racial Minority

**S**ocially-just school administrators lead effectively by both modeling and practicing diversity-responsive leadership (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Mullen & Robertson, 2014). Diversity activists seek to understand how to work constructively with their changing student populations in a broader context of rapid generational fluxes. Our thesis is that school leaders must ensure school administrator quality wherever they are and that minority-serving institutions (MSIs) have a unique responsibility to prepare school leaders to effectively meet the needs of culturally diverse students.

Our purpose is to present information that may not be widely known about MSIs, specifically Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that can assist K-12 school leaders and educators in leading their school communities and university-level faculty members in effectively preparing school leaders. Most children and youth in the nation are racial minorities (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013)—a fact that informs all constituents' work.

Race scholars argue that school administrators must stay on top of demographic shifts if they are to create equitable and just schools for marginalized student populations (Gooden & Dantley, 2012). This transition in geographic demographics is expected to have an unprecedented effect on MSIs. In fact, by 2042, demographic forecasts indicate that racial minority groups will be the majority

population in the U.S. Hispanic and Black Americans will comprise 45% of the 2060 population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's demographic projection (endorsed by the Taylor and the Pew Research Center, 2014)]. An estimated 38 million immigrants live in the United States, constituting over 13% of its population (Shields, 2013). Such demographic changes beg the question: Do superintendents and other school leaders know who the students are in their jurisdictions and what knowledge and experiences they bring to classrooms? (Shields, 2013)

The changing face of the nation reinforces the value of learning how educational leadership programs in HSIs and HBCUs prepare aspiring principals to tackle challenges of demographic diversity, aspiring to provide students with more equitable learning experiences. This issue is of importance to superintendents because the principals of tomorrow will be working in their school districts, and these principals must be prepared to enact effective instructional opportunities for all students, specifically those from minority backgrounds and challenging circumstances such as poverty and mobility (Sherman & Grogan, 2003).

## Guiding Questions and Organization

For this discussion we have asked ourselves how the physical location of HSIs and HBCUs supports diversity-responsive leadership. We are also wondering how their geospatial realities connect to problems of practice that public school leaders (and their constituents) face in these regions. An influx of English Learners, high student mobility rates, and low

graduation rates comprises this changing context. This piece is organized around demographic changes, the relevant literature, and issues of geospatial location, extending to implications for collaboration and preparation, institutional outreach, and steps forward.

### **Literature Touchstones**

Students in U.S. public schools from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are more populous throughout the nation in various areas. Allen (2006), Noguera (2003), and Suttmilller and González (2006) have all studied such students' schooling experiences, with Allen (2006) emphasizing the resiliency they display, Noguera (2003) shedding light on the often-ineffective educational experiences of African American male youth, and Suttmilller and González (2006) identifying the crucial role of academic mentoring.

As many researchers who study poverty and disenfranchised communities attest, all students benefit from effective and supportive learning environments and school leaders whose principal preparation programs had a focus on inclusiveness to strengthen their commitment to success for children and youth (e.g., English, Papa, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012; Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

Gooden and Dantley's (2012) idea of diversity-responsive leadership is that it should orient school leaders to take action by developing and implementing "a leadership preparation framework centered on race" (p. 240). One characteristic of the framework is self-reflection, which motivates transformative action. (The other four characteristics are critical theory; future-oriented, practical ideas; praxis [i.e., action-informed mindfulness], and race language.) School leaders can use any of these attributes for educating educators,

students, and other constituents. In this manner leaders can adapt the types of practices they expect can yield positive results for their own student populations.

Moore and colleagues (2011) fittingly describe various ways in which professional educators have guided youth to become more self-directed, reflective citizens. By gaining voice and exercising their authority and advocacy, youth develop valued skills (e.g., public speaking) and optimism (such as about their future).

Examples include contributing to school governance through participating in making decisions that facilitate curricular and school improvements, experiencing leadership training for their careers and public advocacy roles, and vocalizing policy concerns that affect education. The Urban Youth Collaborative, the Philadelphia Student Union, Future of Tomorrow, and the Youth Education Alliance are just a few such initiatives making it onto the national scene (Moore et al., 2011).

Thus, principals must attune to the sociocultural dynamics of their particular communities, as Khalifa's (2012) ethnography of a school leader attests. Accordingly, because of their developing understanding of affected children and youth—whose environmental conditions for learning, including health, are serious issues (Mullen, 2014)—they can make better decisions about student learning practices.

Educational institutions and leadership programs that commit vigorously to improving the future of historically marginalized groups expand their dialogue and efforts to be inclusive (Mullen, Young, & Harris, 2014). In this vein, faculty members in MSIs focus on enhancing educational opportunities for children and youth in varied sociocultural

contexts (Gasman, 2013; Gasman, Baez, & Turner, 2008; Mullen et al., 2014). HBCUs play a “pivotal role in improving the lives of Black Americans since their inception during a time of racial segregation” (Gasman, 2013, para. 3).

The term *HBCU* came into existence in 1964 through the Civil Rights Act, but several colleges were founded in the late 1800s; demographic shifts of HBCUs, founded with the mission of serving African American students, are relevant to public education at a national level (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). Currently, HBCU principal preparation programs are tasked with preparing school leaders to lead socially-just schools.

### **Geospatial Location of MSIs**

Online searches for MSIs in the United States found that most HSIs are located in the

southwestern states and most HBCUs in the eastern states, which makes these institutions historically situated, if not geospatially isolated. Further refining the search of each university campus, we found that over 100 of these institutions offered master’s degrees and/or doctoral degrees in educational leadership.

As per the amended Title V of the Higher Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), HSIs are 2- and 4-year colleges and universities with a full-time equivalent undergraduate student enrollment that is at least 25% Hispanic. Of the over 300 HSIs in the U.S. (HACU, 2011-2012), only seventy-one are four year universities that offer graduate programs in educational leadership. These institutions are located within ten states, primarily along the south and southwest regions of the nation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Hispanic-serving institutions offering master's and doctoral degrees in educational leadership.



Source: The Authors, 2014; an original adaptation of HACU's [2011–2012] basic map

HSIs dotting the southwestern United States include California and Texas, with large numbers of immigrant students and English learners (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). This student population has academic and linguistic needs requiring specific types of lesson planning, thus it is imperative that principal preparation programs in these geographic areas support those needs (Suttmiller & Gonzalez, 2006). School–university partnerships are warranted for improving educational outcomes for these diverse student groups (Rodríguez, González, & Garza, 2013).

Superintendents' support within such partnerships would help to generate a “grow your own” principal preparation program.

Diversity-oriented outreach initiatives could yield pools of administrators specially trained to lead schools with large culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. Such educators and leaders would benefit from up-to-date diversity training, fluency in Spanish, and relevant travel experience. In diversity workshops, school leaders can learn to identify as well as overcome ways in which they have been socialized to react to their students' social behaviors and learning approaches based on their own learning experiences, assumptions, and perceptions.

Regarding HBCUs, of the over 90 HBCUs in the U.S., 29 are 4-year institutions that offer graduate programs in educational

leadership. These institutions are located in 13 states, primarily in the south and southeast

regions of the U.S. (Google Maps, n.d.; see Figure 2).

*Figure 2:* Black colleges and universities historically offering master's and doctoral degrees in educational leadership.



Source: The Authors, 2014; an original adaptation of Google Map's [n.d.] basic map

HBCUs along the eastern U.S. are also located in states experiencing increases in students whose first language is not English. Statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Education (2006) indicate that Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina have seen the largest increases in the school-age English learner population: 292%, 372%, and 714%, respectively. Such evidence strongly suggests that superintendents in these states must find ways to address the academic needs of their changing student populations (Rodríguez & Shefelbine, 2010).

### **Collaboration and Preparation for Social Justice**

As pointed out, MSIs are located in very specific areas of the nation (Gasman, 2013; Gasman, Baez, & Turner, 2008). This reality makes evident the need for administrators and faculty from predominantly White institutions to connect with faculty at MSIs to, for example, encourage joining educational leadership programs and professional organizations.

The opportunity exists for greater impact upon graduate schools in their university leadership role concerning student diversity as well. Consider that the Council of Graduate Schools (2009) found that students from ethnic minorities have less representation in graduate education than their White counterparts. Ahead of the curve will be faculty and other educators who collaborate with MSIs, whether to recruit graduate students (i.e., aspiring school leaders) or prepare for a much more diverse culture in higher education. All such efforts should be usefully documented and disseminated so that civic communities can benefit from each other.

The call to revise preparation programs for relevance to current practice (Mattocks & Drake, 2003; Tucker, Young, & Koschoreck, 2012) involves moving beyond traditional course offerings. Schoolwide transformation that is not only curricular or operational but also cultural must be addressed to raise consciousness for the purpose of making school cultures equitable (Brooks & Witherspoon-Arnold, 2013; Mullen et al., 2014; Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

Making preparation programs in educational administration relevant to the job demands of school administrators is a specific concern in regard to preparing school leaders in HSIs and HBCUs.

It is imperative that promising practices for supporting traditionally marginalized students become an integral part of school leadership preparation in MSIs. School leaders serving as advocates for underserved students can inform decision-making by building on existing knowledge for these students (Rodríguez & Alanís, 2011).

By supporting diverse students' social needs beyond their traditional academic needs, principals demonstrate concern for student well-being, not just academic success (Mullen, 2014). This leadership capability stems from demonstration of characteristics, such as an informed activist orientation, of school leaders who have firsthand knowledge of their communities and constituencies (Gooden & Dantley, 2012).

As such it is a responsibility of principal preparation programs in HBCUs and HSIs to ensure that future school leaders

are prepared with the know-how of understanding their changing constituents and, more than this, enacting social justice on their campuses. Superintendents play a critical role in ensuring that principals are trained to carry out initiatives that support the learning of diverse student groups. They can position their schools for success by articulating and modelling the expected values, as well as making available to principals the professional development and resources (e.g., bilingual training for teachers) needed for seeing initiatives to fruition.

### **Institutional Outreach for Activist Superintendents**

Institutional diversity with respect to the cultural and ethnic diversity of educators in taking root in places that influence the purview of superintendents, specifically the principalship pipeline they rely on for hiring leaders in their buildings.

Of note, the numbers of minority faculty who work in higher education have increased in educational leadership positions nationwide (Hackman & McCarthy, 2011), which is a sign of institutional diversity as a mindset and core value, as is the mission of universities to expand their diversity portfolios to include the work of all faculty that reflects support of historically marginalized and nontraditional student populations, and diversity of many other kinds.

Aligned with this change, the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration taskforce coined “pedagogically-centered leadership” (English et al., 2012, p. 105) to make the

point that knowledge of learning and teaching that encompasses cultural differences that span individuals, cultures, and institutions is a much-needed disposition. Diversity-responsive leaders have these attractive qualifications.

For district superintendents, the focus on pedagogically-centered leadership is taken up with an emphasis on learning and an awareness that it has been shifting over time. With these shifts, learning has achieved a premium over traditional forms of teaching; however, the craft of teaching as a skilled profession continues to be highly valued, and performance-based assessments of teaching remain essential (English et al., 2012).

Leadership diversity training resources, such as workshops and modules examine quality preparation and the professional development of leaders. Trainings and applications from a pedagogical focus and social justice orientation, geared towards school leadership, include the scholarship of Shields (2013) and the organizational work of the University Council for Educational Administration (2014).

Importantly, superintendents have communicated value for ongoing development and collaborative learning, and specifically for students, educators, and leaders to learn from one another, which we think reflects some aspects of pedagogically-centered leadership; specifically, they have expressed value for collaboration at all levels of the system, which, based on profound cultural changes within their own districts, they believe fosters “collective capacity for change” and

new directions for growth (Dulaney, Hallam, & Wall, 2013, p. 40).

In regard to geographic institutional diversity and preparing future leaders and educators, MSIs play a crucial role in advancing communities of professional educators facing growing student diversity. It is timely for educators and administrators in K-12 school districts and within university-based principal and executive preparation programs, as well as professional organizations, to foster programmatic opportunities by tapping institutions that can help diversify their communities. The pipeline for staffing schools and future leadership extends to MSIs.

### **Steps Forward**

A strong need exists for showcasing MSIs to help educate more broadly as well as foster “solidarity and collaboration” across and beyond these institutions (Gasman, 2013, para. 6). In this vein, institutions of higher education and school districts can develop partnerships to undertake this work. Such partnerships can revitalize the collaborative learning of district leaders that builds on the contributions of MSIs that are preparing aspiring school principals to serve students in their local communities.

More than likely, at least some visionary and activist superintendents, as but one important constituent group, would find value in this new type of collaboration beyond their own geospatial borders.

Research reveals district-level support of collaborative cultures and forward momentum (e.g., Dulaney et al., 2013)—readiness of engagement with MSIs is a next step. This can occur through outreach and collaborative projects, as well as by recruiting graduates from MSIs and staffing schools with diverse professional educators and leaders.

Finally, a call to action has the potential to elevate the awareness of campus and district administrators to effectively meet the needs of diverse learners. Without a doubt, knowing the students in one’s jurisdiction as a school leader is essential and being prepared through trainings that support being part of a prepared leadership (and faculty) to work in a changing environment is a vital step for achieving this outcome.

District and school leaders can tap the resources we have cited that are available through professional associations and the education literature. We also encourage practitioners to reach out to faculty in educational leadership programs in MSIs (geographically mapped herein) who are ready to offer culturally-relevant instruction in the form of professional development for teachers and administrators. More diversity-responsive leaders should be in administrative roles guiding the educational goals and outcomes of the changing populations of students for whom they have responsibility.

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### Mission and Scope

The **mission** of the Journal is to provide peer-reviewed, user-friendly, and methodologically sound research that practicing school and district administrations can use to take action and that higher education faculty can use to prepare future school and district administrators. The Journal publishes accepted manuscripts in the following categories: (1) Evidence-based Practice, (2) Original Research, (3) Research-informed Commentary, and (4) Book Reviews.

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3. Federal, State, and Local Governmental Relationships
4. Teacher Quality (e.g., hiring, assessment, evaluation, development, and compensation of teachers)
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6. Data and Information Systems (for both summative and formative evaluative purposes)
7. Charter Schools and Other Alternatives to Public Schools
8. Turning Around Low-Performing Schools and Districts
9. Large scale assessment policy and programs
10. Curriculum and instruction
11. School reform policies
12. Financial Issues

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**Length of manuscripts should be as follows:** Research and evidence-based practice articles between 2,800 and 4,800 words; commentaries between 1,600 and 3,800 words; book and media reviews between 400 and 800 words. Articles, commentaries, book and media reviews, citations and references are to follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, latest edition. Permission to use previously copyrighted materials is the responsibility of the author, not the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*.

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