Learner Centered Leadership for Language Diverse Schools in High Needs Urban Setting:

Findings from a University and Multi-District Partnership

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Learner Centered Leadership for Language Diverse Schools in High Needs Urban Settings:
Findings from a University and Multi-District Partnership

Since October 2002, the College of Education at Arizona State University has been implementing an emerging professional development program for school leaders in collaboration with the Southwest Center for Educational Equity and Language Diversity and four diverse, urban school districts in the Phoenix area. The receipt of a three-year grant from the United States Department of Education's *School Leadership Program* has provided the opportunity to create the Learner Centered Leadership program (LCL) for language and culturally diverse schools in high needs, urban districts. The intention of the federal grant program is to assist high need local educational agencies in developing, enhancing, or expanding their innovative programs to recruit, train, and mentor principals and assistant principals (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

This paper describes the purpose of the partnership between the university and four urban school districts. The primary function of the union is to help aspiring principals, newly hired, and beginning principals in their first years on the job as they negotiate the role of principal. This paper provides insight regarding some of the overall successes and challenges in the grant collaboration and co-construction of a curriculum for the training and professional development of school administrators within a learner centered leadership framework (Lieberman et al., 1995; Danzig, 1999; Louis et al., 1999; DuFour, 2002; Murphy 2002a, 2002b; Danzig et al., 2004).

The grant draws from a knowledge base that combines abstract and theoretical knowledge on educational leadership with the applied expertise of the four participating school districts by: (a) recruiting and training new candidates for school leadership positions, (b) enhancing expertise of beginning principals and assistant principals based on new knowledge and new understandings of the commitments required of educational leaders, and (c)

encouraging the retention of expert school principals through participation in mentoring and coaching activities.

The combined efforts of university professors and school administrators in the planning and delivery of educational and professional development experiences are presented. Working as a team, principals, assistant principals, university faculty, experienced school administrators, and support staff collectively created courses, workshops and experiences that focused on the multiple issues that must be addressed on the job daily. These professional development activities have focused specifically on the roles of educational leaders in urban, language and culturally diverse schools. The paper illustrates the need for and benefit of collaborative structures within educational settings and why collaboration is a necessary ingredient of school reform and training programs for school administrators.

Descriptive data are presented from participants' evaluation of professional development activities with respect to how these activities affected their practice. Descriptive and causal-comparative data will be presented to shed light on the effectiveness of partnership activities and support services for participants in the leadership project before and during the implementation of project benchmarks.

<div align="center">What is Learner Centered Leadership?</div>

As the title of the grant indicates, attention is given to the primary role of teaching and learning in the development of school leadership expertise. This view, by definition, involves changing the major source of inspiration for educational leadership away from management and towards education and learning. Murphy (2002b) proposes a role for leadership which entails developing a learning community, one in which greater attention is needed to promote an atmosphere of inquiry with greater focus on collaboration and shared decision making. In this

new role, leaders will need to develop the capacity for reflection and promote self-inquiry among the entire school community.

Focus on Learning

Learner centered leadership involves a balance between the professional norms and personal dispositions of educators, with the larger good as defined by a learning community (Danzig & Wright, 2002). Without this focus on learning, there is considerable risk that the daily press of management tasks and a crisis mentality will override the school leader's attention. This enlarged role of leadership implies a movement away from bureaucratic models of schooling which monitor and track children based on efficiency to a model of schooling with the goal of educating all youngsters well. Two challenges that exist will be to reorient the principalship from management to leadership and to re-focus the principalship from administration and policy towards teaching and learning.

This alternative framing, one in which leaders are learners, is central to this grant and to the experiences that we are developing as part of this program. Many leadership actions are implicit in a learner centered approach:

- The leader translates guiding ideas into educational practices that engage all members of the community.

- The leader designs effective learning processes so that individuals and organizations learn.

- The leader provides relevant school data that can be used as a tool for developing a learning community that strives to improve.

- The leader surfaces mental models that people bring to the world and helps faculty and staffs identify strengths and weaknesses of these models.

- Leadership embraces a deeper understanding and learning about one's own work and

  practice.

This view of learner centered leadership implies that leaders individually commit to their

own learning. Leaders committed to their own learning must also have the necessary time to

reflect and answer these questions and the additional opportunities to apply what they have

learned to their performances as school leaders. This application of a learner centered approach

to educational leadership is complicated given the current political demands on leadership along

with demands for greater accountability and press for increased individual and school academic

performance. These demands must be balanced by recognitions that learning cannot always be

reduced to a product and that learners have multiple reasons for engaging in learning. Therefore,

the learning embedded in learner centered leadership must also take into account dilemmas and

contradictions for practicing school leaders who adopt a learner centered focus, and recognize

the situational and social bases of learning.

The Central Role of Community in Learner Centered Leadership

Leadership that connects with community implies leadership at three distinct levels. On

the first level, it implies embracing an external community of parents, families, and

neighborhoods and using the resources available outside the school structure. Within this first

level is the idea that the external community is an asset rather than deficit to learning. On the

second level, it implies creating a community of learning within the school among teachers and

staff in which learning is embraced and valued. At the third level, community leadership implies

a focus on the creation of personalized learning communities among students. At all three levels,

it implies leadership that is less bureaucratic leadership in which others are empowered through

dialogue, reflection, and democratic participation. Under the principles of learner centered

leadership, the metaphor of principal as "captain of the ship" or as CEO no longer sustains critical scrutiny.

Focusing on community also presses school leaders to ask questions about community values, particularly values around educational equity and social justice. If the need for re-culturing the profession is to be taken seriously, then the leaders of tomorrow's schools will be more heavily involved in defining purpose and establishing vision than in maintaining the status quo. This commitment involves greater attention to the culture of schools and to the values of parents, families, and communities. Learner centered leadership is built around the ability to understand, articulate, and communicate community culture and values and the ability to make sense of conflicting values and cultures. Learner centered leadership models democratic participation, considers new ideas, and embraces differences.

One of the central aspects of the leader's work each day is to help clarify the day-to-day activities of participants as they contribute to a larger vision of educational purposes. In this view, the leader is more of a "moral steward" heavily invested in defining purposes which combine action and reflection. Leadership is more than simply managing existing arrangements and keeping fires from burning out of control. Putting out fires is not enough to nourish the minds and hearts of today's principals and school leaders. For that matter, even fire fighters define their work more broadly than just putting out fires and define a broader mission as serving people, whatever it takes.

The theme of community that is part of learner centered leadership asks leaders to translate guiding ideas into educational practices that engage all members of the community. Learner centered leaders serve the community and its ideals, and at the same time, recognize that the community is a work-in-progress. Schools simultaneously contribute to and reflect the

development of local culture and democratic participation. This image of principal as community

builder encourages others to be leaders in their own right and see to it that leadership is deeply

distributed in the organization (Murphy, 2002a; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Focus on a Systems Approach to Change for Leadership in Urban Settings

The third strand of our Grant, relates to understanding the combination of embedded

constituents, multiple stakeholders, and complex relationships in urban school systems that

require a systems approach to change. Learner centered leadership provides this alternative

framing for school leadership, one in which leaders translate guiding ideas into educational

practices that engage all members of the community.

A *systems approach* recognizes various levels at which leadership must operate in order to

change the status quo, solve problems, and meet human needs (Vickers, 1995; Senge, Kleiner,

Roberts, Ross, Roth, & Smith, 1999). A system approach to school reform and change

necessarily involves collaboration among educators and others within and outside the traditional

boundaries of the school. This approach requires understanding of one's own organizational

culture, values, and priorities, and those of other organizations and providers. Systems thinking

implies a collaboration and sharing which professionals do not routinely value. School principals

expect to be held accountable for school-site stability and control. Teachers expect to be in

control of their classrooms. When things go wrong, individuals are identified, not organizations.

This leads to territorialism as a problem in organizations. One result is that the norm of

reciprocity prevails: a quid pro quo of arrangements is typical of schools, between teachers and

students, between principals and teachers, between administrators and school board, etc. Without

powerful incentives, stakeholders will resist collaboration to preserve their individual control

over their respective domains.

In order to move past territorialism, school leaders and stakeholders must learn different terminologies, find common interests, and resolve ideological conflicts in order to maintain day-to-day operations. Institutional disincentives to collaboration must also be understood and recognized: autonomy, time, non-accountability, control over one's own clientele, a sense of personal accomplishment, discretionary decision making, and the control of space are all rewards for non-collaboration. A model of school leader as community builder and the development of strong incentives are required for systems approaches to take hold, and for conditions to improve. In the Grant, achieving this level of collaboration is a daily effort, both within the University team and among the University partners.   The effort to collaborate, in itself, requires crossing of organizational boundaries for both university and school partners.

<div align="center">Mission, Core Beliefs, Guiding Principles, and Strategic Actions of
Learner Centered Leadership</div>

The Learner-Centered Leadership (LCL) program promotes educational leadership and focuses on the professional development of school leaders in urban settings. The four urban districts are devoted to educating the youth of tomorrow, working through the complexities associated with language diversity and urban life. With conditions that require commitment, attention and action, the LCL program bridges theory and practice by building connections between university scholars and public school practitioners. The LCL program provides opportunities for leadership development that focuses learning on a personal and community level.   Urban, diverse schools are continually going through change and challenges that require the development and sustainability of effective leadership. The following describes the mission, core beliefs, guiding principles, and strategic actions of the LCL Program.

The mission of Learner-Centered Leadership is to:

1) Create leadership capacity and sustainability in educational institutions and organizations located in urban, diverse communities.

2) Promote equity and diversity in leadership to meet the evolving needs of diverse students in high needs urban schools and districts.

3) Provide opportunities for leadership development in urban schools through personal growth and mentoring relationships.

4) Promote learning about key topics related to urban schools through the analysis and distribution of research and best practice.

Core Beliefs:

1) Learning is a fundamental aspect of leadership. Learning allows for growth during challenges and promotes the importance of reflection and dialogue in learning organizations. Learning for leadership occurs best when school leaders have opportunities to collaborate, dialogue and share ideas. Learning creates the capacity to fuse leadership practice with theory, helping to guide the work in each field. Learner centered leaders recognize that they control their own learning experiences and through their own thought and actions, benefit from the learning opportunities.

2) Leadership creates capacity for organizational learning by modeling personal and professional learning and by creating an environment where learning becomes the focus. The emphasis on learning among leadership ultimately improves student learning within and outside of school. Leadership for learning exists in many places in educational organizations including school administrators, teachers, staff, community members, families, and students. All of these resources need to be tapped

for children to reach their full potential. Experience serves as a valuable learning tool for leaders and is the basis for reflecting in action and on action.

3) Equity and diversity are strengths and resources in schools and communities. Learner centered leaders create educational environments that value diversity and promote equity. Leaders contribute to equity and justice for all students by developing opportunities to confront and negate patterns of discrimination. School leaders are stewards who are motivated by a deeper commitment to serve the needs of their community. Leaders also realize that change is a slow process and take a long-term approach to actions that improve equity and focus on diversity.

Guiding Principles:

1) Developing opportunities for learning for school leaders. This process requires building collaborative and trusting relationships and creating explicit opportunities (or spaces) for difficult conversations about the challenges of urban diverse schools to occur. Learning requires challenging organizational assumptions about processes and product of school systems and taking new risks in order to improve student learning. Learning for educational leadership connects research and theory with practice, each guiding the other. To make this connection explicit, the learning opportunities must take the real issues and events faced by practitioners and provide some light about how best to understand the problem, and how to create the capacity to change practice in order to move forward in serving more children better.

2) Improving leadership capacity and retention in urban schools. Sustained leadership requires creating opportunities for reflective dialogue and collaboration where school leaders can talk about risks, failures, successes, and learning experiences. Capacity

for learner centered leadership is built by promoting and enhancing leadership from all parts of the organization including non-traditional leadership paths. The program is committed to encouraging individuals from many places within the education organizations to seek leadership opportunities.

3) Promoting learning opportunities that focus on equity and diversity in urban schools. The program seeks to work in education and community environments in which diversity and equity are valued, and/or in organizations that are willing to question taken for granted assumptions regarding equity and diversity. The program wants to encourages participants to think about the long-term impact of educational programming on equity and opportunity. LCL hopes to lead efforts to extend opportunities to experience life more fully and develop richer experiences and opportunities for diverse populations.

Strategic Actions:

1) Partner with other educational institutions including schools, districts, universities on leadership training and development with a focus on learner centered leadership in diverse, urban educational institutions.

2) Develop materials, workshops, and guided experiences to reflect on professional development for education leadership in urban settings with an emphasis on equity and diversity.

3) Conduct research to deepen understanding of education leadership in urban settings and how it may be similar and/or different to leadership in business, military, and political environments.

4) Disseminate and extend what has been learned through conversation in classrooms, meetings, conferences, in papers, articles and books.

Building Relationships: The Key To Creating The Capacity For An Inter-District Mentoring Program For School Administrators

The Learner Centered Leadership program provides professional development opportunities for school administrators, focusing on meeting the needs of beginning administrators through an emerging mentoring model. In order to develop the capacity at an inter-district level for a successful mentoring experience, the first eight months have focused on building relationships between district participants. To do this, the project team has focused its energy on sponsoring district-led workshops, informal socials and activities that provide opportunities for reflection, and participation in a Team Challenge activity that is modeled after ropes and challenge courses. All of these activities have been valuable, and have led to better relationships between participants from the four districts. This is reflected in the feedback forms and personal comments that have been gathered by the project team. As the project moves into the implementation of a mentoring experience, the relationships that have been established in this first phase will continue to flourish and to help the mentoring activities in the future.

Description of Participating Districts

Before looking at the mentoring model and the development of relationships, a description of each of the participating districts is necessary. All four districts are high needs, urban districts with language and culturally diverse student populations. One of the districts is an urban high school district. The other three districts are urban elementary school districts that feed into this high school district. The community in which these districts are located can be described as lower income with a high percentage of ethnic minorities and immigrant

populations. The percentage of children living in poverty among these four districts ranges from 50.4% to 89%. In the high school district, 50.4% of the students are identified at the poverty level. The student population is comprised of 69.2% Hispanic, 10.4% African American, 15.5% Anglo, 1.7% Asian and 3.1% Native American students. Over 60% of the student population speaks English as a second language. In one of the three elementary districts, the schools serve approximately 8,300 students, with a minority enrollment of 88%. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the students live at the low income/poverty level, and 74% are English language learners. Since the 1985-86 school year, there has been a 446% increase in students who have immigrant status within this district. The second elementary school district has about 11,500 students in twenty schools and is facing rapid growth. Four additional schools will be built. The student population has the following breakdown: 75% Hispanic, 19% African-American, 5% Anglo, 0.9% Native American, and 0.15% Asian. Eighty percent (80%) of the school population is at or below the poverty level with over 65% of the students enrolled as English language learners. The final elementary school district is comprised of fifteen school sites serving over 14,000 students. The student population is comprised of 61.05% Hispanic, 21.127% Anglo, 9.4% African-American, 5.17% Native American and 3.1% Asian. This elementary school district has an 85% poverty level, and has over 60% of its student population speaking English as a second language.

The descriptive component includes project information and assessment data which includes frequencies, percentages, averages related to project activities, determination of types of services utilized, and numbers served. Causal-comparative data will be utilized to help determine effectiveness of performances prior to implementation of the project and if there is an increase in effectiveness after the project has implemented each objective. Following standard methods of analyzing qualitative data, data are read multiple times, codes developed which

reflect themes or patterns in the data, and then re-read until all data can be placed in mutually

exclusive and exhaustive categories

Looking at student achievement on the Stanford 9, a norm-referenced test, and on the

Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), the state's standards-based assessment, the

participating schools do worse than other schools in these four districts and within the state. The

Learner Centered Leadership (LCL) program includes 33 schools out of 57 from the four

participating districts. On the AIMS, students are assessed in reading, writing, and math. On

average, students from participating schools score 2.5 points lower than the average score of all
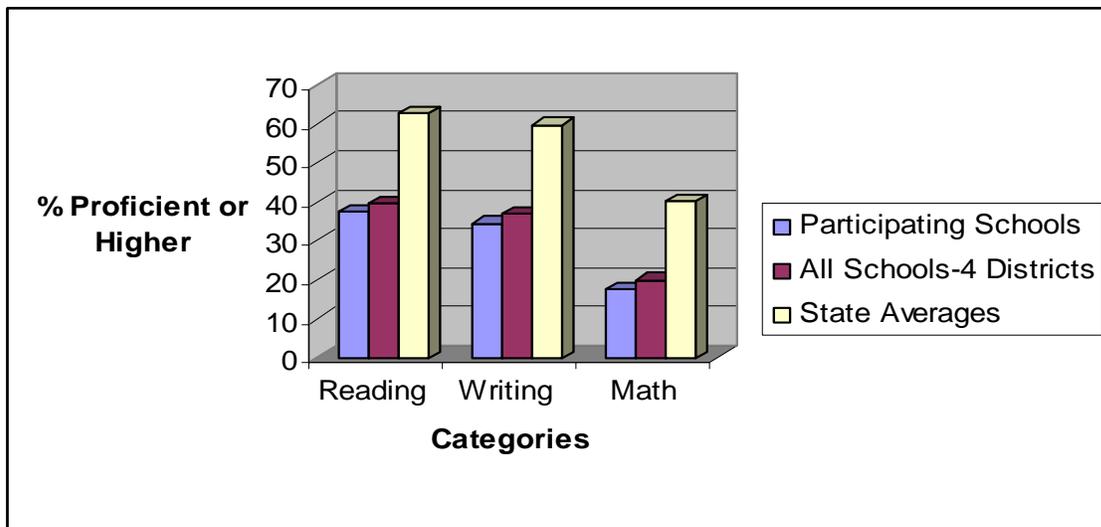
schools from the four districts and

Figure 1. Average Student Scores on AIMS for reading, writing, and math for participation
schools, districts, and state averages.
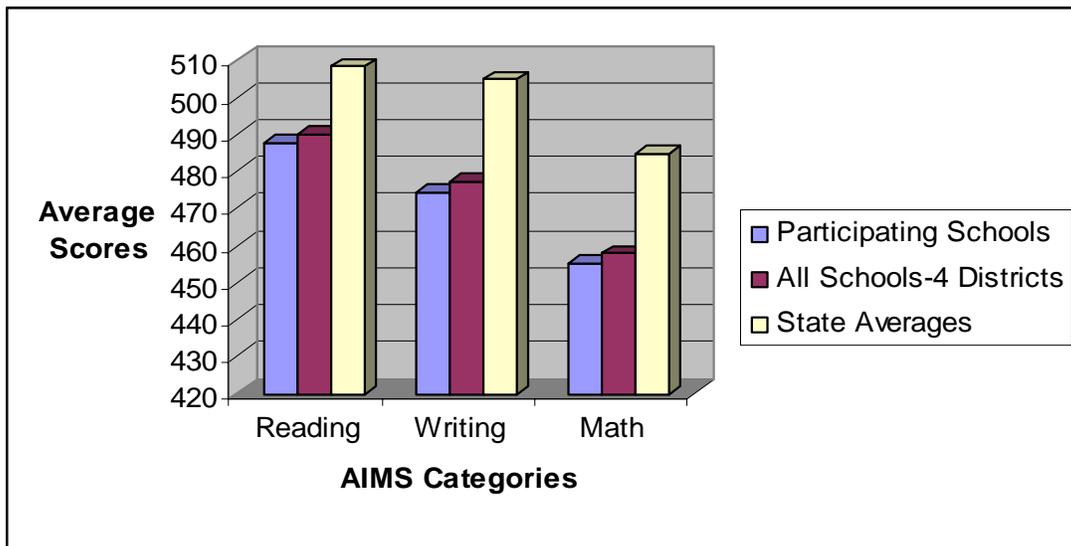
26.75 points lower than the average student score at the state level (see Figure 1). When looking

at the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency or better on the AIMS, the same pattern

is revealed. The average percentage of students from participating schools showing proficiency

or better is 2.3 percentage points below the average for all schools from the four districts and

24.4 percentage points below the state average (see Figure 2). Finally, on the norm-referenced

SAT 9 assessments, students from participating schools again lagged behind other schools from

participating districts and within the state. Looking at average percentile ranks, students from

participating

Figure 2. Average Percentage of Students At or Above Proficiency on AIMS in reading, Writing, and math by schools, districts, and state average.

schools are 2.3 percentile points below the percentile rank average of all schools from the four

districts and 19.5 percentile points below the state average percentile rankings (see Figure 3). As

these statistics show, students from the participating schools struggle academically to do well on

both the AIMS and Stanford 9 assessments. This disparity may be the result of any number of

factors including student demographics, mobility rates of both students and teachers, and access

to educational resources within the schools. With the high percentage of students who are non-

English speakers, who live in poverty, and who do poorly academically, the issues that these

districts face are complex. In order to work through these issues associated with being an urban

school district with a diverse student population, a collaborative model of professional

development for school leaders is important.

Figure 3. Average Percentile Ranks-SAT 9 for participating schools, districts and state averages.
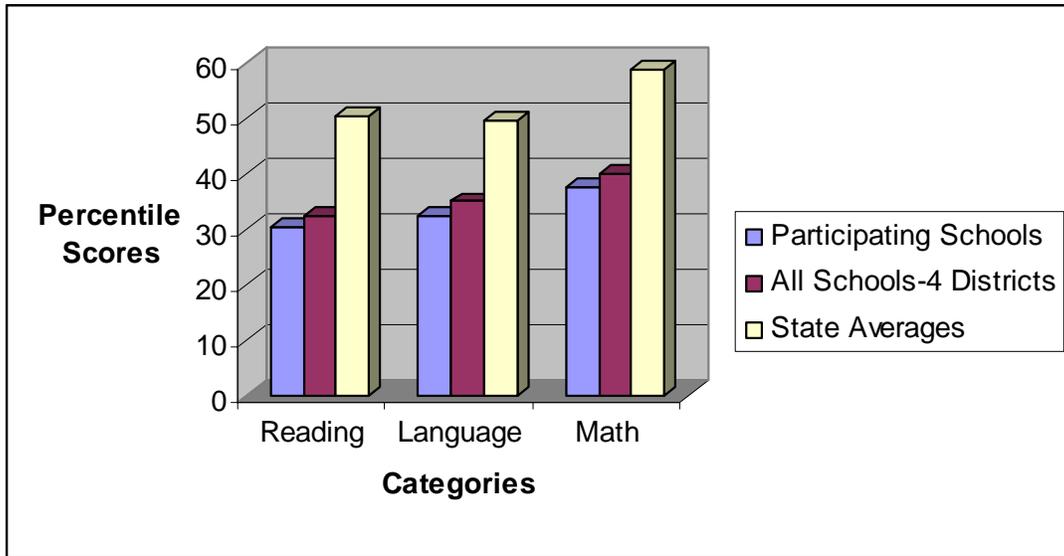
The Learner Centered Leadership Program provides a means for the four districts to share model

programs, to provide research on best practices, and to support each other through the chaotic

process of school leadership and administration in these urban, diverse districts.

<center>Descriptive Elements: Cohorts, Experiences, and Courses</center>

From LCL's first year the collaboration between ASU and the 4 districts has sought

participants from 3 distinct groups. One program goal was the creation and development of a

base of urban school administrators, which required the identification and recruitment of

educators and administrators by each district. Rough guidelines for desired participant

characteristics were developed by the project team, with participating districts responsible for

recruitment. This process of district selection is significant and provides a way of rewarding and

guiding promising staff. During one of the project team meetings (11/13/02) the following

nomination and selection criteria and procedures were developed by the liaisons and other team

members.

1. Each district liaison is to have list of names and packets to ASU by December 3, 2002

2. Group One participants should be teachers and emerging leaders who want to pursue a

    career in educational administration. Group One packets should include three pieces of

    information: a) individual letter of nomination from the district b) resume or vita, and c)

    letter of interest and potential contribution to M.Ed/Certification program in Ed. Admin.

3. Letter will be sent by ASU to each of the participants inviting them to apply to Graduate

    College after acceptance into the program by the Educational Administration Admissions

    Committee.

4. Educational Administration faculty will recommend admission to Graduate College.

There was agreement by the project team (district liaisons and university personnel) that

non-traditional leaders need to be identified in non-traditional ways. It was explicit in these

discussions that participants reflect the diversity of the community in these high-needs, urban

school districts. Along with this, a comprehensive list of other criteria was discussed and agreed

to by the project team. Nominations were to include the following characteristics:

1. risk takers

2. successful teachers in classroom with demonstrated effective instruction

3. teachers who enjoy being in the classroom

4. effective in classroom management skills

5. demonstrate self-direction and initiative

6. have ability to work within established standards and structures

7. loyal to the district

8. stewards of school district and community

9. smart people

10. have the ability to communicate effectively

11. have the ability to prioritize

12. resilient

13. individuals in the beginning stage of formal training in educational administration

14. consideration for overlooked persons

Based on the interviews, the districts did follow these guidelines in selecting participants for Group 1; each used a different process in making these decisions.

With careful attention, it has also led to the inclusion of minorities often underrepresented in administration. Group 1, are prospective administrators, Group 2, rising administrators, and Group 3, experienced administrators. Participants from these groups had specific needs and offerings and were each engaged in varying program activities. Beginning 2005, a new cohort was recruited from within these four districts and other districts.

Prospective Administrators

Group 1, prospective administrators, were enrolled in an administrator certification program at ASU. [1] While entering a master's program is not uncommon for those seeking to step into administrative roles, LCL's emphasis on relationships and collaboration has led to a unique program design. There are some key differences in the program from any that had been offered at ASU in the past.

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[1] We will discuss the collaboration involved in the evolution of the curriculum and some of the consequences of this process for districts and the university in (a later section).

Students generally enter graduate programs separately. Students entering in the same year may take a few classes together early on, but the make up of each class is different and their paths diverge. Group 1 entered the master's program as a cohort. They attended classes and completed course work together. This process lends itself to developing longstanding relationships. It also changes the in-classes dynamics. The course matrix below details 10 courses in the program. There is also a one-year internship.

Traditionally university courses taught by professors have emphasized theory or technical know-how. For the master's program professors and experienced district administrators have been co-taught courses. This collaboration led to the creation of two new courses for the program, Concepts of Learner Centered Leadership and the Sociology of Teaching and Learning. As described in the introduction this process creates a different mix of theory and practical knowledge, the goal being a modeling of praxis for the students. Three courses in the program 1) Leadership Communication & Personal Knowledge, 2) Family-School-Community Connections, and 3) Student Testing, Data and the Evaluation of Learning were taught cooperatively with professors and experienced school administrators.

For the culmination of the course of study the students worked on a capstone project rather than a comprehensive exam. The capstone project calls for the creation of portfolio and the writing of a reflective paper. This paper summarizes the learning that has taken place over the course of study as well as how it the impact on the job.

The figure below describes the courses offered in the LCL Master's Certification Program. The courses covered areas ranging from teaching and learning, family and school connections, and learner centered leadership. The classes are designed to explore each the arenas involved with school administration and supervision.

Figure 4. Learner Centered Leadership Master's/Certification in Educational Administration and Supervision – Course Matrix (October 2004)

Spring 2005	1st Summer Session 2005	Fall 2005	Spring 2006	1st Summer Session 2006	Fall 2006
EDA 501 Competency Performance: *Leadership, Communication & Personal Knowledge* **Mondays** 1/24/-3/14/05 4:40 – 9:30 PM ASU Downtown	EDA 548 Family-School-Community Connections 5/16-6/2/05 **Monday, Tuesday & Thursday** 4:00-8:30 pm ASU Downtown Center	EDA 526 Instructional Supervision & the **Principalship** **Mondays** 4:40 – 9:30 PM ASU Downtown Center	EDA 591 Sociology of Teaching and Learning **Mondays** 4:40 – 9:30 ASU Downtown Center	EDA 591 State & Local Finance: *Resources for School Improvement & Reform* **M, T, Th** 4 PM – 8:30 PM ASU Downtown Dates - TBD	EDA 511 School Law: **Legal Issues for Schools in Urban Settings** **Mondays** 4:40 – 9:30 ASU Downtown Center
EDA 591 Concepts of Learner-Centered Educational Leadership: *How People Learn* **Mondays** 3/21-5/9/05 4:40 – 9:30 PM ASU Downtown Center	COE 505 American Education System: **Issues in Urban Education** 6/13-6/30/05 **Monday, Tuesday & Thursday** 4:00-8:30 pm ASU Downtown Center	EDA 584 *Internship I* **To Be Arranged**	EDA 684 *Internship II* **To Be Arranged**	COE 501 Intro. To Research and Evaluation: *Student Testing, Data, and the Evaluation of Learning* **M, T, Th** 4 PM – 8:30 PM ASU Downtown Dates - TBD	EDA 691 Evaluation & Assessment of School Change: **Capstone and Comps** **Mondays** 4:40 – 9:30 PM ASU Downtown Center

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Prospective Administrators: Findings on Readiness Preparation for Internships

The Learner Centered Leadership Survey was administered the week of April 29, 2004 to the group of Aspiring Administrators, taking coursework to obtain their administrative license and Master's degree in Educational Administration from Arizona State University, Tempe. This group is one of three groups participating in the Learner Centered Leadership Program. The survey helped to determine the effectiveness of current coursework and class preparedness. In addition, the survey examined the support that the aspiring administrators received from their respective districts. Finally, the survey discussed the efficacy of the program and the respondents' willingness to participate in a follow-up session. The survey combined with respondent results helped access immediate feedback as well as will help determine future LCL program design.

Survey Results

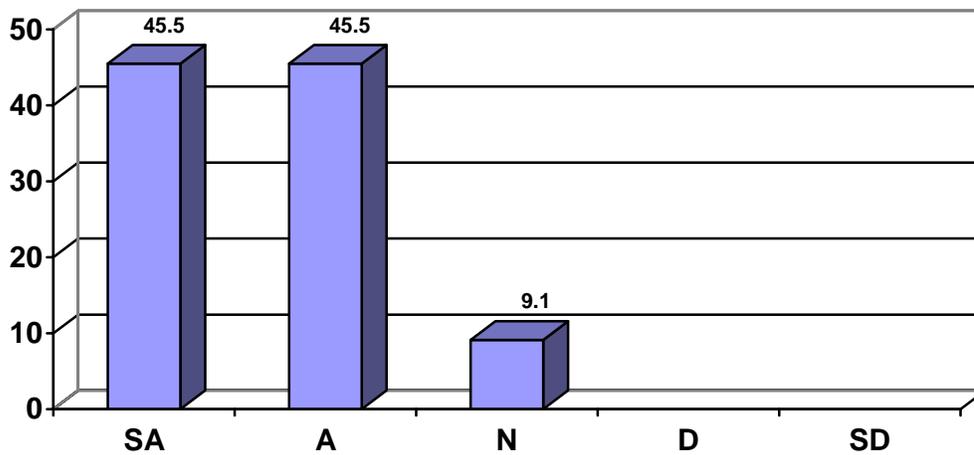**Question 1:** I feel the coursework in the LCL Masters/Certification program prepared me for my

first internship experience.

Table 1

Coursework Preparation Response

Response	N	PCT
Strongly Agree	10	45.5%
Agree	10	45.5%
Neutral	2	9.1%
Disagree	--	--
Strongly Disagree	--	--

Figure 5. Coursework Preparation Response
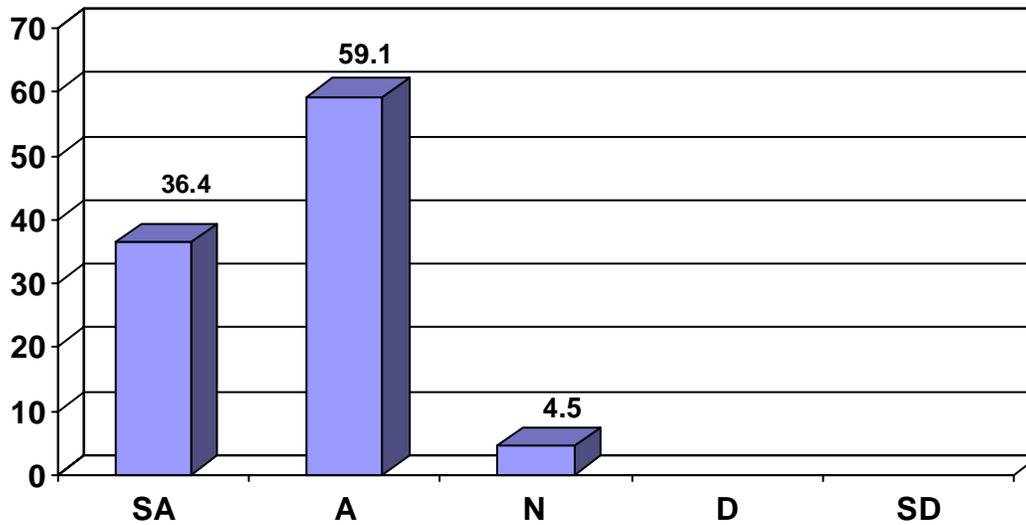
Question 2: I am satisfied with the courses that I have taken as part of LCL

Masters/Certification program.

Table 2

Coursework Satisfaction Response

Response	N	PCT
Strongly Agree	8	36.4%
Agree	13	59.1%
Neutral	1	4.5%
Disagree	--	--
Strongly Disagree	--	--

Figure 6. Coursework Satisfaction Response

Question 3: I feel my work in the LCL program is being supported in my district.

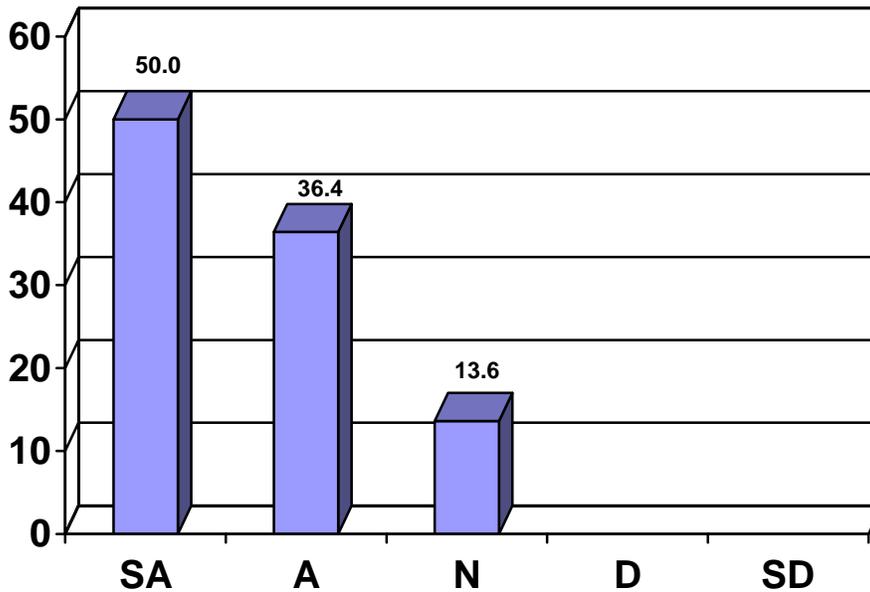Most of the respondents either strongly agreed (50.0%) or agreed (36.4%) that their work in the

LCL program was supported in their district.

Table 3

LCL Program in District Support Response

Response	N	PCT
Strongly Agree	11	50.0%
Agree	8	36.4%
Neutral	3	13.6%
Disagree	--	--
Strongly Disagree	--	--

Figure 7. LCL Program in District Support Response

Question 4: Are there other learning experiences you would like to accomplish in your second

internship?

Some of the "other" learning experiences mentioned below are the following.

budgeting	parent interactions
school law	teacher evaluations
school policy	teacher observations
handling political situations	managing supplies
formative and summative evaluation	

Question 5: What additional learning experiences would you recommend to help you prepare for

the second internship?

The following additional learning experience recommendations are below.

♦ interpersonal relationships
♦ conflict resolution
♦ templates to document hours, opportunities
♦ school law
♦ instructional
♦ implementation of a vision
♦ case studies of dilemmas and conflict of practice and policy
♦ broader perspective of the principal's role
♦ information on the experiences of principals
♦ shadowing of administrators

Question 6: Would you be interested in participating in follow-up sessions during the spring of

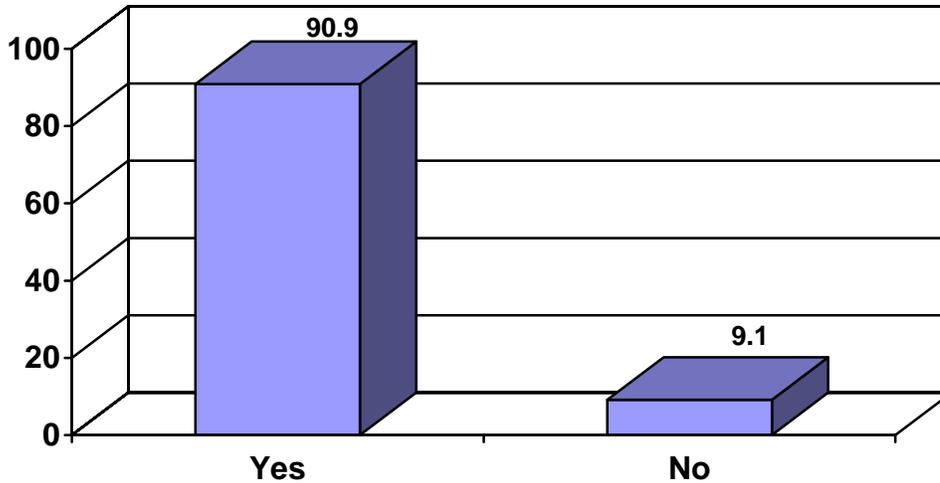2005, after you have completed the LCL program?

A total of 90.9% of the respondents indicated an interest in participating in follow-up sessions

during the Spring of 2005.

Table 4

Follow-Up Session Response

Response	N	PCT
Yes	20	90.9%
No	2	9.1%

Figure 8. Follow-Up Session Response

Rising Administrators

Group 2, rising leaders, were part of the professional development program. These individuals were selected by their respective districts. This experience alone is something new. The Learner-Centered Leadership program has been using a four stage process of mentoring as the foundation of professional development for school administrators involved in the project. Those stages are 1) developing relationships that create the capacity for mentoring, 2) negotiating the mentoring relationship through action and mentoring plan processes, 3) embedding mentoring through action plan implementation, and 4) reflecting on the learning that occurs over the course of the mentoring experience.

Over the course of first year, the grant moved from building relationships, to developing a capacity for action plans, implementation, and mentoring. Activities in first year focused on developing relationships and assessing the needs of this group. The activities listed below describe the assessments used and the facilitated events.

Introduction to Learner Centered Leadership - The first meeting provided a general overview of the grant program. Each participant received a binder that presented general grant information, the philosophy behind learner centered leadership, an overview of the project website, information on mentoring, specific material for both the rising administrators and the accomplished administrators, and a list of organizations and resources available through Arizona State University. During the second half of the session, the rising administrators met separately from the accomplished administrators in order to discuss needs and concerns and to collect specific information from each group. This information provided the guide for planning future activities. During this meeting, participants had an opportunity to introduce themselves, to share

questions and concerns related to educational administration, and to complete surveys that provided introductory data for the grant.

Team Building Exercise - Teambuilding exercises are very important in the development of teams that will work together for an extended period of time on a complex project or a series of activities. The LCL program took part in various teambuilding activities on ASU's campus early in the first-year of the project. It is believed that teambuilding is not a silver bullet for fixing dysfunctional teams, or assuring that all of your teams will work well. The teambuilding exercises can be helpful in developing effective teams, if they are selected to enable teams to explore critical issues that help a team function.

Training and Educational Leadership Self Assessment (TELSA), the TELSA and the Leadership Development Needs Assessment (LEADNA) – These tests were completed by the rising administrators. The purposes of the assessments were to provide educational leaders with a tool for assessing their development needs. The TELSA is divided into ten general functions: lead analysis, design, and development of instruction; lead implementation of instruction; lead evaluation of instruction; lead staff development; perform learner-related duties; perform staff-related duties; perform budgetary and other administrative duties; communicate and use communication technology; self development; and crisis management. All 32 rising administrators completed the TELSA. The LEADNA is a 360 degree assessment in which the participants selected five individuals (two who are people whom they supervise, two who are colleagues, and one who supervises them) to complete the survey.

TELSA scores and reports

Data is also gained from participants' evaluation forms completed after professional development activities, from their participation in discussion groups held to identify various

factors impacting their progress through the program, from participants' portfolios and action

plans, and from administrator performance indicators including the Training and Educational

Leader Self Assessment (TELSA) and the Leadership Development Needs Assessment

(LEADNA).

In the first year of the program, rising administrators completed the TELSA test to assess

professional development needs. 14 of theses administrators retook the TELSA at the end of the

second year. While the results and changes are not statistically significant and cannot be

attributed solely to the program there was an interesting finding. In completing the TELSA

administrators must assess the difficulty, importance, and frequency of tasks within 10 general

leadership categories. The consistent change that is evident in the table is in the importance of

tasks in the instructional leadership categories. These tasks related directly to instructional

leadership versus budgeting, crisis, or staff related duties. We find it very interesting that this

emerged since the focus of the program is on learner centered leadership and linking leadership

to instruction.

Table 5

TELSA Average Results (Rising Administrators, February 1, 2003)

Category	Difficulty	Importance	Frequency	Sum
Lead analysis design and development	2.84	3.46	4.1	10.4
Lead implementation of instruction	2.24	4.2	2.93	9..37
Lead evaluation of instruction	2.39	3.69	3.66	9.74
Lead staff development	2.48	4.01	3.46	9.95
Learner-Related Duties	1.86	4.49	2.2	8.55
Staff-Related Duties	2.42	4.43	3.32	10.17
Budget & Other Admin. Duties	2.83	4.2	3.9	10.93
Communication Skills	1.83	4.0	2.58	8.41
Self-Development	2.34	4.55	1.6	8.49
Crisis Management	2.09	4.58	3.87	10.54

Use the following scale to interpret scores.
Score of 3-7-No formal training or development necessary-address your specific needs through reading and/or coaching from a mentor.
Score of 8-11-Initial formal training and development necessary (train one time). Take a college or commercial training course. Attend a seminar.
Score of 12-15-Initial and on-going formal training and development necessary. Take a college or commercial training course, attend a seminar. Follow up with refresher courses and seminar

Eighteen months into the program, the rising administrators were given the TELSA a second time. The results follow.

Table 6

TELSA Summary Results

Category	Difficulty	Importance	Frequency	Sum
Lead analysis, design, and development of instruction	-0.353	0.095	-0.114	-0.372
Lead implementation of instruction	-0.192	0.053	-0.312	-0.451
Lead evaluation of instruction	-0.546	0.047	-0.361	-0.86
Lead staff development	-0.37	-0.307	-0.332	-1.009
Learner Related Duties	-0.204	-0.534	-0.248	-0.986
Staff Related Duties	-0.702	-0.671	-0.298	-1.671
Budget and Other Administrative Duties	-0.534	-0.496	-0.268	-1.298
Communication Skills	-0.191	-0.219	-0.001	-0.411
Self Development	-0.501	-0.461	0.118	-0.844
Crisis Management	-0.287	-0.395	0.299	-0.383
Average Change	-0.388	-0.2888	-0.1517	-0.4360526

Squaw Peak Hike - Participants had an opportunity to meet informally during the morning for a hike up to the summit of Squaw Peak. Those who wanted had an opportunity to get breakfast after the two hour hike.

Sunrise Storytelling - Alhambra and Creighton School District administrators hosted a morning coffee social where participants from all three groups had an opportunity to share humorous stories related to teaching or administrative experiences. Nineteen participants reflecting all three groups attended the Sunrise Storytelling.

Management vs. Leadership – During this second Saturday session, participants first had an opportunity to meet in respective rising administrator or accomplished administrator groups in order to wrap up unfinished business from the previous meeting. During the second half of the session, participants broke out into small groups in order to have an opportunity to engage in more intimate discussions. Facilitators from the four districts provided prompts to initiate the discussion and lead the activities. Participants worked in the first series of small groups discussing leadership versus management, and during the second series of small groups carefully considered a scenario related to a teacher's dress in order to apply some of the concepts from the first small group.

Professional Portfolios - The rising administrators had an opportunity to talk about the importance of professional portfolios in relation to personal improvement and reflective practice. The participants used the ISLLC and state standards as a foundation for dialogue about professional leadership practices and daily activities that reflect these. Rising administrators were introduced to professional portfolios and the importance of capturing daily practice in a format that reflects professional standards and principles of learner-centered leadership. The workshop was held at Excelencia Elementary School in the Creighton School District. The

workshop was also used to introduce the action planning activity that all rising administrators will be completing. A draft of the action plan form was shared with the participants. Participants agreed that the professional portfolio, the Arizona professional standards, and the action plan can be intertwined in a way that engages the participants to professionally improve while simultaneously helping the school work toward its site improvement goals. Seventeen of the rising administrators attended. At the end of the workshop, a feedback form was completed by 15 of the participants.

Student Achievement and School Climate - Participants from Alhambra Elementary School District developed the curriculum and experience and hosted this workshop, which focused on both using data to improve student achievement and fostering a school climate that reflects student success. Sixty-four people attended the workshop.

McDowell Mountain Hike - Participants had an opportunity to meet informally to hike the summit trail at McDowell Mountain Regional Park. After the hike, participants met for breakfast. Three individuals participated in the hike.

Facilitative Leadership - The leadership team from Creighton Elementary School District developed the curriculum and facilitated the workshop on facilitative leadership. During this activity, participants learned several strategies related to this leadership skill. Fifty-two participants attended this event. Table 12 provides the feedback results from the workshop.

Coffee Gathering - Administrators from Phoenix Union High School District hosted a coffee gathering for all participants during the morning. This was an informal opportunity for the participants to socialize. Nine individuals participated in the coffee social.

Reading Roundtables – Roundtables were organized using the project website and Listserv for the summers of 2003 and 2004. All participants were asked to participate in two on-

line Summer Reading Roundtables during the months of July and August, 2003 and in July and

August of 2004. This was done to connect LCL project participants with some of the leading

researchers and practitioners in the fields of urban education and education for linguistically and

culturally diverse settings and draw from popular readings in the field. The planning group

opted to capitalize on the strength of technology to mediate summer book discussions among

participants who could be anywhere in the country. Eight on-line discussions were held on the

following books in year 2003:

- o   Giuliani's *Leadershi*

- o   Kohl's *I Won't Learn from You*

- o   Delpit's *Other People's Children*

- o   Stailey's *Think Rather of Zebra*

- o   Fisher's *Getting to Yes*

- o   Healy's *Endangered Minds*

- o   Valdes' *Con Respeto*

- o   Kohn's *Punished by Rewards*

In 2004, the group decided to adopt more face-to-face discussions.

- o   Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand*

- o   Tse's *Why Don't They Learn English*

- o   Tatum's *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*

- o   Wagner's *Making the Grade*

- o   Heifetz's *Leadership Without Easy Answers*

- o   Clawson's *Getting Below the Surface*

- o   Maxwell's *Laws of Leadership*

- o Whitaker's *Dealing With Difficult Teachers*

Activities in the second year shifted as they became more focused on bringing personal and professional development into daily practice. This took several forms and demonstrated the strength of the cross district and university relationships established in the first year. The centerpiece of the activities was the action plan. Workshops were designed by planning teams to give the rising administrators (Group 2) guidance and tools for developing and implementing successful action plans. Another dimension was added to this progression with the creation of formal mentoring relationships between Group 2 and Group 3. The following paragraphs and subsequent papers give more details of each of the activities and initiatives.

Strand Workshops (December 2003 through March 2004) focused on 4 areas:

1. Human Relations/Communication

2. Language and Cultural Diversity

3. Learner Centered Leadership

4. Mediating Change/Dealing with Resistance

Rising administrators were asked to select 2 strands that tied directly to the action goals they had identified. The workshops were designed to provide the rising administrators with resources and information that could be incorporated into their comprehensive action plan and to continue to develop relationships between mentors and those being mentored so that the rising administrators would be able to identify key individuals who could act as coaches with specific steps of the action plan.

Southwest Leadership Institute - February 2004, featured the work of Peter Senge and others from the book, *Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares about Education.* Twenty-four participants from LCL attended the

conference (2 liaisons, 9 accomplished administrators, 8 rising administrators, and 5 prospective administrators). Members of the project team (liaisons, superintendents, and ASU faculty) also served as facilitators of the breakout sessions at the conference. Strategies and materials that were introduced at the institute and in the book were used in future workshops facilitated by LCL participants. For example, an iceberg metaphor was used as a tool to examine situations and dilemmas related to urban education and to further reflect on the root causes. The Southwest Leadership Institute served as a conduit for disseminating valuable strategies that rising administrators could incorporate into their action plan process and that accomplished administrators could use as part of school improvement planning.

Action Planning Workshop (April 2004) - The project team hoped the rising administrators would select a model that worked best for them to reach their professional goals. Instead, the project team identified six critical attributes that needed to be reflected in the final action plans. In analyzing various models for action planning (Donaldson, Bowe, MacKenzie, & Marnik, 2004; Goldberg & Sifonis, 1994; National Study of School Evaluation, 2004), the LCL project team noted that the six attributes are critical regardless of an action plan's format or focus (e.g., professional development, program implementation, or action research). The attributes are: specific, observable and measurable, data-driven, continuous and ongoing, sustainable, and critically reflective.

Formal mentoring relationships – These were seen as critical by the districts teams and each one realized that research on mentoring made it clear that the mentoring relationships should be systemic and planned (Daresh, 2001; Hay, 1995; Johnson, 1997). The one high school district, the team of participants decided to develop pairings that were based on location. With the three elementary districts, the pairings related specifically to the action plan goals. Each

mentee was asked to select an individual who had the expertise and knowledge that aligned with the action goal and needs of the rising administrator.

Coaching mentoring – This was also something the districts wanted to use. Along with this one-on-one relationship, the district teams also wanted to use a team coaching mentoring process. In this process, each rising administrator would have a team of mentors who help with the implementation of the action plan. Each rising administrator (mentee) would identify a mentor(s) with each action step or strategy associated with the plan. This mentor would serve as a coach who specifically assists the mentee with the completion of that action step. The mentees were encouraged to use mentors outside of the district teams including university faculty and mentors from the other three districts. By doing this, the mentoring process became more collaborative and worked to develop inter-district and district-university relationships.

Group 3, established administrators, took part in many of the same activities described above for Group 2. Yet, their involvement was qualitatively different. Group 2 participants played a role in facilitating the design and process of the activities and workshops. Rather than describing their role in each of the activities it may be more fruitful to highlight the nature of this facilitation in 4 key realms 1) co-instruction, 2) planning teams, 3) action planning, 4) mentoring.

Praxis, the melding of practice and theory, or theory infused practice is a project goal, and this group in different ways has served as the conduit.

1. Co-instruction went beyond the workshops. As mentioned above, courses for the Master's program taught by the professors and practitioners was new for the university as well as the districts. Four of the ten courses were co-taught and both internships supervised by clinical faculty with strong administrative experience at principal and superintendent levels. Members from group 3 also facilitated online discussions for the summer roundtables.

2. Planning Teams created four strands that focus attention on the issues and challenges associated urban education. The strands, which developed from needs assessments and program priorities, are human relations/communication, language and cultural diversity, learner centered leadership, and mediating change. The planning team for each strand includes mentors, liaisons, and ASU faculty.

3. Action Planning served to make professional development part of daily practice in alignment with district goals. The project team identified six critical attributes that needed to be reflected in the final action plans. The action planning gave group 3 participants the opportunity to serve as outside resources on goal driven plans.

4. Mentoring went on informally in some of the districts, but the creation and support of a formal mentoring program was a way of ensuring that administrators who might otherwise have been missed were included.

<div align="center">Preliminary Outcomes</div>

The following section gives data from important project tasks. Some of the information takes the form of demographics, survey results, participant responses, and interview quotes. Tables 7 and 8 offer a breakdown of the original project participants by gender, ethnicity, and position. Table 9 provides similar data for year 2. Table 10 is another piece of demographic data. This table shows the number of promotions for participants over the first 2 years of the program.

Table 7

Participant Information (Gender and Ethnicity)

	Gender	**Ethnicity**
Prospective Leaders (N=32)	Female=18 (56%) Male= 14 (44%)	African American=7 (22%) Caucasian=14 (44%) Hispanic=11 (34%)
Rising Leaders (N=31)	Female=23 (74%) Male=8 (26%)	African American=6 (19%) Asian American=1 (3%) Caucasian=13 (42%) Hispanic=10 (32%) Native American=1 (3%)
Accomplished Leaders (N=30)	Female=17 (57%) Male=13 (43%)	African American=9 (30%) Caucasian=16 (53%) Hispanic=5 (17%)

Table 8

Participant Information (Educational Positions. The table provides the professional positions that are held by participants in each group.

	Professional Position	**Number/Percent**
Prospective Leaders **(N=32)**	Elementary Teacher Secondary Teacher	24/75% 8/25%
Rising Leaders **(N=31)**	Assistant Principal Dean of Students District Personnel Intervention Specialist Principal	15/49% 4/13% 2/6% 4/13% 6/19%
Accomplished Leaders **(N=30)**	Assistant Superintendent Directors Principal	2/7% 3/9% 25/84%

Table 9

Participant Information (Rising Administrators)(April 30, 2004)

Rising Administrator Participation	Total Population	Gender	Ethnicity
Total Enrolled (Year One and Two)	35	23 Females (66%) 12 Males (34%)	7 African Americans (20%) 1 Asian American (3%) 17 Caucasians (48%) 9 Hispanics (26%) 1 Native American (3%)
Current Participation	31	21 Females (68%) 10 Males (32%)	6 African Americans (20%) 1 Asian American (3%) 14 Caucasians (45%) 9 Hispanics (29%) 1 Native American (3%)

Table 10

Promotion (Participants within each group) (April 30, 2004)

Group	Number of Promotions
Prospective Administrators	1
Rising Administrators	10
Accomplished Administrators	3

Nearly every project function included some sort of feedback survey. Rather than going through these results this paper will focus on rising administrators' responses to the second year's strand and action planning workshops. These sessions highlighted two keys of the project, university and district collaboration and professional development.

<div align="center">Theoretical Implications: What We've Learned</div>

The best examples of professional development reflect a method of embedding new knowledge into the existing roles, processes, and structures of schools (Guskey, 2000). Our approach fosters individual and collective learning through a collaborative mentoring process that includes action learning projects. The proposed research examines collaborative mentoring, how it leads to changed leadership practices, and by extension, how it ultimately impacts practices in schools and classrooms associated with student learning.

In the feedback collected from participants in the Learner Centered Leadership program, the dominant theme that has emerged is the importance of having the time to engage in conversation with other administrators about the intricacies of administration in urban settings. As part of this dialogue, case studies and narratives have become a dominant way to illustrate the complexities and complications related to school administration and leadership. Narratives and cases illustrate some of the ways in which administrators work through challenges and make decisions regarding complicated issues using personal knowledge. One goal of crafting cases has been to provide opportunities for urban school administrators to share experience, information, and innovative strategies, which address complex school leadership themes such as accountability, assessment, and student achievement. Sharing knowledge and information and understanding its complexity, through cases and narratives, has been an important part of the interactive and communal process.

Using formative assessments and initial focus groups with participants, the Learner Centered Leadership project team identified four themes as the subjects for the collaborative mentoring: 1) learner centered practice, 2) language and cultural diversity; 3) collaboration within a democratic community; and 4) school improvement and change. These topical areas became the source of focused dialogue and sharing of practical experiences around closing the achievement gap for students. In several instances, case stories (Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002) were used in order to provide data that could be critically analyzed to discuss impact of instructional and programmatic decisions on student achievement. Based upon self-determined needs and action planning goals at the school site, participants had an opportunity to participate in thematically based collaborative mentoring sessions. Participants then used these sessions as a framework to examine programs and instructional practices at their individual school site, raise issues and concerns, and adopt new strategies concerning student learning.

This collaborative mentoring model, examined through this research project, was designed to assist school leaders in urban districts develop collective wisdom regarding practice. The importance of learning to leadership practice, the significance of language and culture, and the availability of community resources are part of the wisdom to be tapped to ensure that all students including English language learners achieve at par with or better than their counterparts in affluent communities. Collaborative mentoring assists school administrators become better learners, collaborators, and problem-solvers by encouraging them to tap into community resources and think systemically about how to manage challenges associated with urban, diverse schools; ultimately, these administrators take actions which result in better learning outcomes for students.

One theme of this paper and the project has been to create a university and district collaboration. This has led to 3 developments at ASU. 1) The certification curriculum was developed and taught in collaboration with district partners. 2) ASU entered into professional development of administrators. 3) Collaboration developed on project and strand teams.

Specifically speaking, a few ideas that emerged from the collaboration include the following:

- Time is hard to find – The time commitment for schools administrators is great, and finding adequate time frames to meet and discuss ideas was a reoccurring challenge within the grant. Using the action planning process forced administrators to find time to achieve planning goals. The more aligned to district goals, the better these action plans were implemented.

- Collaboration takes time and commitment – In order for people to open up and create a genuine dialogue; they must often first become comfortable with one another. The collaborative efforts required consistent time and commitment from all participants. This does not happen by accident.

- Drawing knowledge and relevance needs from districts is instrumental to gaining support – The input from the districts on pertinent school-based issue and topics is highly valued. In order to effectively build a partnership with the site based personnel, it is first imperative to collect and gather their needs from first-hand experience.

- Making professional development part of an overall district commitment – Districts are often mired in day to day functions of schools. A long-term commitment to professional development is a key component to opening opportunities for the multitude of stakeholders while proving opportunities for growth and improvement.

- Action plans tied to district goals and mentoring were viewed equally as important – Practitioners like applicable projects and goals that can help them in the day to day operations of a school. While the mentoring did provide valuable knowledge and information from more seasoned administrators, the action plans were locally focused and therefore truly representative of the praxis of teaching.

- Participation by superintendent and district administration teams is crucial to administrative professional development – Their presence in encouraging and enriching member participation was important to morale, sense of ownership, value for the project, and overall rating of success.

- School practitioners enjoy the company of university professors and vice versa – Being able to appreciate the differences in personality, perspective, and experience makes working together and investing extra time worthwhile.

- University role based less on research alone than understanding research and context– In order to make contact and engage with administrators during planning, workshops and events it was key for professors to be sensitive to the context. Presenting the statistics or history of state testing was not the same as addressing the direct concerns of speaking with teachers, students or parents about them.

- Roles and work ethic of each group became more respected over time – Familiarity led to the groups adopting new viewpoints which respected the workplace cultures and challenges of each.

- Takes time to create spaces for criticism – The climate of respect and understanding is needed to maintain constructive critique and dialogue. A "critical friends" approach was

possible as participants became more familiar with each other in 'safe zones' between

university and district environments.

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