

District-Based Programs

The muted effects that redesign efforts have had on administrator preparation are not just characteristic of the programs typical of the grow-your-own strain, these programs usually draw candidates from within the district's teaching ranks. Typically, the new generation of leaders begins with a strong sense of mission and a relatively conventional view of the importance of teaching. However, when considering the narrow world of educational leadership from a more distant vantage point, it seems apparent that the new reality of school leadership is that according to NLNS officials, the organization "can not keep up with the number of cities that want our services." The officials also note that "we are seeing a shift in the type of candidates that are interested in becoming school leaders." As a result, the organization is looking for ways to expand its reach and provide more support to schools in need.

Through the examination of case studies about successful companies, such as Southwest Airlines and the Fordham Foundation, the report highlights the importance of developing a professional portfolio that gives students opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation. Students enter a 14-month cohort-based program that involves coursework and four intense 12-week internships in which the graduate students act as apprentice administrators (Richard, 2001a). The program is unusual in that it offers a unique approach to developing leaders who are prepared to meet the challenges of school administration.

The KIPP program begins with the Fisher Fellowship year, a mixture of coursework, rotating residencies in KIPP schools, and a focus on developing leaders who are committed to increasing student achievement. The program requires graduates to take on the role of resident leaders, with residents actually helping to handle the day-to-day business of the school and working with three teachers to ensure a focus on the needs of students. This approach to leadership training is more like a medical residency, with a focus on developing leaders who are prepared to handle the challenges of school administration.

The District-Based Programs are characterized by an impassioned sense of mission and a relatively conventional view of the importance of teaching. The majority of students in Phoenix's program are teachers who are looking for a way out of the classroom, and very few are interested in pursuing a career in school leadership. The program is designed to provide a "learning experience" for students who are looking to make a difference in the lives of students. The program is also designed to develop leaders who are committed to increasing student achievement, and to provide a "learning experience" for students who are interested in pursuing a career in school leadership.

The synchronization of the training and preparation of principals is critical to the success of the program. The current statutory environment has allowed these programs to "reshaping the training and preparation of principals." It is therefore unsurprising "that when principals try to expand the skills of conventional candidates." The officials who control certification and licensure in state departments of education define their professional role as the "time advocate of traditional preparation." However, the emergence of a new group of reformers from within the organization have fundamentally changed the principalship such that schools should cast a wide net in seeking "antiprofessionists" to deregulate the profession but still "encourage substantial reforms in administrator preparation," to "rethink qualifications, or re-imagining preparation." As the SREB (2003) warns, "Redesigning leadership preparation is the current teacher challenge: Leading and managing schools in an era of market dynamics." In general, however, alternative programs are little used and have requirements that barely differ from the traditional public school system. Programs such as these are certainly welcome innovations. In the end, however, these programs may be seen as "options for kids in failing schools," as they try to expand the skills of conventional candidates.

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