Planning University-Urban District Partnerships: Implications for Principal Preparation Programs

Mark A. Gooden, Christian M. Bell, Richard M. Gonzales, and Amy P. Lippa

ABSTRACT

Urban school districts continue to face increased demands for improving student learning in PK-12 settings. As a result, universities are faced with increased accountability, requiring their leadership preparation programs to be more effective and proficient at monitoring and measuring the impact their graduates have on student achievement. Recent research supports creating university-district partnerships as part of a complex solution to address some of the demands by improving the effectiveness of principal preparation programs and thereby increasing the number of effective leaders prepared to work in urban schools. Findings from this work present some pitfalls to avoid and some recommendations for those interested in exploring university-district partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

School districts continue to face increased demands for improving student learning in PK-12 settings. While this increases the need to have highly effective teachers, it also highlights the need to have strong leaders. In fact, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) have found that leadership in schools influences outcomes by impacting school conditions and teachers' work. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) concluded, "school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning" (p. 27). There is a strong need to recruit and retain quality leaders in urban districts, especially at the secondary level. Added to these realities are changing expectations school leaders face once they are placed in their leadership positions. The current high demands and rapidly changing expectations for urban school leaders to improve school performance as measured primarily by achievement scores make it harder for leaders to accept positions in these settings. Leadership preparation programs then are called to prepare graduates who are instructional leaders who understand how to analyze data and manage change using a lens that is sensitive to the large and seemingly insurmountable inequities often found in urban schools.

Though it may not be as extreme as what is happening in the PK-12 setting, there is increased accountability of university leadership preparation programs to be more effective and demonstrate this by measuring the impact their graduates have on student achievement. There are also some criticisms of these conventional programs (Levine, 2005). As school districts search for ways to recruit, train, and retain effective secondary leaders, universities can be viable partners. In fact, a recent study by Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) found university-district partnerships to be an essential factor in exemplary leadership preparation programs. The purpose of this article is to briefly review the history of university-district partnerships, while also highlighting some of the challenges and opportunities of such current partnerships and how they can enhance conventional programs and positively impact leadership preparation. Another purpose of this article is to describe a new partnership and recount some of the lessons we have learned in this process. We conclude by providing some recommendations and implications for those educators courageous enough to engage in the important work of establishing university-district partnerships.

UNIVERSITY-DISTRICT PARTERSHIPS – A BRIEF HISTORY

The earliest university-district partnership dates back to the late 1800s and "the committee of ten," headed by Charles Eliot, president of Harvard, which issued recommendations in 1892, calling for:

> A conference of school and college teachers of each principal subject which enters into programs of secondary schools… to reconsider the limits of its subject, the best methods of instruction, the most desirable allocation of time for the subject, and the best methods of testing the pupils attainment therein. (Cohen, 1974)

These early efforts subsequently led to the development of the College Entrance Examination Board and the Scholastic Aptitude tests. However, Zykowski and Mitchell (1990) note that this working

relationship went beyond collaborating around course work and instructional materials. Instead, the relationship extended to college personnel prescribing what was good for schools, based on their "superior expertise" (p. 6). Not surprisingly, this type of interaction led to direct conflict with schools.

The onset of World War II also did much to enhance university-district partnerships. The conclusion of the war led to a large number of GI Bill-supported graduate students who were able to complete even more field studies and surveys than in preceding decades. In addition, the "baby boom" led to a rapid expansion of public schools, which in turn increased the need for cooperation in the preparation of teachers. Society's growing awareness of significant social problems led sociologist Kurt Lewin to coin the term "action research" which was intended to link university research with practice. The goals of action research were to contribute to theory and knowledge in the field of education and to improve practice in the schools. The elements of collaborative action research promoted the idea that each group be represented in the process and share in the planning, implementation, and analysis of the research. This fostered an awareness and appreciation that each member contributes different expertise and a unique perspective to that process (Zykowski and Mitchell,1990).

Beginning in 1987, reformers asserted that while community partnerships were difficult to create and sustain, quality teaching and learning require community collaboration (Comer, 1987). In response, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1988) urged universities and other community-based organizations to build support networks for urban schools and pledged to help finance such efforts. The 1990 bipartisan National Commission on Children established by the president and Congress resulted in key recommendations and outlined methods for stakeholders, including individuals, communities, universities, businesses, and the government to strengthen and support schools. The Pew Partnership found that throughout the decade that followed, more than 1,200 partnerships between schools and universities were formed (Goldring & Sims, 2005).

University-district partnerships focusing on developing leaders were also starting to form around this time but their history evolved somewhat differently. According to Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2009), the Danforth Foundation pioneered the concept of university-district partnerships in leadership through its creation of the Danforth Programs for the Preparation of School Principals initiative started during the late 1980s. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration and the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration were key partners with Danforth in this developmental process. The primary thrust of Danforth was to support the efforts of 22 university leadership preparation programs as they partnered with school districts to redesign their programs. During this time the programs focused on innovative design strategies such as recruitment of high-quality candidates and integration of field experiences in the content of the curriculum. There were also deliberate intentions to develop a curriculum that was more relevant to the principalship. These university-district partnerships seemed to be taking advantage of effective collaboration.

However, similar to the early university-district partnerships, recent partnerships have been noted for their difficulties. For example, researchers found that many partnerships are strained because of differences between schools and universities in terms of the pace of work, professional focus, career reward structure, and incongruent personal power and efficacy (Brookhart & Loadman, 1990, 1992). In addition, Million and Vare (1994) found collaboration shock, turf issues, and communication were typical problems associated with these partnerships. Other barriers include negative past experiences with collaboration, difficult past or present relationships among agencies, personality conflicts, lack of precedent, and fear of risk (Anderson, 1996). Research suggests that strong collaborations require a great deal of effort to start and even more effort to sustain. Other lessons learned during this era emphasized that most collaborative efforts are doomed to fail unless organizations possess the skill and will to reorganize relationships among various stakeholders (Kilbourne, Decker, & Romney, 1994). The same is true today.

Traditional leadership programs developed earlier and in greater numbers than university-district based programs. While these traditional university programs have not been strict copies of one another, most included a general format of professors delivering research-based knowledge of educational administration, coupled with an internship in the student's school with a principal or other administrator (Simmons, Grogan, Preis, Matthews, Smith-Anderson, Walls, & Jackson, 2007). While there are surely

exceptions, this model has proliferated in many university-based preparation programs. However, it has been severely criticized for providing outdated content and ineffective program delivery (Fry, Bottoms & O'Neill, 2007; Levine, 2005). The criticisms stem from the fact that during the last century professional expectations for school leaders have evolved with the changing political and social climate, while some leadership preparation programs have failed to change as a result of these new expectations. Consequently, educational leadership preparation programs have been under intense examination, oftentimes from individuals or groups that have not engaged in the thorough and careful research to adequately and fairly evaluate these programs (Levine, 2005). Despite the questionable soundness of these challenges, they have gained momentum and have led to calls, within and outside the academy, to seriously consider the effectiveness of the current university-based leadership preparation programs.

The calls for a redesign of leadership preparation programs from within the academy underscore the need for university-district partnerships as one part of a complex solution to increase the effectiveness of these programs. These partnerships not only prepare school leaders, but also can provide school districts and universities with additional resources that can be better realized when both organizations work together. Moreover, university-district partnerships are more likely to ensure that school leadership preparation is a sustained effort that in turn ensures there is a pipeline of effective school leaders (Young, 2010).

As stated earlier, a study by Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) found partnerships to be an essential factor in the effective leadership preparation programs. In each of the highly effective programs examined, they found that partnerships contributed significantly to the program's success. One of the factors that distinguished effective programs from others was a commitment of key stakeholders from the university and district to create written guidelines that helped delineate clear expectations, thus facilitating collaboration on a range of tasks and activities. This commitment went beyond mere words to include district-provided subsidies for credits, streamlined hiring, and, in some cases, collaboration in the development of university-based curriculum. On the other hand, universities provided tuition waivers, mentors, and coaches for prospective principals, as well as faculty to support district-based professional development. Darling-Hammond et al assert that such strong partnerships have the potential to prepare principals for specific district and regional contexts and can develop a stronger and more committed pool of leaders. These partnerships can also mitigate some of the challenges associated with the internship. Several of these features and an actual model are discussed below.

DEVELOPING A UNIVERSITY-DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP IN LEADERSHIP

The University of Texas at Austin Principalship Program (UTAPP) has successfully partnered with school districts surrounding Austin to train principals for over 50 years. The level of commitment of the partners has varied by district and partnerships, when formed, have not always included formal written agreements. In recent years, the students entering the program have come mostly from school districts surrounding Austin. In pursuing the goal of training principals, UTAPP, a two-year master's program with certification, has included components such as a rigorous recruitment and careful selection of participants, a cohort structure, and an emphasis on powerful authentic learning experiences (Darling-Hammond, et al, 2007; Orr, 2006). One enduring component of the program includes an initial 8-week nontraditional course generally called Foundations of Educational Administration (FEA) where students participate in problem-based learning by conducting a school study as a cohort. In addition to aiming to change incoming student's view to incorporate a building level perspective, this course introduces and emphasizes the core theory of action of the program. That is, if leaders are to be more reflective, collaborative, and focused on addressing social justice issues in education using real data to study, explore and engage in problem-based learning, then we must provide them with complex school-based problems to solve as a cohort and as individuals.

UTAPP carried these program components and our developing changes forward to create The University of Texas Collaborative Urban Leadership Project (UTCULP), an extension of UTAPP's efforts to increase academic achievement in PK-12 schools by developing 120 effective urban secondary school leaders prepared to meet the unique needs of respective district partners. Because UTAPP typically only admitted 15-20 leaders per cohort per year, achieving this goal would require the help

and identification of new school district partners beyond the Austin area. UTAPP officially partnered with three high-need LEAs – Dallas Independent School District (DISD), Houston Independent School District (HISD), and Harlandale Independent School District.

To provide better insight into our planning, we outline below how UTAPP developed a relationship with our first UTCULP partner, Dallas ISD. We included several successful carryover features including a highly selective admissions process, year-long internship, cohesive curriculum, and tenure-track faculty in ratios consistent with the Austin program. However, there was a need to make the program more customized to fit the needs of the districts and to make this part of an authentic partnership. A genuine partnership includes at a minimum agreed upon goals and objectives, clear roles and responsibilities, and a monitoring and feedback process. Adding to these a nurturing relationship can lead to sharing of resources and commitment. To fulfill as many of these as possible, we engaged with our Dallas partners on a number of key tasks in the co-designing of a principalship program. For example, we conducted a needs assessment, reviewed the results and disseminated them to our partner, held curriculum-planning meetings, co-conducted a candidate assessment center and launched our first cohort. Details of this model and the planning are provided below. We also benefited when we depended on our partners in the strengthening of the internship and mentoring components of the program.

SETTING GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

The development of current University of Texas partnerships was informed by the work of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2008), which encourages cooperatively designing and implementing all aspects of a principal preparation program. To discuss expectations, develop understandings of the tasks ahead and to strengthen trust with our first partner, the Dallas Independent School District (DISD), we held several face-to-face meetings in Dallas. We formalized this process and our work to establish specific goals of the partnership and to identify expectations with our Dallas partners early through the development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) (SREB, 2008).

One shared understanding reflected in the MOU was that the curriculum would be collaboratively developed, mapped, and monitored and that candidate screening and assessment would be a joint process between the district and university leaders. In order to do this work, we held several meetings involving practicing DISD principals, executive principals, and central office leaders and all tenure-track professors who teach in The University of Texas at Austin Principalship Program. In March 2010, leaders from Dallas, including the Chief Administrative Officer, worked with all tenure-track principalship program professors to conduct an assessment center to screen candidates for admission into the Dallas Cohort of the principalship program.

Monitoring Progress

Early in the process we presented our partners with a scoring guide developed by SREB, which described core conditions of partnerships, and we invited them to rate the partnership and we did the same (SREB, 2008). This fulfilled the monitoring and feedback requirement described above. However, it also provided feedback on what we did well and what need to be improved. We currently maintain records of these ratings as they can allow us to assess each other in the partnership at key points in the process. Both partners invested much time and persevered to overcome most of common challenges of university-district partnerships that have already been mentioned. One tangible result of the hard collaborative work was the first Dallas cohort of 15 outstanding aspiring principals which started in June 2010. Incidentally, that cohort of students will graduate in May 2012 and three have already been hired in leadership positions. Notably, admission of the Dallas cohort immediately increased the racial and ethnic diversity of our program, which was a significant bonus.

In sum, we were able to meet the goal and objectives by clearly defining roles and expectations and these were formalized in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which we could revisit if necessary. The MOU should be detailed enough to outline clear expectations but open enough to allow flexibility where it might be necessary as in specific semester-hour requirements of the program and design details. Lastly, we keep the progress monitoring ratings on file and plan to continue to revisit as them and calibrate as needed. They serve a clear, agreed upon method to assess our progress during the

partnership.

CO-DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM

Collaborative curriculum design merges theory and research about principal preparation programs with the practical application, or the "realness" of the job. While organizational management and related leadership theories are important components of principal preparation programs, the practical knowledge of the job is equally important. One study found that over 95% of principals reported that on-the-job experiences or guidance from colleagues was more helpful in preparing them for their current position than their graduate school studies (Hess & Kelly, 2007). The purpose of the UTCULP grant expressly states that the needs of urban, secondary schools are diverse and require a different approach. Our partners add that this includes preparing leaders that are instructionally effective, data savvy, and capable of managing change. Therefore, it follows that development of this curriculum would demand reflective and responsive collaborative planning that includes the research combined with a district's recommended best practices.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The first step toward curriculum development was to perform a needs assessment by conducting an online survey. The primary purpose of the survey was to determine the overall needs of secondary school leaders in the urban school district. The online survey was delivered using Survey Monkey and included both multiple choice and open-ended questions. There was a need to collect data from interviews to get richer data. We decided that focus groups should be used because their purpose is to determine how people with similar attributes feel or think about an issue, product, service or idea (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The purpose of the focus group sessions was to delve deeper into the thoughts principals have related to the work they do in urban, secondary schools. Specifically, we expected the focus groups to render useful data about the following three topics related to the work of a principal: a) the knowledge, skills and attributes of a highly effective secondary principal; b) the ideal components of a principal preparation program; and c) the perceived ways that the central office facilitates or impedes principal effectiveness. Following the completion of the needs assessment, UTCULP synthesized the results and disseminated the findings to the district for review. UTCULP and district officials then collaborated to co-develop curriculum congruent with the needs of the urban district as guided by the needs assessment. As with all university-district partnerships, lessons were learned along the way.

First Partnership

In the first partnership, UTCULP leadership collaborated with Dallas Independent School District. Though the process essentially was the same with both partners, we were less effective in our execution with Dallas ISD and found that we needed to improve in a number of areas. For example, technical glitches and nuances of online survey software all contributed to a lower than expected response rate for our first administration of the survey. Additionally, we were naïve about how much time it takes to prepare for the entire process of planning, developing, and implementing a co-developed leadership preparation program. Planning and coordination are key components of the process but it also requires building relationships. The work from SREB (2008) and their university-district training workshop facilitator recommended a minimum of a year to build relationships. Though we started early, we simply did not have the luxury of this kind of time before starting work with our first partner.

However, during the process, UTCULP focused on developing relationships. This was important given that Dallas ISD had experienced personnel changes. For example, the position of Director of Leadership Development, a key position for our work, was vacated and remained vacant several months at the start of this partnership. Large districts experience personnel changes and it was important for the university to expect them and positively respond to them. The learning experiences of the first year directly contributed to the success of the curriculum-planning meeting with the second district partnership.

Second Partnership

In the second partnership, our team of UTCULP researchers conducted a comprehensive needs assessment that included the inclusion of multiple sources of data from the Houston ISD secondary principals. This time the quantitative and qualitative sources of data were included as part of the survey. We used two focus group sessions to collect data. Through careful planning, improving research questions and techniques, and modifying the time of the year the survey was administered, we were able to improve the response rate for the survey for Houston ISD. There were 77 respondents and all were principals, which was just above an 80 % response rate. Though the focus of the grant is for secondary principals, both elementary and secondary school principals responded to the survey.

The research team also conducted two focus groups at the Houston ISD central office and included 12 secondary principals across both sessions. The principals represented wide diversity in personal and social identities such as race/ethnicity, gender and age. For example, the average number of years of experience as a principal was eight years. All participants in the focus groups were secondary school principals representing schools with accountability ratings ranging from Exemplary (highly successful) to Academically Unacceptable (struggling) schools as described by the Texas Accountability System. District central office personnel selected the participants. Each focus group session lasted approximately two hours.

Based on the results of the survey and focus groups, a comprehensive report was prepared for the district. The UTCULP research team used triangulation as the primary method of analysis, which included synthesizing findings from the quantitative and qualitative sections of the survey, as well as from the findings from the focus group (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Findings from the three data sources (quantitative section of survey, qualitative section of survey, and focus group findings) were explained in detail. Six overall key findings were revealed to serve as major discussion points for the curriculum meeting.

We used the report findings to inform and influence the development of a district-specific curriculum in a process described below. A second purpose of the needs assessment was to identify district policies and practices that either assist or impede secondary school leaders in their efforts to improve schooling for students on their campuses. We presented the report to district leaders and principalship program professors to peruse prior to the curriculum-planning meeting. This provided participants an opportunity to review the findings from the needs assessment and come prepared to work through the data.

CURRICULUM PLANNING MEETINGS

We specifically designed the curriculum-planning sessions to provide the practitioners and researchers with focused opportunities to develop a common vision around shared beliefs of what should be taught in the customized master's program. At the curriculum meeting, district and university team members gathered to discuss the findings from the needs assessment report and develop powerful learning experiences, which would serve as building blocks, or guides for curriculum work. District personnel included principals, middle range central office personnel, and upper level administrators. University team members included UTCULP staff, faculty from the University of Texas principalship program (UTAPP), other university professors, and graduate students who had served in leadership roles in the PK-12 settings. Creating synergy around the curriculum-planning phase in many ways was contingent upon the congruency of beliefs about principal preparation programs for urban secondary educational settings. While oftentimes much is made of the chasm between researchers and practitioners, we found there was certainly enough common ground to move this conversation forward in our two-day meeting.

According to the findings of Coburn, Soung and Turner (2008), in the absence of shared beliefs about the direction of the work, those in status positions, in this case university professors, will likely face difficulties if they promote approaches incongruent with the approaches valued by authority figures in the district. Those with authority have a greater range of tools for negotiation and thus have greater influence. Essentially, we found in practice that this process was going to be more successful if we focused more on the purpose of the work and the goals rather than personal egos and agendas.

The major findings of the needs assessment set the framework for discussion amongst the collaborators about the most important aspects of a principal preparation program for the district-specific context. We also drew upon the research and used the infusion of ELCC standards. After the whole group reached consensus about the central learning components of the preparation program, we broke

into teams that included members from both sides of the university-district partnership. For example, a university member and two district officials made up each of the breakout teams. The purpose of the breakout groups was to create the actual powerful learning experiences (PLE), which would be used as a foundation for creating course content for the program. Members of the teams were also asked to align the PLEs with key findings from the needs assessment, the ELCC standards, and supply examples of assessments. This work would support the creation of the course content for the principal preparation program. The co-developed learning objectives, taken directly from the discussion of the findings from the needs assessment, directly influence the curriculum through the construction of the powerful learning experiences.

LESSONS LEARNED

One of the lessons learned when disseminating the survey to Dallas ISD was the importance of understanding of the relationships within the district and how to navigate its vast organizational structure. Dallas experienced personnel changes and understood the importance of having a bridge person. They worked very hard to get this individual hired and onboard. In large urban districts, it is extremely important to have an inside person who can focus on the partnership exclusively. Having the large amount of dedication enabled us to get the program up and running despite the district seeking to hire this person. The second survey distribution with Houston had a greater response rate partly because we were able to improve upon the complete process the second time. We also capitalized on lessons learned about the importance of a bridge person and starting early, and having clearly defined goals. Consequently, the survey was disseminated from the appropriate authority within the organization, or school district. Differences in status between researchers and practitioners can lead to conflict (Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Freedman & Salmon, 2001; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988). Unclear roles and relationships on both sides can create uncertainty and misunderstanding (Freedman & Salmon, 2001; Goldring & Sims, 2005). Planning well and working with two willing partners have enabled us to avoid such conflicts. However, we must emphasize that this requires spending time to manage the relationship throughout the process of developing partnerships. There is no substitute that we have learned about here so time requirement is necessary.

Coburn, Soung and Turner (2008) suggest that the development of clear authority relations actually enables productive working relationships. Shared understanding of appropriate roles and relationships provides guidance for interaction and decision-making. In the Houston curriculum meeting, seamless negotiations between those with status and those with authority happened due to the construction of knowledge between and among university professors, researchers, and district administrators about what makes a quality principal preparation program

In the end, the collaborative process for co-development of curriculum was a success. The shared beliefs about relevant curriculum for urban secondary schools resulted in the development of a principal preparation program plan that reflected a theoretical and practical approach to learning. This process is part of an ongoing conversation. We continue to discuss curricular issues with both partners and anticipate the need to have more meetings in the future as we revisit content.

According to research related to effective university-district partnerships, in order for the school administration to support the efforts of outside grants, they need to be cognizant of the goals the grant is trying to achieve, what has already been accomplished, and exactly what type of training will be required (Cook-Hirai & Garza, 2008). District officials and administrators are inundated with many demands on their time and fulfilling the goals of a grant may not always be a top priority, unless there is an atmosphere of ongoing and continual shared collaboration. At the start of our partnership, Dallas ISD was a district serving over 157, 000 students and divided into eight Learning Communities (areas) each led by as many Executive Directors. Houston ISD had over 200,000 students and 298 schools. Districts this large have a great deal of complexity and competing demands on central office and building level leaders. As these are the people we need to engage for work on this project, this reality re-emphasizes the importance of having clear goals and objectives, clear roles and responsibilities, and a clear monitoring and feedback process. In the process of forging relationships with partner districts to begin training aspiring administrators for secondary urban settings, UTCULP developed a process to promote a collaborative approach to designing curriculum and we worked with our bridge people to gain access to key players in

the development of secondary leaders. As we continue these partnerships, we realize that there is always a need to pay close attention to the complexities of these processes and we continue to put the work in because of the added benefits of partnerships. One important benefit is the planning is the internship. We now turn to explore how partnerships with districts can support this important component of principal preparation programs.

INTERNSHIPS

Particular concern has been expressed about the quality and effectiveness of principal internships. Internships emerged as a common practice in the 1980s as part of the educational reform movement to raise educator certification standards, which are thought to be a critical link between theory and practice (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995) and an essential socialization process for capacity building and identity transformation (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; 2004) for aspiring principals. But concerns about the inadequacy in traditional principal preparation include:

- Preparing school reform leaders is not a priority;
- Leadership departments and school districts not working together to provide authentic on-the-job opportunities;
- Principal preparation is out of sync with accountability demands; and
- Many interns are under-supported by mentor principals (SREB, 2005).

Emerging consensus holds that principal preparation programs should be more innovative (USDE, 2004) and emphasize relevant, authentic learning experiences (Williamson and Hudson, 2001; Williams, Matthews, & Baugh, 2004; Elmore, 2006; Cunningham and Sherman, 2008) that allow principal interns to progressively assume leadership responsibility by observing, participating then facilitating tasks (SREB, 2005). Rather than focusing narrowly on management skills, principal internships also should develop aspiring principals' instructional leadership, school improvement and student achievement capacities (Catano and Stronge, 2006; Cunningham and Sherman, 2008) to better align to today's school leadership demands.

Improved collaboration between universities and school districts is essential to reforming principal preparation (Young, Peterson & Short, 2002) and creating internships guided by university faculty and experienced practitioners (Cunningham and Sherman, 2008). Through scholarship, graduate faculty challenge future leaders to think critically about teaching and learning, the needs of students and families, current achievement trends, and schooling. In the field, seasoned practitioners model administrative best practice and the art of effective leadership (Williams, Matthews, & Baugh, 2004).

In sum, guidance on developing successful principal internships described in the literature (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2001; Williamson and Hudson, 2001; Smith 2003; SREB, 2005; Cunningham, 2007) recommends that collaboration between universities and school districts:

- Align experience to ISLLC standards;
- Connect theory and practice in realistic way;
- Ensure programs are feasible and sustainable;
- Place interns in diverse settings;
- Provide interns constructive feedback;
- Ensure activities prepare interns to assume administrative roles with competence and confidence; and
- Evaluate effectiveness on interns' mastery and performance.

COGNITIVE COACHING AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL FIELD-BASED MENTORING

Traditionally, securing an internship and mentor has been the responsibility of the aspiring administrator (Earley, 2009). Because internships have typically occurred while the aspiring administrator is teaching full time, most interns have completed their internships in the same school where they taught under the mentorship of their principal (Earley, 2009). This arrangement has resulted in interns typically having a limited amount of meaningful opportunities to observe or participate in activities designed to promote decision-making, problem-solving or exercise professional judgment, essential skills for school

leadership (McKerrow, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Moreover, in traditional internships, aspiring principals have sometimes been used primarily to complete routine administrative tasks "in order to keep labor costs low and volume production up" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 76). Consequently, field-based experiences have been found to not always be (1) context-sensitive, (2) purposeful and articulated, (3) participatory and collaborative, (4) knowledge based, (5) ongoing, (6) developmental and (7) analytic and reflective (Williams, Matthews & Baugh, 2004). Thus, it comes as no surprise that traditional internships have been argued to be the weakest portion of preparation programs (Geismar, Morris, & Lieberman, 2000; Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991).

As noted earlier, however, current research supports that clinical internships structured and implemented collaboratively between university faculty and experienced practitioners can provide the professional training and socialization Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) describe as essential to the transformational process of becoming a principal. Effective internships provide aspiring principals the authentic learning opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge in field-based situations under the supervision of a mentor (Milstein, Bobroff, & Restine, 1991) and opportunities to reflect on and discuss those experiences with peers and mentors (Muth, 2002). Holistically, this experience can lead to the capacity development to meet the demands of school leadership (Lane, 1984; Mullen, Gordon, Greenlee, & Anderson, 2002; Ortiz, 1982: Wenger, 1998) and the socialization of aspiring principals into the leadership community of practice (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Matthews & Crow, 2003).

An alternative to the unstructured, traditional model of mentoring is Costa and Garmston's Cognitive Coaching (2002) model for clinical supervision, a mentoring approach which employs four support services essential to supporting instruction: evaluation, collaboration, consultation and cognitive coaching. While each function can play a crucial role in improving an aspiring principal's performance, Costa and Garmston emphasize that collaboration, consultation and coaching directly support practice, whereas evaluation serves an assessment and accountability function. Further, they assert that collaboration and consultation serve practitioners most during their early stages of development, while coaching remains important to continuous improvement over time.

Cognitive Coaching operates from the fundamental assumption that perception affects behavior; and thus, that perception change is necessary for behavior change to improve effectiveness. Grounded in cognitive and humanist psychological theories, cognitive coaching views intellectual struggle and social interaction as the means to producing personal growth. In essence, cognitive coaching aims to develop practitioners' decision-making and self-directed learning ability through self-management, self-monitoring and self-modification practices.

Instead of acting as the expert who imparts wisdom, mentors acting as cognitive coaches, strategically engage aspiring principals in goal-oriented conversations to plan, reflect and solve problems. Through the process of mental mapping, or the navigation of various paths to achieve a desired outcome, mentors acting as cognitive coaches ask mediating questions that require the aspiring principal to focus on their thoughts, perceptions, beliefs and assumptions as they engage in management and leadership activities in authentic contexts. Through this metacognitive process, aspiring principals develop the skill set essential to managing a school effectively and the habits of mind critical to becoming self-directed leaders with the cognitive capacity to build and sustain a professional learning culture in their school (Costa and Garmston, 2002).

The use of researched-based cognitive coaching model has the potential to enhance our principalship programs. We attempted to improve upon the conventional model by paying mentors to work with our principalship students while they went through the internship but met with uneven success and waning interest on the part of the mentor principals. We have improved this model by paying for the mentors to be trained as Cognitive Coaches so they now have an incentive and a set of skills to use to more effectively mentor the students so that they can build their self-directed learning ability through self-management, self-monitoring and self-modification practices (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Cognitive coaches can be principals or assistant principals from partner districts. Our district partners assist us in selecting the best people and we pay for their training that includes eight-days spread over several months in order to give participants a chance to practice their coaching. This adds another level of support in addition to the building principal who can still mentor the interns but in a different way and with less pressure on

the student. The university professor who visits the students on-site as they go through their internship is also available to support their growth. Thus we have improved upon the traditional model by creating three levels of support for all of our students. Additionally, we offer our current students the opportunity to get trained as cognitive coaches.

CONCLUSION

University-district partnerships have been promoted as a way to bridge theory and practice and address the criticism that university preparation programs are removed from the reality of the principalship (Grogan, Bredeson, Sherman, Preis, & Beaty, 2009). Such partnerships can present opportunities for districts and universities to collaborate and maximize resources to address the need to prepare leaders for PK-12 schools. As we have outlined, there are clear benefits to engaging in this work. Still, scholars have noted that there are challenges to forming these partnerships, as the organizational structures may often be incompatible (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Myran, Crum, & Clayton, 2010).

While we agree with this assessment, the work of UTCULP suggests that careful planning and attending to some issues explained here can really increase the likelihood of starting and sustaining effective partnerships. First, it is absolutely necessary for partners to be clear about expectations as described through a memorandum of understanding or similar type of agreement. These documents clearly state the expectations, shared understandings, common beliefs, and responsible parties. Moreover, they should list goals and how resources will be shared. In tough times in the partnership, these really help as they give the respective partners something to refer to if there is a need to amicably resolve any issues. Second, there should be some way for partners to assess how the partnership is going. There should be flexibility to make reasonable changes to aspects of the agreement when necessary. Despite having an MOU, the UTCULP partnership has required that those involved be flexible and patient, and committed to the process. Third, there is no substitute for lost time or the amount of time it takes to do this work. However, working deliberately and carefully on relationships can really help build comfort levels as partners undertake this important work. The UTCULP partnership has been based on increasing the number of trained principals prepared to work in urban secondary schools. This remains the key thrust of our work as partners. It is crucial that universities and school district consider the steps of a conducting needs assessment, drafting an MOU, and implementing a system for monitoring and assessing progress when planning for effective partnerships. If these steps are seriously considered, partners an increase the likelihood of creating a viable university-district partnership with the promising potential of preparing effective urban leaders.

REFERENCES

Anderson, R. T. (1996). *Beyond "one-stop shopping:" An integrated service delivery system for job seekers and employers* (ED 390 479). Pewaukee, WI: Waukesha CountyWorkforce Development Center.

Bickel, W. E., & Hattrup, R. A. (1995). Teachers and researchers in collaboration: Reflections on the process. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(1), 35-62.

Brookhart, S. M., & Loadman,W. E. (1990). School-university collaboration: Different workplace cultures. *Contemporary Education*, *61*(3), 125-128.

Brookhart, S. M., & Loadman,W. E. (1992). School-university collaboration: Across cultures.*Teaching Education*, *4*(2), 53-68.

Browne-Ferrigno, T., & Muth, R. (2001). Becoming a principal: Role transformation through clinical practice. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, November 12-15, Cincinnati, OH.

Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2003). Becoming a principal: Role conception, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, purposeful engagement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 39*(4), 468-503.

Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2004). Principals Excellence Program: Developing effective school leaders through unique university-district partnership. *Education Leadership Review, 5*(2), 24-36.

Browne-Ferrigno, T., & Muth, R. (2004). Leadership mentoring in clinical practice: Role socialization, professional development, and capacity building. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(4), 468–494.

Browne-Ferrigno. T. & Muth, R. (2009). Candidates in educational leadership graduate programs. In M.D. Young, G.M. Crow, J. Murphy & R.T. Ogawa (Eds.), Handbook of research on the education of school leaders (pp. 195-224). New York: Routledge.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1988). Partnerships: Support beyond the school. In *An imperiled generation: Saving urban schools* (pp. 41-49). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Catano, N., & Stronge, J. (2006). What are principals expected to do? Congruence between principal elevation and performance standards. *NASSP Bulletin*, *90*(3), 221-237.

Coburn, C.E., Soung, B., & Turner, E.O. (2008). Authority, status and the dynamics of insider outsider partnerships at the district level. *Peabody Journal of Education, 83*, 364 – 399. doi:10.1080/01619560802222350

Comer, J. P. (1987). New Haven's school-community collaboration. *Educational Leadership*,*44*(6), 13-16.

Cohen, S. (1974). *Education in the United States: A documentary history*. New York, NY: Random House.

Cook-Hirai, D. & Garza, E. (2008). University and school district grant collaboration: How to avoid a logistical nightmare. *Micro Journal of Education and Human Development, 2*(1). Retrieved from http://www.scientificjournals.org/journals2008/articles/1397.pdf

Cordeiro, P.A. & Smith-Sloan, E. (1995). Apprenticeships for administrative interns: learning to talk like a principal. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Costa, A.L. & Garmston, R.J. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Cristopher Gordon.

Crow, G. & Matthews, L.J. (1998). *Finding one's way: How mentoring can lead to dynamic leadership*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Cunningham, W. G. (2007). *A handbook for educational leadership interns: A rite of passage*. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Cunningham, W.G., & Sherman, W.H. (2008). Effective internships: Building bridges between theory and practice. *The Educational Forum*, *72*, 308-318.

Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., & Orr, M. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA; Stanford University.

Earley, P. (2009). Work, learning and professional practice: The role of leadership apprenticeships. School Leadership and Management, 29(3), 307-320.Fry, B., Bottoms, G., & O'Neill, K. (2005). The principal internship: How can we get it right? Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education.

Elmore, R. (2006). Breaking the cartel. *Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(7), 517-518.

Freedman, R., & Salmon, D. (2001). The dialectic nature of research collaborations: The relational literacy curriculum. In T. Ravid & M. G. Handler (Eds.), *The many faces of school university collaboration: Characteristics of successful partnerships* (pp. 179–183). Englewood, CO: Teachers Ideas Press.

Fry, B., Bottoms, G., O'Neill, K. (2007). *Schools need good leaders now: State progress in creating a learning centered school leadership system*. Southern Regional Education Board, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation.

Geismar, T.J., Morris, J.D., & Lieberman, M.G. (2000). Selecting mentors for principalship interns. *Journal of School Leadership*, *10*(3), 233-247.

Goldring, E., & Sims, P. (2005). Modeling creative and courageous school Leadership through district community- university partnerships. *Educational Policy, 19*(1), 223–249.

Goodlad, J. I., & Sirotnik, K. A. (1988). *School-university partnerships in action: Concepts, Cases and*

concerns. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Grogan, M., Bredeson, P.V., Sherman, W.H., Preis, S., & Beaty, D.M. (2009). The design and delivery of leadership preparation. In M.D. Young, G.G. Crow, J.Murphy, R.T. Ogawa (Eds.)*, Handbook of research on the education of school leaders* (pp.395-416). New York: Routledge.

Hess, F.M. & Kelly, A.P. (2007). Learning to lead: What gets taught in principal-preparation programs. *Teachers College Record, 109*(1), 1-28.

Kilbourne, L., Decker, L. E., & Romney,V. A. (1994). *Rebuilding the partnership for public education.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia, Curry School of Education, Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education.

Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.(2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lane, J.J. (Ed.). (1984). *The making of a principal*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York: Wallace Foundation.

Leithwood, K., & Mascall, B. (2008). Collective leadership effects on student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44*, 529-561.

Levine, A. (2005). *Educating School Leaders*. New York: The Educational Schools Project.

Matthews, L. & Crow, G. (2003). *Being and becoming a principal: Role conceptions for contemporary principals and assistant principals*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

McKerrow, K. (1998). Administrative internships: quality or quantity. *Journal of Education, 8*, 171–186.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, M.A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Million, S., & Vare, J. (1994). *School and university collaboration: Bridging the cultural and value gaps*. Charleston, SC: National Council of States.

Milstein, M. M., Bobroff, B. M., & Restine, L. N. (1991). *Internship programs in educational administration: A guide to preparing educational leaders.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Mullen, C. A., Gordon, S. P., Greenlee, B. J., & Anderson, R. H. (2002). Capacities for school leadership: Emerging trends in the literature. *International Journal of Educational Reform,11*(2), 158-198.

Muth, R. (2002). Scholar-practitioner goals, practices, and outcomes: What students and faculty need to know and be able to do. *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, *1*(1), 67-87.

Myran, S., Crum, K.S., & Clayton, J. (2010). Four pillars of effective university-school district partnerships: Implications for educational planning. *Educational Planning, 19*(2), 46-60.

Orr, M.T. (2006). Mapping innovation in leadership preparation in our nations' schools of education. *Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(7), 492-499.

Ortiz, F. I. (1982). *Career patterns in education: Women, men and minorities in public school administration*. New York: Praeger.

Simmons, J.C., Grogan, M., Preis, S.J., Matthews, K., Smith-Anderson, S., Walls, B.P., & Jackson, A. (2007). Preparing first-time leaders for an urban public school district: An action research study of a collaborative district-university partnership. *Journal of School Leadership, 17*(5), 540-569.

Smith, P. (2003). Workplace learning and flexible delivery. *Review of Educational Research*, *73*(1), 58-88.

Southern Regional Education Board (2005). Report on principal internships. *Techniques*, *80*(8). Retrieved October 18, 2010 from http://www.thefreelibrary.com/ SREB report on principal internships.(Southern Regional Education...-a0139206491.

Southern Regional Education Board. (2008). *Developing collaborative university-district partnerships to prepare learning-centered principals.* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.

United States Department of Education. (2004). *Innovative pathways to school leadership.* Washington, DC: Office of Innovation and Improvement.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, E. J., Matthews, J., & Baugh, S. (2004). Developing a mentoring internship model for school leadership: using legitimate peripheral participation. *Mentoring and Tutoring*, *12*(1), 53-70.

Williamson, R., & Hudson, M. (2001). The good, the bad and the ugly: Internships in principal preparation. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, August 12-16, Houston, TX.

Young, M. (2010). From the director: The Promise of university–district partnerships. *UCEA Review*, *51*(1), 1-3.

Young, M., Peterson, G., & Short, P. (2002). The complexity of substantive reform: A call for interdependence among key stakeholders. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *38*(2), 137-175.

Zykowski, J.L., & Mitchell, D.E. (1990). University-local district partnerships: The case of the California educational research cooperative. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA.