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AN ANALYSIS OF A DISTRICT-LED LEADERSHIP SEMINAR ON THE  
DISPOSITIONS OF CERTIFIED STAFF MEMBERS

By

Michael J. Rupprecht

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Dr. Kay A. Keiser, Ed.D.

Omaha, Nebraska

December 2013

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## **Abstract**

### **AN ANALYSIS OF A DISTRICT-LED LEADERSHIP SEMINAR ON THE DISPOSITIONS OF CERTIFIED STAFF MEMBERS**

Michael J. Rupprecht, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 2013

Advisor: Dr. Kay A. Keiser

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar had a significant impact on the dispositions of its members compared to staff members who did not participate in the program. The participants involved ( $N = 20$ ) included a naturally formed group of certified staff members ( $n = 10$ ) who attended and completed a nine-month, district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar and a demographically-matched, randomly selected group of certified staff members ( $n = 10$ ) who did not attend or complete the leadership seminar. The dependent variable used in this study was the Administrator Disposition Index (ADI), a 36-item, five-point Likert survey aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. The survey consists of a 17-item student-centered subscale and a 19-item community-centered subscale.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of a district-led leadership program had a statistically significant impact on the ADI community subscale and the ADI composite score of those who participated in the leadership seminar. The findings also indicate that the leadership program did not have a statistically significant impact on the ADI student subscale for those who participated in the seminar. Overall, the study suggests that a district-led leadership program may promote the development of

dispositions necessary to be a successful administrator. A discussion of the findings, implications for policy and practice, as well as recommendations for further study are included.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Case for Leadership**

Lee Iacocca isn't a name typically found in most educational publications. As a former CEO of the Chrysler Corporation, however, Lee Iacocca clearly understood the importance of leadership. Many of these philosophies about leadership were captured in his book, *Where Have All the Leaders Gone?* Although his work is primarily a commentary on the state of American politics on the eve of the 2008 presidential election, many of Iacocca's ideas about leadership are surprisingly applicable to the field of educational administration.

Like managing a successful car company, providing students with a high quality education is an exceptionally difficult task. In order to give students the opportunity to reach their potential, a community must be able to harness the vast array of material, fiscal, and human resources at their disposal. While each of these resources has an important role to play, the greatest, and perhaps most essential resource, is leadership. Effective leadership separates a good school from a great one. It is the difference between functionality and success.

Although effective leadership may be found at all levels within a school district, it is the building principal, working in conjunction with his or her staff members, who can have the greatest impact on student achievement. According to Hallinger and Heck (1998), school leadership has a small, but educationally significant effect on student learning, typically accounting for 5-7% of the differences in student achievement. In spite of the fact that these contributions are largely indirect, strong leadership has the

potential to unleash the hidden capacities of those who work in the organization. This, in turn, can have a significant impact on student learning (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Likewise, just as effective principal leadership is associated with high levels of student achievement, the lack of good leadership, as represented through high rates of principal turnover, is associated with low levels of student achievement. In a study involving 2,570 teachers in 80 different schools, researchers discovered that schools with the highest number of principals over a ten-year period of time had the lowest student achievement (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). Collectively, these findings illustrate the fact that good leadership should not be thought of as a luxury, but rather a necessity for student success.

Effective principals have an enormous influence on the climate of their buildings. Through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers, strong principals can have an influence on both the learning environment and, ultimately, school outcomes (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2006). On the other hand, when principals leave, teachers tend to depart as well. This, in turn, can have a dramatic impact on student achievement. This domino effect of principal and teacher turnover can not only be disastrous for the atmosphere of the building, but also the ability of the organization to articulate its goals, effectively allocate resources, and develop organizational structures to support teaching and learning (Brewer, 1993).

A strong principal is also essential to the building's school improvement efforts (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In order to create an environment that is conducive to school improvement, a principal must first be able to create a collaborative atmosphere built on mutual respect and trust. This foundation is built

slowly over time, and is not fully established until both the principal and the staff members are able to draw upon the strengths of one another for the benefit of the school. On the other hand, institutions that suffer from multiple changes in leadership become breeding grounds for staff cynicism, making it difficult for school leaders to create any meaningful change (Fink & Brayman, 2006). In buildings where principal turnover is particularly high, staff members tend to be reluctant to commit to a long-term process of improvement when those efforts may be abandoned by a change in leadership. In such an environment, the prevailing attitude among staff members may be best summed up by the expression, “this too shall pass”.

### **The Problem of Supply**

Unfortunately, many of those individuals who have had such a profound influence on the lives of their students are increasingly in short supply. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, close to 20% of the nation’s 90,000 public school principals leave their jobs each year, leaving approximately 18,000 schools with a new principal each fall (Battle, 2010). Other studies investigating the shortage of experienced school leaders have reached similar conclusions. Researchers in Texas, for example, found that 53% of principals left their current position within the first three years, with approximately 71% leaving after five years (Baker, 2007).

The problem of supply is even more pronounced when one examines the retention rates of principals who work in low achieving, high poverty, or minority schools. From 1996-2008, Fuller and Young (2009) examined the retention rates of newly hired principals who worked in the Texas Public Schools. They determined that principals who served in low achieving, high poverty schools had the lowest retention rates (Fuller &

Young, 2009). The researchers attributed these findings to a variety of factors including the pressures associated with student accountability, the increasing complexity and intensity of the job, lack of support from the central office, and low compensation. In a similar study, researchers analyzing administrative data from North Carolina and Illinois found that principals who served in buildings containing large proportions of minority students are more likely to transfer to other schools or leave the position altogether compared to principals who work in other buildings (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2005).

Although the decision to leave a leadership position is undoubtedly a personal one, some common themes are present in the literature. Increasingly, principals are being pulled away from the tasks they find most satisfying, such as working with students, and are forced to spend more time on managerial tasks they find less satisfying, such as student discipline and paperwork (Dipaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Other researchers point to the heightened awareness that has been placed on student achievement since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. In a multiple case study of principal succession spanning a 30-year period of time, Fink and Brayman (2006) concluded that the impact of high stakes testing and standards based instruction may be partly to blame for principals leaving the profession prematurely (Fink & Brayman, 2006).

The stress associated with increased public scrutiny over academic performance is only one of several reasons why newly certified administrators are hesitant to become principals. More than ever before, the role of the principal is one that has become increasingly complex (Cooley & Shen, 2003). As such, researchers have identified

several common themes which explain why teachers are reluctant to accept a leadership role in a school district. Some of the more frequently mentioned reasons include: increased responsibility for student achievement (Bass, 2006; Winter, Rinehart, Keedy, & Bjork, 2004; Winter & Morgenthal, 2002; Pounder & Merrill, 2001a), loss of contact time with children (Howley, Adrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Adams & Hambright, 2004), the stress involved with school and district politics (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Howley et al., 2005), loss of tenure (Bass, 2006), and the time required to fulfill the duties of the position (Bass, 2006; Pounder & Merrill, 2001a).

The amount of time required to fulfill the duties of a building principal is a particularly sensitive issue for those who belong to “Generation X” or “Generation Y”. Unlike administrators from previous generations, newly certified principals are less likely to sacrifice their personal time for the sake of their professional career. In a study involving over 300 educational administration Masters students, Hancock, Black, and Bird (2006) concluded that the personal needs of "Generation X" and "Generation Y" candidates, such as spending time with family and friends, often outweighed their interest in pursuing an administrative position. These findings were later echoed by Fink (2010), who noted that newly certified administrators are more passionate about maintaining a reasonable balance between their work and personal life.

### **Unequal Distribution**

The problem of supply is further compounded by the unequal distribution of candidates across the nation. Increasingly, individuals who are entering school administration are becoming much more selective about where they are willing to work (Fink, 2010). High poverty and low performing school districts, for example, are at a



distinct disadvantage compared to affluent, suburban school districts based on the number of applications received for principal vacancies (Roza, Celio, Harvey, & Wishon, 2003). Likewise, rural schools also receive far fewer applications for administrative openings than their urban counterparts (Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002).

The problem of unequal distribution of leadership is not only found among school districts, but within districts as well. In a longitudinal study from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools from 2003-2004 through 2008-2009, researchers discovered that students who attend low-income, low-performing schools that were predominately non-white were more likely to be led by a principal who was less qualified than his or her colleagues within the same district (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010). In general, these schools tended to be staffed by a first-year or interim principal, a principal with less average experience, a principal who had not yet earned a Masters degree, or a principal who attended a less selective college. These findings were similar to those of Papa et al. (2002), who investigated the distribution of administrators within the New York City schools. In this study, Papa discovered that schools where at least 20% of the students scored on the lowest level of a fourth grade English language arts exam, 23% of the principals were first-year administrators. On the other hand, only 5% of the principals were first-year administrators where none of the students scored in the lowest level on the same exam (Papa et al., 2002).

In spite of the shortages of certified applicants that exist in a number of schools and districts, some researchers believe that the problems of supply may be overstated. In a survey conducted in eighty-three school districts in ten different regions across the United States, Roza et al. (2003) determined that the average principal applicant pool had

declined by approximately 10% over a seven-year period of time. In spite of the decrease, however, approximately 50% of the school districts surveyed reported no significant change in the applicant pool, while 14% of the districts surveyed actually reported an increase in the number of applicants per vacancy (Roza et al., 2003). More recently, Gajda and Militello (2008) also noted a decline in principal application pools in spite of the fact that the number of certified administrators is nearly twice the number of available positions. The researchers concluded that redefining the role of the principal might help attract effective school leaders to the position (Gajda & Militello, 2008).

### **The Wrong Type of Leader**

Part of the problem associated with the decline in qualified principal candidates stems from the skills that are now an essential part of the job description. Although there are several, traditional responsibilities that are likely to remain part of a principal's job, educational leaders are now expected to be well-versed in topics, such as analyzing formative and summative test data, that are often outside of traditional training programs (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009). At the same time, principals are occasionally asked to implement procedures that conflict with their traditional role as the head of the school. For example, while many individuals still view the principal as the final authority for building-based decisions, principals are expected to routinely engage in shared decision-making with their staff members. Effective leadership, therefore, is no longer about maintaining the status quo and ensuring that bus schedules run smoothly. Instead, effective leadership is now about taking risks, building relationships, changing cultures, and having the ability to create a shared vision of the future (McGowan & Miller, 2001).

Although it is clear that the demands of principals have changed over time, it is less clear that the profession has changed accordingly to help principals meet these new challenges.

Colleges and universities may be partly responsible for the large number of certified administrators who hesitate to become educational leaders. Specifically, some researchers are concerned that the programs currently being offered in administration may not adequately prepare individuals for the realities associated with a leadership position. Critics contend that, "While the jobs of school leaders, superintendents, principals, teacher leaders, and school board members have changed dramatically, it appears that neither organized professional development nor formal preparation programs based in higher education institutions have adequately prepared those holding these jobs to meet the priority demands of the 21st Century" (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 1). Other critics of traditional training programs believe that many college and university leadership programs fail to help graduate students draw a clear connection between theory and practice through carefully constructed internship experiences. Those who favor a more hands-on approach to administrative programs also favor on-going opportunities for candidates to participate in authentic, real-world experiences during their course of study (The Wallace Foundation, 2008).

Of course, a valid argument can also be made that school districts also have an important role to play in ensuring that the right type of leader is selected to lead a school. Like private businesses, public institutions will inevitably need to replace its leaders due to retirement, advancement, or termination. Although a formalized succession plan would appear to be the ideal vehicle for ensuring that schools are led by the most qualified individuals, there appears to be a significant difference in the perceived need for

succession planning among school districts. According to Zepeda, Bengtson, and Parylo (2012), formalized succession plans are most common in districts that tend to be large or those that are experiencing a high rate of growth. In other districts, however, succession planning is carried out with far less urgency (Zepeda, Bengtson, & Parylo, 2012). If school districts want to ensure that future principals have the capacity to move the organization forward, they must be prepared to invest the time in developing their employees' skills rather than randomly selecting a candidate from an outside pool of applicants.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Traditional preparation programs for school administrators are designed to teach the knowledge and skills that are considered essential for a leadership position. However, it is the individual's professional dispositions that may ultimately determine if the candidate succeeds as a school leader (Morris, 1999). Unfortunately, developing a candidate's dispositions are less likely to be addressed in traditional preparation programs due to the fact that they can be difficult to measure quantitatively.

In spite of this difficulty, researchers have determined that the dispositions of effective school leaders can be assessed with an acceptable degree of reliability and validity through the use of the Administrator Disposition Index (ADI) (Schulte & Kowal, 2005). In theory, the ADI could be used to measure the impact of an intensive, nine-month seminar devoted to teaching the dispositions that are necessary to successfully lead others. If the results of the ADI revealed that a candidate's scores significantly increased over the course of the seminar, it would be reasonable to conclude that his or her understanding of the dispositions needed to be a successful administrator would likewise

have grown over the same period of time. This, in turn, would indicate that the individual would be better prepared to meet the demands of the position, thereby having a greater chance of making a positive contribution to the academic growth of students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar had a significant impact on the dispositions of its members compared to staff members who did not participate in the program. This study analyzed the domain scores found on the Administrator Disposition Index of certified staff members who participated in district-led, grow-your-own leadership program against certified staff members in a similar work environment who did not participate in the program.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were addressed and answered in this study:

**Question 1:** Does the implementation of a district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 promote the development of (a) student or (b) community centered dispositions among its participants as measured by the Administrator Disposition index?

**Question 2:** Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index student domain score?

**Question 3:** Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index community domain score?

**Question 4:** Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index composite score?

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Administrator Disposition Index (ADI).** The Administrator Disposition Index (ADI) is a 36-item, five-point Likert survey that is aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. The survey consists of a 17-item student-centered subscale and a 19-item community-centered subscale.

**Aspiring Principal's Program (APP).** The Aspiring Principal's Program (APP) is an accelerated, 14 month, "grow-your-own" administrative preparation program developed by the New York City Department of Education. APP is an alternative certification program designed to prepare aspiring principals to serve in hard to staff, low performing schools (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2012).

**Coaching.** Coaching involves transferring the ability to perform a specific task from one individual to another. Unlike mentoring, which has more of a relationship rather than task focus, coaches work with a protégé to either extend an existing skill or develop new ones (McKenzie, 1989).

**Cohort group.** A cohort group typically consists of individuals who share a similar set of experiences over a given period of time. In an educational context, cohort groups commonly refer to students who are enrolled in a specific program of study and tend to complete the prescribed course sequence as a collaborative group.

**Contest mobility.** Contest mobility refers to a process where all candidates have an equal chance to attain a given position through fair and open selection procedures (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011).

**Disposition.** The term disposition is defined as the values and beliefs one has in regard to a given topic that are exhibited in an individual's behaviors and actions. Dispositions can also be thought of as "personal qualities or characteristics that are possessed by individuals including attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values, and modes of adjustment" (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000, p. 2).

**External stakeholders.** External stakeholders commonly refer to individuals outside of a school who have a stake in the decisions made by the building's leadership team. Parents, business leaders, and community members are individuals who are typically included in this group.

**Grow-your-own leadership seminar.** A type of leadership development seminar where the participants are members and/or employees of the parent organization. Since grow-your-own leadership seminars are designed to enhance the leadership skills of the organization's existing staff, individuals who do not belong to the parent organization are typically not allowed to participate.

**Internship.** An internship experience is a field-based placement where a student has an opportunity to learn and/or apply what he or she has learned in an authentic, real-world environment.

**Instructional leadership.** Instructional leadership refers to the administrative duties primarily associated with improving student achievement. Some of these duties may include establishing the goals of the organization, coaching and evaluating teachers,

managing curriculum and instructional programs, and using data to make decisions (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012).

**Internal stakeholders.** Internal stakeholders commonly refer to individuals within a school who have a stake in the decisions made by the building's leadership team. Students, teachers, and classified staff members are individuals who are typically included in this group.

**LAUNCH.** LAUNCH is a nine-month leadership development program developed by the Omaha Public Schools and presented in partnership with the University of Nebraska at Omaha. LAUNCH is an acronym for the six essential elements found in Omaha's program: Leadership, Aspiring, Utilizing, Networking, Collaborating, and Hands-on.

**Mentoring.** Mentoring, as it relates to the field of educational administration, can be described as an interactive process characterized by a supportive relationship between two people. Mentoring often lasts for more than one year, emphasizes long-range expertise, and leads to the attainment of managerial potential (McKenzie, 1989).

**Professional development schools.** Professional development schools are collaborative, school-college partnerships designed to simultaneously restructure schools for improved student learning and revitalize the preparation and professional development of experienced educators (Teitel, 1999).

**Ralston Leadership Academy.** The Ralston Leadership Academy is a nine-month, grow-your-own district succession plan designed to cultivate the participant's personal and professional dispositions needed to become a successful school leader. Over the course of the seminar, participants are exposed to theoretical concepts and



learning experiences that are specific to the Ralston Public Schools. The goal of the program is to instill the knowledge, skills, and dispositions sought by the district into those who are participating in the program.

**Replacement planning.** Replacement planning is a reactive hiring strategy that focuses on identifying anticipated openings within an organization and finding individuals who are viable replacements for those who are leaving (Rothwell, 2010).

**Sponsored mobility.** Sponsored mobility is a process whereby individuals are recruited to fill a given position based on criteria current administrators want to see in future leaders (Myung, et al., 2011).

**Succession plan.** A succession plan is a proactive plan developed by a school or district that attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership for the organization. Succession plans are designed to cultivating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of others within the organization (Rothwell, 2010).

**Tapping.** Tapping is a form of sponsored mobility where principals and other administrators identify, encourage, and/or assist staff members who they believe should be appointed to a leadership position (Myung, et al., 2011).

**Transformational leadership.** Transformational leadership is a leadership style that focuses on improving organizational qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness. Transformational leaders strive to meet the complex and diverse needs of the system in order to achieve the goals of the organization (Shields, 2010).

### **Assumptions**

This study has several strong features. For instance, any certified staff member who was interested in participating in this study had the opportunity to do so, as there

were no staff recommendations or pre-requisite conditions that needed to be satisfied for inclusion in the study. This “open enrollment” policy helped to ensure that a broad cross-section of certified staff members would be available to participate in the leadership seminar, free any factors that might otherwise limit their participation. In addition, all instructors and guest instructors involved in the leadership seminar were well-versed in their field of expertise, and tailored their content to match the objectives of the seminar. Moreover, on-going, individualized support was provided to all certified staff members who participated in the leadership seminar in order to ensure mastery of the course material. Finally, this program enjoyed broad support from both the local school board as well as the senior administrative leadership in the district. As a result, the instructors of the seminar were able to draw upon a wide array of fiscal and human resources during the duration of the program. It is assumed, however, that the participants involved in this study responded to the survey questions honestly and accurately. Likewise, it is also assumed that the participants involved in the leadership seminar enrolled in the course with the primary intention of learning more about the multiple facets of leadership.

### **Limitations**

One limitation to this study involves the relatively small sample size that was used by the researcher. The total number of participants involved in the study was  $N = 20$ . As a result, the presence of outliers could skew the results, thereby potentially limiting how the findings could be applied to other studies. Another variable not controlled for in this study involved the participant’s ongoing professional development outside the district. Since ongoing, professional development is a certification requirement for educators in many states, additional coursework completed by the

participants during the course of this study may contribute to the outcome variance. These limitations were taken into consideration when analyzing, interpreting and discussing the results.

### **Delimitations**

This study is delimited to an urban public school district serving approximately 3,100 students in a small, midwestern community. In addition, the participants involved in the study were delimited to a group of certified staff members who were primarily Caucasian, who were between 25 and 57 years old. Finally, the length of the leadership seminar was delimited to a series of monthly meetings lasting approximately two hours in length over the course of a nine-month period of time.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study has the potential to contribute to educational research as well as policy and practice. Future research can be conducted to determine whether or not any changes to the ADI scores of the participants are positively or negatively correlated to the age, gender, years of professional experience, or educational level of the subjects. Furthermore, additional research may be conducted to determine whether or not the results of this study are dependent on the size, location, or demographic composition of the school district. Finally, future research may yield that changes made to one or more of the units of study in the grow-your-own leadership seminar may impact the results of the participants' ADI student or community subscale scores

Educational policy and practice may also be affected by the outcome of this study. If the results of the grow-your-own leadership seminar are found to have an impact on the dispositions of staff members, school districts may be inclined to include a similar

program as part of their district's succession practices. Likewise, the success of the grow-your-own leadership seminar will likely lead to a broader discussion among current educational leaders regarding the characteristics they feel are essential to the success of future leaders. The results of both of these discussions will yield better prepared building principals and other district-level leaders who, in turn, will have the capacity to promote student achievement.

### **Organization of the Study**

A review of the literature relevant to this study is presented in chapter two. Chapter three includes an analysis of the participants involved, a description of the research design and methodology, an explanation of the independent and dependent variables used in the study, as well as the procedures used to gather and analyze the data. Chapter four reports the research findings, including data analysis, tables, and descriptive statistics. Chapter five provides conclusions and a discussion of the research findings, including recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of the Literature

Three main concepts will be introduced in this review of the literature. The first concept describes the elements that are commonly found in existing leadership programs both at the university and district level. The second concept describes an alternate model for leadership development and how school districts and universities can support one another. Finally, a description of three existing leadership development programs will be presented along with a brief discussion of the impact they have had on their respective school districts.

#### University Level Practices

Teachers who are interested in pursuing an administrative leadership position typically enroll in a certification program offered at the university level. Nationwide, approximately 500 university programs and colleges of education offer leadership preparation programs that allow students to earn masters, specialists, or doctoral degrees (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007). Unfortunately, some researchers believe the traditional course of study may be disconnected from the realities of school leadership (Creighton & Johnson, 2002; Levine, 2005). In a national survey involving 925 public school principals and 1,006 superintendents, Farkas, Johnson, and Duffett (2003) reported that 67% of the principals surveyed indicated that “typical leadership programs in graduate schools of education are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today’s school districts” (p 39). The same study also found that 96% of practicing principals felt that on the job experience or guidance from administrative colleagues had been more

helpful in preparing them for their current position than their preparation program. This disconnect between existing programs and the day-to-day demands of the profession helps explain why some educators are advocating for substantial reforms in administrator preparation programs (Kowalski, 2004).

One of the factors that may explain the disconnect between what is offered in a university training program and the experiences of a practicing administrator involves the rapidly evolving role of the building principal. With the rise in emphasis currently being placed on high stakes testing, data-driven decision making, and accountability, there is an overwhelming need to adjust the curriculum found in leadership programs to better reflect the changing expectations for leaders (Murphy & Orr, 2009). Research conducted by Hess and Kelly (2007), however, raised serious questions about whether current preparation programs have the ability to equip future administrators for the challenges they will face in an era of accountability. After examining a total of 210 syllabi from 31 principal preparation programs, the researchers discovered that only 6%-7% of instruction was devoted to accountability, analyzing data, or utilizing technology as a management tool. Another area of concern involved the amount of time devoted to external leadership. On average, the researchers discovered that approximately 8% of a typical preparation program was devoted to topics related to working with parent and community organizations, negotiating local politics, understanding collective bargaining agreements, or public relations (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Unless university programs are able to adapt to meet the needs of administrators, graduates may find themselves unprepared for the responsibilities associated with leadership positions.

A related problem associated with current preparation programs involves the emphasis placed on the managerial components of administration. A managerial approach to leadership is based on the belief that if a principal carries out the essential tasks or functions of the position in a competent manner, the school as a whole will operate effectively (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). While researchers acknowledge that managing people and resources is a necessary function of any administrative position, effective management alone is no longer sufficient to meet the challenges associated with school leadership (McGowan & Miller, 2001; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Unfortunately, traditional principal preparation programs typically devote a significant amount of time to skills-based, managerial concepts. For example, technical knowledge, which includes topics such as school finance and educational law, account for approximately 30% of the total amount of time spent in a typical principal preparation program (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Although managing people and resources will undoubtedly continue to be a part of an administrator's duties, graduate programs should also recognize that leadership, not management, is a key ingredient for sustained school improvement.

Another characteristic commonly found in most administrative training programs involves a lack of professional or social support. Although it has been well-established that mentoring provides numerous benefits to aspiring leaders, (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2004; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Grogan, 2000, 2002) traditional preparation programs typically do not contain formal, multi-year mentors. Likewise, although researchers have identified cohort structures as an element consistently found in exemplary leadership programs, implementation at the university level varies greatly among institutions (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe,

Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). The cohort experience in particular appears to be highly sought after by candidates who are interested in pursuing an advanced degree in educational leadership. Having the opportunity to participate in a supportive, shared learning environment may help explain the rise in alternative certification programs where cohort membership is far more common (Militello, Gajda, & Bowers, 2009).

Internship experiences are also a source of criticism in university-led preparation programs. Although more than 90% of all credentialed programs require an internship experience of some kind (Murphy, 1992), the value of these experiences can vary greatly. In a study involving 25 schools with educational leadership programs, Levine (2005) reported that internship requirements differed in length from as few as 45 hours to as many as 300 hours. While some programs were conducted over 90 days, others spanned an entire academic year. In addition to the length of the experience, the specific activities involved in a traditional, university-led internship can range from highly worthwhile to meaningless. Shadowing experiences, for example, are a common type of internship experience where aspiring leaders may be assigned to follow a veteran principal, handle routine chores, or attend scheduled administrative meetings. While shadowing can help familiarize a candidate to the duties typically assigned to an administrator, the experience as a whole loses much of its value if it fails to move beyond simple observation or does not require the candidate to engage in some type of professional reflection (Chance, 2000; Fry, Bottoms, O'Neill, & Walker, 2007). Critics of traditional internships also contend that most experiences fail to reflect the philosophy and core concepts found in the corresponding program of study (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). As a result, the internship often lacks depth and does not provide potential leaders



with opportunities to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. Instead of using the experience to learn about the interrelated challenges that administrators face, students may simply see the internship as merely as a “compliance activity” required for their degree program.

Another feature commonly found in institutions that offer advanced leadership courses is a program of study where candidates have the option of earning a doctoral degree in education (EdD) rather than a traditional doctorate in philosophy (PhD). Between 1993-2003, the number of programs that offered doctoral degrees in education has increased 48%. By 2003, almost 200 of these programs were available to graduate students nationwide (Baker, et al., 2007). While access to doctoral programs has improved significantly, some researchers believe that newly developed programs may lack the institutional resources, depth of faculty knowledge, or history to adequately support the program. In addition, critics of the educational doctorate contend that poorly funded institutions may be tempted to lower their admission standards in an attempt to financially sustain the program (Orr, 2007). While supporters of the educational doctorate believe that EdD programs are simply a response to the need of administrators who find themselves working in an increasingly complex environment, others believe that less rigorous admission standards coupled with poorly developed programs of study and a reliance on adjunct faculty members may have serious implications for school districts (Barnett & Carlson, 2010; Levine, 2005; Shulman, 2007.)

One final characteristic that is common among most university-led programs is the lack of evaluative data. In an attempt to study the effectiveness of traditional, preparation programs, Wildman (2001) noted that the amount of scholarly research that

has been conducted was limited to a handful of studies evaluating different dimensions of leadership programs. As such, Wildman was unable to draw any meaningful conclusions that the content of university training programs actually improved principal effectiveness. Likewise, as part of their investigation in the field of educational leadership, Murphy and Vriesenga (2004) noted that the overall landscape of educational administration research was best described as “considerably bleaker than most would prefer” (p. 11).

Accordingly, the researchers were forced to concede that very little was known about the curricular areas of study commonly found in traditional preparation programs. These observations were further echoed by Hess and Kelly (2007) who reported a lack of systematic research on the content being studied in the nation's principal preparation programs. With a limited amount of evaluative data to draw from, it is difficult to determine how the content of university-based preparation programs should be adjusted to better meet the needs of future administrators.

### **District Level Practices**

At the district level, policies and practices meant to develop the leadership qualities of potential leaders are similarly flawed. Perhaps the clearest example of how districts fail to harness the talent of their staff members deals with the emphasis some organizations place on replacement planning at the expense of succession planning. Unlike replacement planning, which simply focuses on identifying individuals who are viable replacements for those leaving a position, succession planning is a proactive effort that attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by deliberately cultivating the talent from within the organization (Rothwell, 2010). Unfortunately, researchers have determined that most succession decisions made by school districts are seen as a chance

to solve a short-term staffing issue rather than a long-term opportunity to sustain the success of a school (Hargreaves, 2005). In addition, there appears to be a number of significant differences in how school districts handle the inevitable need to replace departing building-level administrators. Research conducted by Zepeda, et al., (2012), for example, examined the current practices of school leader succession in the state of Georgia. The study concluded that there appeared to be a wide degree of variance in the perceived need for succession planning between large and small school systems.

Typically, large urban districts were more likely to have formal succession policies in place, while leaders in smaller rural districts were less likely to view succession planning with a sense of urgency. Likewise, districts experiencing high growth rates were more likely to have various elements of succession planning in place, while districts with low to moderate student growth were less likely to have adopted a formalized structure (Zepeda, et al., 2012). School districts that lack formalized succession practices not only run the risk of hiring poorly qualified administrators to fill leadership positions, but also fail to exploit the potential talent hidden within the system.

In order to identify potential leaders, districts that lack formal succession policies may utilize a recruiting mechanism known as tapping to fill openings within the district. Tapping is a process where principals and other school administrators identify and encourage teachers who they think should become school leaders (Myung, et al., 2011). Unlike contest mobility, where all candidates have an equal chance to attain a position through fair and open procedures, tapping is a form of sponsored mobility where individuals are recruited based on the criteria current administrators want to see in candidates. In a study involving 15,840 teachers, 583 assistant principals, and 312

principals in the Miami-Dade County Public School System, researchers were able to determine that principals were far more likely to tap teachers who have either the competencies or experiences to be a successful school leader than those who do not. Unfortunately, however, the researchers also concluded that tapping biases may potentially limit qualified individuals seeking a leadership position. In general, principals tended to tap teachers who belonged to the same racial or ethnic group. Likewise, principals were more likely to tap male teachers for leadership positions than female teachers (Myung, et al., 2011). Taken as a whole, the practice of tapping not only restricts the diversity found in administrative positions, but can also significantly limit a district's ability to draw from a large pool of candidates. In a study which examined the connection between gender and leadership, Pounder and Merrill (2001) determined that females were more interested in serving as a high school principal than their male counterparts. Unfortunately, district-level administrators appear to be reluctant to tap women for leadership roles, particularly in secondary schools. Researchers believe this reluctance may be due to the perception that the high school principalship is predominately a masculine role (Bowles, 1990). Considering that the results of the Pounder and Merrill study appear to suggest that a significant number of females are interested in serving in some type of leadership capacity, the practice of tapping can be particularly detrimental to a district that has failed to adopt selection policies based on objective, predefined criteria.

The increased emphasis on student accountability has also had a limiting effect on who is selected to serve as either a district or building-level leader. In the era of high stakes testing, most superintendents face enormous pressure to continually improve

student achievement. Since the success of a superintendent is largely dependent on the abilities of his or her principals, superintendents may be tempted to hire exclusively from the ranks of individuals who have prior experience as an administrator. Unfortunately, narrowing the list of potential candidates in this manner can cause superintendents to greatly underestimate the number of available candidates for a position. In one study involving 245 superintendents in the state of Arkansas, for example, researchers determined that superintendents routinely underestimated the candidate pool in their own district by approximately 15%. Collectively, urban superintendents underestimate their applicant pool to an even greater degree (Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009). Other researchers have noted that non-traditional applicants, who may possess strong leadership qualities, are frequently overlooked by human resource departments (Roza, et al., 2003). While the emphasis on “safe” candidates may help solve a short-term staffing issue, it can unintentionally create a larger, long-term sustainability problem as the population of experienced school administrators continues to age.

### **An Alternate Model for Leadership Preparation**

As a result of the weaknesses that exist in leadership preparation programs, researchers have begun to investigate how the existing system could be improved. Instead of operating independently of one another, theorists now envision a system where local universities and school districts work collaboratively to provide leadership candidates with a direct connection between theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007; Fry, et al., 2007). Other researchers have focused on the specific qualities found within exemplary leadership preparation programs and have identified a number of common characteristics. These characteristics include: active learning strategies that

stimulate reflection; a coherent curriculum that addresses effective instructional leadership, organizational development and change management aligned to professional standards; a well-defined theory of leadership that frames program features around a set of shared beliefs, values and knowledge; social and professional support structures that include the utilization of cohort groups; quality internships that provide opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert mentor; and the use of program feedback and continuous improvement processes to ensure leadership programs are aligned to their objectives (Davis, et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Orr, 2006). Collectively, these elements have the potential to transform current practices and will help ensure that future administrators are better prepared to face the challenges associated with the evolving role of school leadership.

In order for preparation programs to be relevant, both school districts and universities need to ensure that candidates see a direct connection between educational theory and the day-to-day experiences of a school administrator. Researchers have begun to recognize the importance of moving away from a traditional, management-focused curriculum in order to address issues administrators are likely to face in today's schools. Some of the more contemporary topics being addressed in leadership programs include effective teaching and learning, moral stewardship, social justice, and building collaborative communities (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Murphy, 1992, 2002; Shields, 2010). What's still missing from most university preparation programs, however, is an opportunity to apply this information in an authentic, problem-based environment. In a study conducted in 2010, researchers at a large, urban California university placed an 18-month field experience at the center of a leadership preparation

program. The candidates involved were presented with twenty-five authentic leadership tasks, such as designing and delivering a staff inservice or improving school-community relations. In support of their field experience, each class was designed to simultaneously provide the students with coursework applicable to their current situation. At the conclusion of the study, researchers discovered that most students' perceptions of school leadership had evolved from managing systems and personnel to implementing instructional improvements designed to promote student achievement (Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2011). The researchers also noted that the participants began to recognize the complexities associated with a leadership position and the importance of building trust among stakeholders. Most importantly, the candidates not only reported feeling significantly more confident in their ability to lead, but also their ability to identify, understand, analyze, communicate, and use data to improve teaching and learning (Perez et al., 2011). Case and problem-based experiences such as these have enormous potential to improve leadership preparation programs by building the candidates' ability to frame and solve real-world problems (Orr, 2006).

Leadership preparation programs should also be designed to specifically teach candidates the necessity of forming collaborative relationships with others. In a survey involving 200 superintendents in California, researchers determined that the most common reason why principals were dismissed from their positions dealt with their inability to build positive relationships with parents, teachers, students, and colleagues (Davis, 1998). The ability to form strong relationships with others is absolutely essential for effective leaders since it helps foster a strong sense of community where both internal and external stakeholders act in unison to create an environment conducive to student

learning. In many ways, an administrator who is adept at forming strong relationships with others is like a tailor who has the ability to pull together the various threads of stakeholder groups in order to create an interlocking safety net for students. As the fabric of the school community is woven, successful leaders are able to recognize, learn from, and appreciate the individual differences found in each thread. These interactions with diverse groups of stakeholders is what ultimately enables administrators to cultivate their professional dispositions as well as their understanding of how each stakeholder group can contribute to a successful school community. As such, it is imperative for preparation programs to not only address the importance of building relationships with others, but to also emphasize teaching positive, professional dispositions in a deliberate, systematic fashion (Davis, 1998; Keiser & Smith, 2009).

In contrast with traditional preparation programs that tend to focus primarily on the managerial aspects of leadership, future leadership programs should consist of a more comprehensive curriculum that also includes an emphasis on transformational and instructional leadership. In a study involving 155 high school principals and 131 teachers from Missouri, Valentine and Prater (2011) determined that successful school leaders were able to draw upon a broad base of knowledge that extended beyond the managerial aspects of leadership. Transformational leadership, for example, which includes skills such as identifying a shared vision and fostering group goals, was found to have the greatest impact on improving student achievement. Instead of affecting the students directly, transformational leaders work to build the leadership capacity throughout their school in order to build a collaborative culture that is stronger than the sum of its members. Likewise, researchers also discovered that effective principals also have a



broad understanding of instructional leadership. They are well-versed on effective teaching practices and the latest instructional approaches, and use this knowledge to monitor the practices of staff members and the progress of students. The importance of instructional leadership was later echoed by Barnett, et al., (2012) who similarly noted that a strong foundation in instructional leadership was an essential skill for those serving as an assistant principal. In spite of the enormous impact transformational and instructional leadership can have on student achievement, Valentine and Prater (2011) cautioned that no single leadership behavior should be considered effective at the exclusion of others. For example, although day-to-day tasks such as developing a sustainable budget or effectively dealing with student discipline issues may not have an immediate impact on student achievement, the researchers acknowledged that the importance of managerial leadership cannot be ignored. The key for future leadership preparation programs is to recognize that managerial leadership is only a component of a well-designed curriculum, and should not be the exclusive focus for a program of study.

Another essential component found in successful leadership programs is the presence of a highly skilled mentor. Mentoring is an effective way to facilitate the transfer of experiences and relationships between veteran leaders and newly appointed administrators (Newcomb, 2011). In the absence of a strong mentoring program, new staff members may not only find themselves overwhelmed with the task at hand, but may also experience feelings of stress, frustration, and isolation. On the other hand, new administrators who are able to draw upon the resources of a mentor can reap enormous benefits during their first few years as a leader. In addition to guiding a new administrator through the socialization process of being a member of a leadership team,

Daresh (2004) identifies several other ways mentors can assist their protégés. Some of the benefits associated with working with a highly skilled mentor include developing feelings of professional competence, recognizing the connection between educational theory and practice, learning “the tricks of the trade”, reducing feelings of isolation, and engaging in professional conversation and reflection. Grogan (2000; 2002) has similarly identified numerous benefits mentoring provides to leadership candidates. These benefits include having access to the unwritten rules of administration, knowing a veteran leader of influence, gaining self-confidence, having access to an advocate to speak on your behalf, and having the opportunity to establish a network of support. Although critics of the mentoring process claim that mentoring typically suffers from obstacles involving sustainability, resource allocation, inadequate preparation of mentors, and a tendency to lose sight of the importance of mentoring as a support system, the benefits of an administrative mentoring program far outweigh the costs -- particularly when one considers the impact a building administrator can have on his or her students (Daresh, 2004). The key to a successful mentoring experience not only lies in creating a program that is a formal part of a principal’s professional development, but also compels leaders to engage in the process of self-reflection. By learning how to critically examine one’s practices, protégés will continue to grow as professionals long after the formal mentoring relationship has ended (Hall, 2008).

Along with the guidance of a highly skilled mentor, preparation programs should also strive to support leadership candidates with highly skilled coaches found within the community. Unlike mentoring, which is an interactive process that is characterized by a supportive relationship between two people, coaching is more task driven and involves

extending an existing skill or developing new ones under the guidance of an expert (McKenzie, 1989). As part of their “grow-your-own” leadership program, for example, Trenholm State Technical College in Alabama solicits professional coaches from the surrounding community to share their technical expertise in areas such as, problem solving, entrepreneurship, leadership, and budget analysis. These experts are utilized as part of a larger program designed to build a sustainable pool of candidates to deal with the impending retirement of baby boomers (Scott & Sanders-McBryde, 2012).

Another way to provide leadership candidates access to highly skilled coaches is by creating a formal, collaborative partnership between the school district and local colleges and universities. These relationships, known as professional development schools, seek to simultaneously renew teacher education programs and improve instructional practices in schools (Teitel, 1999). Although many professional development schools primarily focus on teacher education practices, the same core concepts can also be applied to administrative preparation programs. In a qualitative meta-analysis that examined 49 exemplary studies on the subject of professional development schools, researchers identified several factors which must be present in order for a professional development school to flourish. These factors include allocating adequate human and fiscal resources, creating a sustainable organizational structure, removing bureaucratic barriers, developing a shared vision of success based on mutual respect, and creating meaningful partnerships between both institutions (Breault & Breault, 2010). Although the researchers acknowledge that existing studies do not provide sufficient evidence to justify the time, energy, and resources spent implementing professional development schools, the study did not conclude that such arrangements

were ineffective. Rather, the researchers emphasize that both schools and local colleges or universities should not rush to create leadership programs without first examining the implications the partnership would have on both institutions (Breault & Breault, 2010).

A third type of professional support that should be included in future preparation programs involves the utilization of a cohort group. Cohort groups, which typically consist of individuals who share a similar set of experiences over a given period of time, are particularly valuable to educational leaders since they help create a network of professional support and personal camaraderie. Cohort groups also provide an efficient way to deliver content, allow for the scaffolding of learning experiences, and promote program completion rates (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000). In recent years, scholars have noted the impact cohort groups have had on educational leaders, particularly those who are new to the superintendency. In one study, Orr (2007a) conducted a qualitative analysis of six individuals participating in a seminar program designed to advance the superintendents' skills and leadership capacities. Among the findings that emerged from the study was that each member of the cohort group formed strong bonds with the other participants, frequently calling and e-mailing one another for guidance and support on problems and issues. The researcher also noted that several participants not only expressed relief at having access to a safe, trusting environment to explore their dilemmas and validate their feelings, but also believed that the collaborative inquiry component was the most valuable part of the program (Orr, 2007a). Although Orr cautioned that the small number of participants raised questions as to whether a larger cohort group would experience the same levels of success, the results of the study

suggested that membership in a cohort group is a critical source of support for those interested in serving in a leadership capacity.

In addition to providing multiple sources of support, leadership programs should also strive to ensure that the candidates have access to well-designed internship experiences. After investigating the impact seventeen different leadership preparation programs had on 470 graduate students, Orr (2011) confirmed that the quality of the candidates' internship experiences was positively related to his or her intentions to become a building principal. As such, leadership preparation programs should contain rich, field-based experiences where individuals have the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in order to solve authentic, school-based problems (O'Neil, Fry, & Bottoms, 2005). In addition, internships should also provide candidates with the practical, procedural knowledge necessary to make data-based decisions and provide meaningful instructional leadership (Militello, et al., 2009). Most importantly, researchers believe the internship should provide future leaders with opportunities to experience situations not typically addressed in a formal program of study. These topics may include the social component of administration, professional etiquette, or the political realities involved in serving in a leadership position (Lattuca, 2012).

Innovative leadership preparation programs should also strive to correct problems associated with the internship experience that are commonly found in traditional models. Weaknesses found in the design or implementation of the internship can prevent candidates from receiving the full range of benefits the experience has to offer. One common design flaw, for example, involves the placement of the internship experience in the leadership program's course sequence. Traditionally, internship experiences are

thought of as either a single event or a culminating experience in a university-led program. Researchers, however, advocate the use of frequent, regularly scheduled field experiences interwoven throughout the students' course of study that progress from simple observation to active participation (Creighton & Johnson, 2002; O'Neil, et al., 2005). Multiple field experiences are particularly important for staff members who have had limited opportunities to serve in leadership capacities, and therefore, are likely to have relatively weak skills (Schmit-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). Another challenge that innovative programs should strive to control involves placing candidates with administrators who are capable of modeling the desired leadership behaviors and know how to guide the intern to the established standards of the program. Pairing candidates with high quality principals during the internship experience helps ensure that future leaders understand the critical role administrators play in the process of managing change and how principals are essential to creating an environment that promotes student achievement (O'Neil, et al., 2005; Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

One final component that must be included in any leadership development program involves the collection of reliable data to determine whether or not the program is meeting its intended objectives. The National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP), for example, has commissioned several papers to analyze the state of administrator preparation. Unfortunately, NCAELP's work largely consists of essays or anecdotal descriptions of specific programs rather than quantitative data (Hess & Kelly, 2007). While useful, the lack of empirical data on a topic of this magnitude could be best described as disheartening. This sentiment is perhaps best captured by Murphy and Vriesenga (2004) who concluded, "From the extant

research, we know almost nothing about the traditional curricular domains of preparation programs...nor...the shape of curriculum in a post-theory era where issues around teaching and learning and community are reshaping the profession” (p. 24). In order for preparation programs to produce the type of administrators our schools, students, and communities desperately need, researchers must do a better job of critically examining leadership programs in order to find the specific elements that will have the greatest impact on a candidate’s level of success.

### **A Model for Excellence at the District Level**

Acting independently, school districts can also implement policies and procedures designed to promote growth in their leadership talent pool. One of the best ways to address the issue of leadership sustainability is by developing a leadership succession plan that is an integral part of a district’s overall school improvement process (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Schechter & Tischler, 2007). Having a thoughtful, deliberate succession plan allows districts to avoid the organizational instability that inevitably comes with a change in leadership (Peters, 2011). Scholars believe that the best leadership succession plans are those led by the superintendent in order to demonstrate that he or she is personally interested in ensuring the overall quality of the program. The efforts of the superintendent should, in turn, be supported by the administrative team in order to ensure that succession planning is a shared responsibility of everyone serving in a leadership capacity (Odden, 2011). Like all improvement programs, a leadership succession plan should contain an obtainable vision of success, an intervention strategy consisting of a series of specific steps designed to achieve the desired goal, as well as a process designed to measure the overall effectiveness of the program. In the case of a district succession

plan, the district should work to identify the key competencies associated with each leadership position, align the functions within the human resource department to acquire, develop, and retain talent associated with these competencies, and utilize multiple, performance-based measures to assess the effectiveness of the plan (Odden, 2011). By doing so, districts place themselves in the position of being able to proactively develop internal candidates rather than being forced to respond reactively as vacancies occur (Peters, 2011).

As part of a successful succession plan, districts can enhance both the quantity and quality of their leadership pool by ensuring that the key competencies associated with each leadership position are explicitly defined. Considering that sponsored mobility appears to have a significant impact not only on a teacher's interest in a leadership position, but also his or her perceived probability of actually becoming a building administrator, districts are more likely to benefit if their key competencies are based on objective dispositions rather than personal traits (Myung, et al., 2011). By clearly identifying the values of the institution and the criteria used to select future leaders, current administrators would be able to quickly and easily identify potential candidates. This, in turn, would allow them to provide the necessary staff development to address any professional shortcomings that may hinder an individual's success as a future leader.

Finally, districts can increase their pool of viable candidates by recognizing that experienced administrators may not always be the best choice for an available position. Rather than focusing exclusively on experience when hiring a new administrator, superintendents should be willing to accept some short-term risks in exchange for the long-term growth potential of an employee. The situation facing superintendents is not



unlike the situation that some major league baseball teams face each year: Is it better to sign a seasoned veteran who's nearing the end of his career, or a rookie player with solid potential and many years ahead of him? (Pijanowski, et al., 2009). Although the answer to this question will likely depend on the specific vacancy that's available, superintendents should recognize that finding the best possible fit will occasionally involve passing over talented and experienced administrators from the pool of available candidates. Superintendents who understand the value of succession planning do not concern themselves with selecting "safe" candidates. Instead, they are interested in selecting the "right" person for the position. It is a process that not only requires patience, but also a long-term view of both individuals and the organization as a whole (Schmit-Davis & Bottoms, 2011).

### **Existing Leadership Development Programs**

In an effort to create sustainable pools of potential administrators, some school districts have implemented district-led leadership development programs. One such program, implemented in 2003 by the New York City Department of Education, is the Aspiring Principals Program, known as APP. APP is an accelerated, 14 month "grow-your-own" preparation program designed to prepare aspiring principals to serve in hard to staff, low performing schools. APP's program, which emphasizes learning by doing, allows candidates to participate in an alternative certification program rather than completing a traditional administrative degree (Corcoran, et al., 2012).

Candidates who are interested in participating in the APP program must first meet the state's legal requirements for certification and licensure. The admission program is a three-stage process consisting of a written application, group interview, and individual

interview. At each stage of the process, candidates are screened for their ability to meet the standards established by New York City Leadership Academy. On average, approximately 20% of the people who apply are admitted into the program. Once accepted, the selection process continues throughout the candidate's training. By design, APP's graduation rate is below 100%, with an average completion rate of approximately 80% among the first three cohort groups (Stein, 2006).

APP's curriculum consists of a six-week, summer intensive program, a ten month school residency period, followed by a transitional planning summer (Marquis, Guthrie, Arum, & Larson, 2008; Stein, 2006). The summer intensive program relies on practical, problem-based learning and group role plays that are aligned with the district's goals, policies, and objectives. The intent of the summer intensive program is to simulate the realities of serving as a principal in a New York City school. During the school residency period, APP candidates work alongside a mentor principal, observe teachers, and attend bi-weekly leadership development seminars. Finally, during the planning summer, new principals have an opportunity to synthesize what they have learned and prepare for their new leadership position. Interwoven throughout the training process is a set of personal qualities and behaviors that have been associated with school effectiveness the New York City Leadership Academy hopes to develop within its candidates. These qualities and behaviors include reacting constructively to disappointment, collaborating with families, and recruiting high quality staff members (Reeves, 2009; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Ultimately, the objective of the APP curriculum is to provide candidates with the necessary experiences needed to

facilitate a smooth transition into an administrative work environment (Corcoran, et al., 2012).

Attempting to determine the effectiveness of the APP program largely depends on how one measures success. On the one hand, the APP program has been successful in filling vacancies in high needs schools throughout the city. As of 2012, the New York City Department of Education reported that approximately 17% of the city's 1,500 schools were led by graduates of the APP program. In addition, APP has contributed to the diversity of the leadership pool within the New York City Public Schools. APP principals were more likely to be African-American males that, on average, were younger than their counterparts. The typical APP principal had an average of 2.3 fewer years of teaching experience and spent significantly less time working at his or her "home" school compared to non-APP principals. Perhaps the most striking difference between the APP graduates and those trained in traditional programs involved the amount of time spent working as an assistant principal. While 83% of non-APP principals had some experience as an assistant principal, less than a third of APP principals (31%) had any experience in that role (Corcoran, et al., 2012).

In term of student academic achievement, however, the impact of the APP program is less significant. When comparing the results of the New York State exams in English-language arts and math, students in schools led by APP graduates performed about as well as students in schools managed by other new principals. A closer look at the data revealed that schools led by APP principals modestly narrowed the achievement gap in English-language arts, but tended to score somewhat lower in the area of

mathematics. In all cases, however, the overall magnitude of the effect was small and was characterized by the researcher as statistically insignificant (Corcoran, et al., 2012).

Another leadership development program currently available in the Midwest is the LAUNCH program administered by the Omaha Public Schools. According to Janice Garnett (personal communication, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012), LAUNCH is an acronym derived from some of the key components found within the program: Leadership, Aspiring, Utilizing, Networking, Collaborating, and Hands-on. The program is presented in partnership with the University of Nebraska at Omaha and is offered between the months of August and April. Approximately 70-100 teachers apply each year, with an average of 25 staff members who are selected to participate on an annual basis.

There are four primary components of the LAUNCH program. The first component includes the creation of a leadership development plan. This plan is used to guide the internship process and helps prepare the candidate for leadership in the Omaha Public Schools. The leadership development plan consists of a personalized mission and vision statement, and includes a set of goals and activities for the candidate to utilize during his or her professional development.

The second component involves the candidates' attendance at a series of bi-monthly seminars held over the course of the year. Each seminar is focused on district departments and initiatives and is facilitated by guest presenters who speak on topics related to their areas of expertise. Some of these sessions may include representatives from specialized areas such as school improvement or finance, while other clinical sessions address sharpening the candidates listening and speaking skills. Throughout the

course of the seminar, the candidates are asked to complete course assignments or required readings, typically assigned on a monthly basis.

The third component of the LAUNCH program is a two-week block internship held each spring either at the building level or the district office. Release time is given to the staff member to work directly with a district mentor in order to learn the day-to-day operations of the position. Part of the mentor's responsibilities involves communicating the expectations of the program, providing the candidate with some general guidelines, as well as being available to answer questions the candidate may have. Each internship is designed to be an active, hands-on experience that involves a minimum amount of job shadowing. During the internship, candidates are also required to keep reflection logs documenting their reactions to the experience.

The final component involves selecting candidates who are fully endorsed in school administration to serve as a summer school principal in the Omaha Public Schools. Like the spring internship experience, the summer school position is designed to introduce candidates to approaches that are effective for urban school administration. For those selected for this phase of the program, the candidate has yet another opportunity to learn more about the priorities and culture within the Omaha Public Schools.

In many ways, the impact of Omaha's LAUNCH program is similar to the APP program in New York City. Like its east coast counterpart, LAUNCH has been successful in helping the district meet its staffing needs in the face of an aging population of administrators. On average, approximately 75% of those who graduate from the LAUNCH program move into an administrative position within two years. For those

who are not assigned to a building leadership position, LAUNCH graduates are frequently called upon to chair district level initiatives or serve as presenters for specific curricular or grade level initiatives. In addition, LAUNCH has been directly attributed to a small, but noticeable increase in the overall ethnic diversity of the administrative team in the Omaha Public Schools.

Although the district has not yet assessed the academic impact the LAUNCH program has had on its students, the human resource department has noted that when LAUNCH graduates serve as a building principal, the overall climate and culture of the school appears to improve. In buildings currently administered by LAUNCH graduates, the Omaha Public Schools has observed an increase in staff retention and student recruitment compared to schools that are led by administrators who did not participate in the program. By establishing a healthy climate within the building, district officials hope that teacher effectiveness will increase, thereby leading to a measurable increase in student achievement.

One final school leadership program currently in operation is the Ralston Leadership Academy administered by the Ralston Public Schools. Implemented in the fall of 2011, the Ralston Leadership Academy is a nine-month district succession program designed to cultivate the personal and professional dispositions needed to become a successful school leader. Like LAUNCH, the Ralston Leadership Academy was designed as a partnership with the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Ralston's program, however, is unique in the respect that its participants are exposed to the theoretical concepts and learning experiences that are specific to the needs of the external and internal stakeholders served by the Ralston Public Schools.

In effort to ensure that all staff members have an equal opportunity to participate in the program, the Ralston Leadership program is open to any staff member who is interested in enhancing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be a successful leader. Due to the relatively small size of the district, approximately 10-20 individuals enroll in the course each year. Participants in the leadership program meet approximately once a month for a two-hour period of time. The course content is delivered using a combination of direct instruction, cooperative learning, small group instruction, and presentations on research activities. The theoretical knowledge base used in the course was further supported by a collection of required readings that focused primarily on the changing role of school leaders as well as the challenges facing building and district administrators in the Ralston Public Schools.

Over the course of the year, participants addressed topics selected by the senior administrative team based on those qualities they wish to see in future leaders. Some of the topics presented in this seminar include recognizing the challenges and resources that are present at the building and district level, understanding and managing the process of change, harnessing the strengths of individuals, groups, and the community for the benefit of the organization, promoting 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching and learning skills, diversity, community outreach, emotional intelligence, professional accountability, and school accreditation.

In addition to the monthly face-to-face group meetings and assigned readings, all participants are asked to complete six different assignments over the course of the year. In an effort to better understand the student's own personal strengths, each member of the cohort group is asked to complete the Strengths Finder 2.0 assessment developed by the

Gallup Organization. Typically, this first assignment takes approximately an hour to complete, and is used to facilitate a conversation about how a successful administrator can leverage his or her strengths to better serve Ralston's stakeholders.

The second assignment involves the completion of a leadership field experience for one day. This activity requires the student to spend approximately 8-10 hours observing an area that is not a part of the employee's normal work environment or endorsed area. After the observation, each participant is asked to complete a written reflection of his or her experience.

The third assignment requires the participant to attend at least one school board or city council meeting for approximately two hours. This activity is not only designed to expose students to the political realities of working in the field of public education, but also provide them with an opportunity to interact with members of the surrounding community. As with the leadership field experience, a written reflection is required.

The fourth assignment consists of a two-hour personal interview of either a Ralston administrator or an administrator currently serving in another school district. The interview is designed to help the participant learn more about the current administrators own personal experiences, challenges, successes, goals, and personal vision. The administrator being interviewed may not be an individual who is the employee's direct supervisor. At the conclusion of the experience, the student is once again asked to reflect on his or her experience.

Similar to the fourth assignment, the fifth assignment asks all students to interview their current administrative supervisor for approximately two hours regarding their own personal experiences, challenges, successes, goals, and personal vision. Like



the previous three assignments, participants are asked to reflect on the experiences they have recorded, noting the similarities and differences between the two administrative interviews.

The sixth assignment requires students to research and give an oral presentation on one of Maxwell's 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership. The presentation is expected to include discussion points that are presented to the entire group. This activity, typically requiring two hours of research and organization, may be completed either at the beginning of one of the monthly meetings, or by posting the information to an electronic discussion board. In both cases, the presenter is responsible for leading the discussion and answering any questions his or her colleagues may have.

The Ralston Leadership Academy also places special emphasis on connecting theory to practice in the employees work environment. As a culminating experience, each participant is expected to meet with the district superintendent for approximately 45 minutes each month. These meetings provide an opportunity to ascertain the participant's level of understanding of the course materials and assigned readings. Once established, each participant is then asked to identify a challenge currently facing the school district. During subsequent meetings, the superintendent provides the necessary guidance and support to help the seminar participant develop a plan of action in order to remedy the current situation. Although not required as part of the official program, participants are encouraged to implement the various stages of their plan with the help of the district's leadership team.

Like the LAUNCH program implemented by the Omaha Public Schools, the district has insufficient information to indicate whether or not the Ralston Leadership

Academy has had a direct impact on student achievement. However, by tailoring the program to fit the unique needs of the internal and external stakeholders found within the district, it is hoped that graduates of the Ralston Leadership Academy will have a better understanding of the issues facing the community, and therefore be more responsive to addressing those needs to the best of their ability.

### **Conclusion**

In spite of the fact that there is an abundance of information on how leadership training could be enhanced, traditional training programs have been slow to implement research-based best practices. Likewise, many school districts have failed to take the necessary steps to ensure that a sustainable pool of administrators will be available to lead the organization both at the building and district level. In order to prepare future administrators for the challenges they will certainly face, local colleges and universities need to partner with school districts in order to provide a more relevant curriculum, broad-based support, and high quality field experiences. To further ensure that schools have access to an adequate pool of candidates, school officials need to implement procedures that differ from the practices commonly found in many districts. By implementing innovative leadership programs as part of this broader effort, districts will be able to ensure that future administrators possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are needed to become a successful leader.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar had a significant impact on the dispositions of its members compared to staff members who did not participate in the program. This study analyzed the domain scores found on the Administrator Disposition Index of certified staff members who participated in district-led, grow-your-own leadership program against certified staff members in a similar work environment who did not participate in the program.

#### Participants

**Number of participants.** The maximum accrual for this study was ( $N = 20$ ) and includes a naturally formed group of certified staff members ( $n = 10$ ) who attended and completed a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar and a demographically-matched, randomly selected group of certified staff members ( $n = 10$ ) who did not attend or complete a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar. All staff members participating in this study ( $N = 20$ ) were employees of the same urban school district over the course of the academic year.

**Gender of participants.** Of the total number of identified subjects who attended and completed a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the gender ratio was six males (60%) and four females (40%). Of the total number of identified subjects who did not attend or complete a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the gender ratio was three males (30%) and seven females (70%).

**Age range of participants.** The age range for all study participants ( $N = 20$ ) at the beginning of the study was between 25 years and 57 years. The age range of certified staff members who attended and completed a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ) was between 27 years and 57 years, with an average age of 36.7. The age range of certified staff members who did not attend or complete a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ) was between 25 years and 52 years, with an average age of 36.7.

**Racial and ethnic origins of participants.** Of the total number of identified subjects who attended and completed a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the racial and ethnic origins were nine Caucasian (90%) and one Hispanic (10%). Of the total number of identified subjects who did not attend or complete a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the racial and ethnic origins were eight Caucasian (80%), one African-American (10%), and one Native American (10%). The racial and ethnic origin of the participants is congruent with the research school district's racial and ethnic origin demographics for certified staff members.

**Education level of participants.** Of the total number of identified subjects who attended and completed a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the average number of graduate hours completed in an education-related field was 53.1 ( $SD = 33.4$ ). Of the total number of identified subjects who did not attend or complete a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the average number of graduate hours completed in an education-related field was 60.8 ( $SD = 33.8$ ).

**Experience of participants.** Of the total number of identified subjects who attended and completed a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the

average number of years of experience within the district was 8.9 ( $SD = 10.0$ ). Of the total number of identified subjects who did not attend or complete a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar ( $n = 10$ ), the average number of years of experience within the district was 11.3 ( $SD = 8.7$ ).

**Inclusion criteria of participants.** All certified staff members who were employed by the research school district and interested in a future leadership position within the district were eligible to participate. In addition, the participants indicated their intention to complete all of the program requirements for the district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar.

**Method of participant identification.** Certified staff members who were employed by the research school district were identified through completion of a self-reported, demographic questionnaire and completion of the Administrator Disposition Index (ADI) prior to participation in the district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar. No individual identifiers were attached to the data collected from the 20 participants in either of the two groups.

### **Description of Procedures**

**Research design.** The pretest, posttest, control group comparative efficacy study design is displayed in the following notation:

Group 1:  $X_1 O_1 Y_1 O_2$

Group 2:  $X_1 O_1 Y_2 O_2$

**Group 1 = study participants #1.** A naturally formed group of certified staff members ( $n = 10$ ).

**Group 2 = study participants #2.** A randomly selected control group of certified staff members ( $n = 10$ ).

**X<sub>1</sub> = study constant.** All certified staff members were employees of the same urban Midwestern school district during the duration of this study.

**Y<sub>1</sub> = study independent variable, leadership seminar condition.** Certified staff members who attended and completed a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar.

**Y<sub>2</sub> = study independent variable, leadership seminar condition.** Certified staff members who did not attend or complete a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar.

**O<sub>1</sub> = study pretest dependent measure.** Leadership qualities as measured by the Administrator Disposition Index composite score which includes (a) student and (b) community domain sub-scores.

**O<sub>2</sub> = study posttest dependent measure.** Leadership qualities as measured by the Administrator Disposition Index composite score which includes (a) student and (b) community domain sub-scores.

### **Independent Variable Description**

The independent variable for this study consisted of a nine-month leadership seminar. The program, known as the Ralston Leadership Academy, is a collaborative course offering between the Ralston Public Schools and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The program is intended to prepare school leader candidates who are interested in applying leadership and management theory to the practical operations of the school. In addition, special emphasis is placed on cultivating both the personal and professional dispositions necessary to become a successful school leader. The ultimate goal of the

program is to provide existing staff members with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be a successful building or district leader.

Participants in the leadership seminar were expected to meet approximately once a month for a two-hour period of time. Course content was delivered using a combination of direct instruction, cooperative learning, small group instruction, and presentations on research activities. The course content was further supported by a collection of required readings that focused primarily on the changing role of school leaders as well as the challenges facing building and district administrators.

Over the course of the seminar, participants addressed topics selected by the sponsoring school district based on those qualities they wish to see in future leaders. Some of the topics addressed in this seminar include recognizing the challenges and resources that are present at the building and district level, understanding and managing the process of change, harnessing the strengths of individuals, groups, and the community for the benefit of the organization, promoting 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching and learning skills, diversity, community outreach, emotional intelligence, professional accountability, and school accreditation.

In addition to the monthly meetings, participants also met with the district superintendent for approximately 45 minutes each month to determine his or her level of understanding of the course material and assigned readings. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss how the current topic of study applied to the participant's current role. Each meeting also served as a way of organizing the participant's experiences in preparation for the seminar's final, culminating activity. This activity involved identifying a challenge currently facing the school district, then developing a plan of

action to remedy the situation. Although not required, participants were encouraged to implement their plan with the help the district's leadership team.

### **Dependent Variable Description**

The dependent variable used in this study was the Administrator Disposition Index (ADI). The Administrator Disposition Index is a 36-item, five-point Likert survey that is aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. The survey consists of a 17-item student domain as well as a 19-item community domain.

### **Research Questions and Data Analysis**

The following research questions were used to analyze the impact of the grow-your-own leadership seminar as measured by the Administrator Disposition Index:

**Question 1:** Does the implementation of a district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 promote the development of either (a) student or (b) community centered dispositions among its participants as measured by the Administrator Disposition index?

Research question #1 was analyzed using descriptive statistical measures. Means and standard deviations were individually reported for 36 survey items according to the corresponding student or community domain and by factor.

**Question 2:** Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index student domain score?

Research question #2 was analyzed using independent *t*-tests to examine the significance of difference between the pretest and posttest ADI student domain scores for



both the seminar and non-seminar participants. In addition, repeated measures *t*-tests were also used to examine the significance of difference within the pretest and posttest ADI student domain scores for both the seminar and non-seminar participants. To help control for type 1 errors, a one-tailed, .05 alpha level was used for both the independent and repeated measures *t*-tests.

**Question 3:** Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index community domain score?

Research question #3 was analyzed using independent *t*-tests to examine the significance of difference between the pretest and posttest ADI community domain scores for both the seminar and non-seminar participants. In addition, repeated measures *t*-tests were also used to examine the significance of difference within the pretest and posttest ADI community domain scores for both the seminar and non-seminar participants. To help control for type 1 errors, a one-tailed, .05 alpha level was used for both the independent and repeated measures *t*-tests.

**Question 4:** Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index composite score?

Research question #4 was analyzed using independent *t*-tests to examine the significance of difference between the pretest and posttest ADI composite scores for both the seminar and non-seminar participants. In addition, repeated measures *t*-tests were also used to examine the significance of difference within the pretest and posttest ADI composite scores for both the seminar and non-seminar participants. To help control for

type 1 errors, a one-tailed, .05 alpha level was used for both the independent and repeated measures *t*-tests.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

All study data was retrospective and archival school information. Permission from the appropriate school personnel was obtained. Naturally formed groups of 10 certified staff members in one arm and 10 demographically matched, randomly selected certified staff members in the other was obtained. Non-coded numbers were used to display individual de-identified achievement data. Aggregated group data, descriptive statistics, and parametric statistical analysis were utilized and reported with means and standard deviations in tables.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar had a significant impact on the dispositions of its members compared to staff members who did not participate in the program. This study analyzed the domain scores found on the Administrator Disposition Index of certified staff members who participated in district-led, grow-your-own leadership program against certified staff members in a similar work environment who did not participate in the program. The number of study participants was 20.

#### **Research Question #1:**

Does the implementation of a district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 promote the development of either (a) student or (b) community centered dispositions among its participants as measured by the Administrator Disposition Index?

Among the seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), responses for the student subscale showed an average increase of 0.15 between the pretest ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ) and posttest scores ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 0.18$ ). Individual item averages ranged from a decrease of 0.3 to an increase 0.3 on the 17-item subscale. Among the non-seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), responses for the student subscale showed an average increase of 0.02 between the pretest ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) and posttest scores ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ ). Individual item averages ranged from a decrease of 0.2 to an increase of 0.3 on the 17-item subscale. Table 1 displays the results of this analysis.

Among the seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), responses for the community subscale showed an average increase of 0.25 between the pretest ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) and posttest scores ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ). Individual item averages ranged from a decrease of 0.1 to an increase 0.7 on the 19-item subscale. Among the non-seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), responses for the community subscale showed an average increase of 0.14 between the pretest ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) and posttest scores ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ). Individual item averages ranged from a decrease of 0.2 to an increase of 0.4 on the 19-item subscale. Table 2 displays the results of this analysis.

**Research Question #2:**

Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index student domain score?

Among the study participants ( $N = 20$ ), an independent measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the seminar ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) pretest scores for the student subscale. This information is displayed on table three. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(18) = 0.76$ ,  $p = .23$  (one-tailed).

Among the seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), a repeated measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists within the pretest ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 0.18$ ) student domain scores. This information is displayed in table four. An analysis of

the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(9) = 1.52, p = .08$  (one-tailed).

Among the non-seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), a repeated measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists within the pretest ( $M = 4.82, SD = 0.31$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.84, SD = 0.32$ ) student domain scores. This information is displayed in table five. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(9) = 0.25, p = .40$  (one-tailed).

Among the study participants ( $N = 20$ ), an independent measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the seminar ( $M = 4.89, SD = 0.18$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.84, SD = 0.32$ ) posttest scores for the student subscale. This information is displayed on table six. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(18) = 0.58, p = .29$  (one-tailed).

### **Research Question #3:**

Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of 2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index community domain score?

Among the study participants ( $N = 20$ ), an independent measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the seminar ( $M = 4.38, SD = 0.58$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.39, SD = 0.53$ ) pretest scores for the community subscale. This information is displayed on

table seven. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(18) = 0.12, p = .45$  (one-tailed).

Among the seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), a repeated measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists within the pretest ( $M = 4.38, SD = 0.58$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.63, SD = 0.43$ ) community domain scores. This information is displayed in table eight. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were statistically significant,  $t(9) = 2.13, p = .03, r^2 = 0.336$  (one-tailed).

Among the non-seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), a repeated measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists within the pretest ( $M = 4.39, SD = 0.53$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.53, SD = 0.52$ ) community domain scores. This information is displayed in table nine. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were statistically significant,  $t(9) = 2.34, p = .02, r^2 = 0.379$  (one-tailed).

Among the study participants ( $N = 20$ ), an independent measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the seminar ( $M = 4.63, SD = 0.43$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.53, SD = 0.52$ ) posttest scores for the community subscale. This information is displayed on table ten. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(18) = 0.85, p = .20$  (one-tailed).

#### **Research Question #4:**

Is there a significant difference between staff members who did and did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar from the fall of 2011 to the spring of

2012 on the Administrator Disposition Index composite score?

Among the study participants ( $N = 20$ ), an independent measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the seminar ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) pretest scores for the ADI composite score. This information is displayed on table eleven. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(18) = 0.41$ ,  $p = .34$  (one-tailed).

Among the seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), a repeated measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists within the pretest ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) ADI composite scores. This information is displayed in table twelve. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were statistically significant,  $t(9) = 1.99$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $r^2 = 0.306$  (one-tailed).

Among the non-seminar participants ( $n = 10$ ), a repeated measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists within the pretest ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) ADI composite scores. This information is displayed in table thirteen. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(9) = 1.26$ ,  $p = .12$  (one-tailed).

Among the study participants ( $N = 20$ ), an independent measures  $t$ -test was conducted to compare group means in order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between the seminar ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) posttest scores for the ADI composite score. This information is displayed on

table fourteen. An analysis of the findings revealed that the results were not statistically significant,  $t(18) = 0.77, p = .22$  (one-tailed).





students to be contributing members of society.	4.90	0.32	5.00	0.00	4.90	0.32	4.80	0.42
I am committed to ethical principals in the decision-making process.	4.70	0.48	4.90	0.32	4.80	0.42	4.80	0.42
I believe administrators should work with faculty, staff, and students to develop a caring school community.	4.80	0.42	5.00	0.00	4.90	0.32	4.80	0.42
I believe student learning is the fundamental purpose of schooling.	4.60	.70	4.30	0.48	4.60	0.52	4.60	0.52
I believe schools must hold high standards for learning.	4.80	0.42	4.80	0.42	4.90	0.32	4.90	0.32
I am committed to the principles stated in the Bill of Rights.	4.40	0.70	4.70	0.67	4.50	0.53	4.70	0.48
I believe schools are an integral part of the larger community.	4.80	0.42	5.00	0.00	4.70	0.48	4.80	0.42
I believe there are a variety of ways in which students can learn.	4.70	0.48	5.00	0.00	4.90	0.32	4.90	0.32
I believe one should accept the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions.	4.60	0.52	4.80	0.42	4.50	0.53	4.80	0.42

I believe learning is life-long for me and others.	4.70	0.48	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
I believe there are a variety of ways in which teachers can teach.	4.80	0.42	4.90	0.32	5.00	0.00	4.80	0.42
Total Factor	4.74	0.46	4.89	0.18	4.82	0.31	4.84	0.32



appropriately and tactfully with people from different backgrounds.	4.40	0.52	4.60	0.52	4.40	0.52	4.40	0.52
I express verbal and/or non-verbal recognition of feelings, needs, and concerns of others.	4.00	0.47	4.30	0.48	4.30	0.48	4.40	0.52
I continuously do the work required for high levels of performance for myself and the organization.	4.70	0.48	4.90	0.32	4.60	0.52	4.60	0.52
I believe families are partners in the education of their children.	4.80	0.42	5.00	0.00	4.90	0.32	4.80	0.42
I believe in the involvement of stakeholders in management processes.	4.40	0.70	4.30	0.48	4.10	0.57	4.50	0.53
I believe administrators should develop alliances and/or resources outside the school that improve the quality of teaching and learning.	4.50	0.85	4.70	0.48	4.40	0.52	4.70	0.48
I believe diversity brings benefits to the school community.	4.60	0.52	4.80	0.42	4.60	0.52	4.70	0.48
I communicate necessary information to the appropriate								

persons in a timely manner.	4.20	0.42	4.60	0.52	4.20	0.63	4.50	0.53
I am committed to the inclusion of all members of the school community.	4.30	0.67	4.80	0.42	4.50	0.53	4.60	0.52
I believe it is important to dialogue with other decision-makers affecting education.	4.70	0.48	4.80	0.42	4.50	0.53	4.80	0.42
I am committed to collaboration and communication with families.	4.30	0.95	5.00	0.00	4.50	0.53	4.70	0.48
I believe administrators must take risks to improve schools to make them safer and more efficient and effective.	4.60	0.52	4.70	0.67	4.30	0.67	4.30	0.67
I generate enthusiasm and work to influence others to accomplish common goals.	4.50	0.53	4.70	0.48	4.20	0.63	4.50	0.53
Total Factor	4.38	0.58	4.63	0.43	4.39	0.53	4.53	0.52

Table 3

*Student Factor Pretest Pretest Analysis for Seminar and Non-Seminar Participants*

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	Pretest-Pretest Comparison			
	Seminar		Non-Seminar	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.74	0.46	4.82	0.31

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*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 4

*Student Factor Pretest Posttest Analysis for Seminar Participants*

	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.74	0.46	4.89	0.18

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree



Table 5

*Student Factor Pretest Posttest Analysis for Non-Seminar Participants*

	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.82	0.31	4.84	0.32

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 6

*Student Factor Posttest Posttest Analysis for Seminar and Non-Seminar Participants*

---

	Posttest-Posttest Comparison			
	Seminar		Non-Seminar	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.89	0.18	4.84	0.32

---

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 7

*Community Factor Pretest Pretest Analysis for Seminar and Non-Seminar Participants*


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	Pretest-Pretest Comparison			
	Seminar		Non-Seminar	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.38	0.58	4.39	0.53

---

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 8

*Community Factor Pretest Posttest Analysis for Seminar Participants*

	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.38	0.58	4.63	0.43

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 9

*Community Factor Pretest Posttest Analysis for Non-Seminar Participants*


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	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.39	0.53	4.53	0.52

---

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 10

*Community Factor Posttest Posttest Analysis for Seminar and Non-Seminar Participants*

---

	Posttest-Posttest Comparison			
	Seminar		Non-Seminar	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.63	0.43	4.53	0.52

---

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 11

*Composite Factor Pretest Pretest Analysis for Seminar and Non-Seminar Participants*

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	Pretest-Pretest Comparison			
	Seminar		Non-Seminar	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.55	0.52	4.60	0.43

---

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 12

*Composite Factor Pretest Posttest Analysis for Seminar Participants*

	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.55	0.52	4.75	0.31

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree



Table 13

*Composite Factor Pretest Posttest Analysis for Non-Seminar Participants*

	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.60	0.43	4.68	0.43

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 14

*Composite Factor Posttest Posttest Analysis for Seminar and Non-Seminar Participants*


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	Posttest-Posttest Comparison			
	Seminar		Non-Seminar	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Factor	4.75	0.31	4.68	0.43

---

*Note:* The ADI utilizes a five-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusions and Discussion

When Lee Iacocca published his book, *Where Have All the Leaders Gone?* many readers undoubtedly interpreted the title as a rhetorical commentary on the apparent lack of leadership in our society. While that may have been the intent of the author, the title itself seems to suggest that capable leaders are a finite commodity who are becoming increasingly difficult to find.

If one accepts the premise suggested by the title of this book, grow-your-own leadership programs provide school districts with an opportunity to replenish their pool of leadership candidates. By proactively adopting programs such as these, capable leaders will no longer be a rare commodity found outside the organization, but rather a resource developed from within. For districts that have implemented leadership programs, Lee Iacocca's question, *Where Have All the Leaders Gone?* is no longer a rhetorical issue, but a question with a simple answer: leaders can always be found in organizations that invest in the potential of their employees.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a district-led, grow-your-own leadership seminar had a significant impact on the dispositions of its members compared to staff members who did not participate in the program. This study analyzed the domain scores found on the Administrator Disposition Index of certified staff members who participated in district-led, grow-your-own leadership program against certified staff members in a similar work environment who did not participate in the program.

## **Conclusions**

### **Research Question #1**

Among the items found on the student subscale, the average participant in the leadership seminar experienced an increase on 14 of the 17 items. For those who did not participate in the leadership seminar, the average participant experienced an increase on only 6 of the 17 items. Question #1 ("I am committed to high quality standards, expectations, and performances") saw the biggest difference between the two groups as the average pretest and posttest scores for the seminar participants increased 0.3 points, while the average pretest and posttest scores for the non-seminar participants decreased by 0.2 points.

Among the items found on the community subscale, the average participant in the leadership seminar experienced an increase on 17 of the 19 items. For those who did not participate in the leadership seminar, the average participant experienced an increase on 12 of the 19 items. For the seminar group, question #4 ("I believe in mobilizing community resources to benefit children) and question #32 ("I am committed to collaboration and communication with families") saw the biggest difference between the two groups. For item #4, the average pretest and posttest scores for the seminar participants increased 0.3 points, while the average pretest and posttest scores for the non-seminar participants decreased by 0.2 points. Similarly, for item #32, the average pretest and posttest scores for the seminar participants increased 0.7 points, while the average pretest and posttest scores for the non-seminar participants increased only 0.2 points.

Curiously, the non-seminar participants experienced an equally large gain on item

#20 ("I believe in the involvement of stakeholders in management processes") compared to the seminar participants. While the average seminar participant saw a decrease of 0.1 points between the pretest and posttest scores, the average non-seminar participant saw an increase of 0.4 points between the pretest and posttest scores. Although the leadership seminar was designed to demonstrate the advantages of harnessing the strengths of others, it's possible that the current emphasis on professional accountability may make it difficult for a potential administrator to place his or her career in the hands of another.

### **Research Question #2**

Overall, the pretest pretest analysis of the student domain between the seminar ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) groups did not reveal a statistically significant difference. Likewise, the posttest posttest analysis between the seminar ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 0.18$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ ) groups did not reveal a statistical significance. Although the two groups experienced different levels of growth and achievement, the average seminar and non-seminar participant both possessed exceptionally well-developed student dispositions.

Among the seminar group, the difference between the average pretest ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 0.18$ ) factor scores for the student domain was 0.15. Compared to the non-seminar group, individuals involved in the district-led, grow-your-own leadership program not only experienced a greater average rate of growth on the student domain items, but also experienced a higher level of achievement.

Among the non-seminar group, the difference between the average pretest ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ ) factor scores for the student domain was 0.02. Although there were some individual fluctuations on the average scores for

each item included in the student domain, the pretest and posttest scores for those not involved in the district-led, leadership seminar was essentially unchanged.

### **Research Question #3**

Overall, the pretest pretest analysis of the community domain between the seminar ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) groups did not reveal a statistically significant difference. Likewise, the posttest posttest analysis between the seminar ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) groups did not reveal a statistical significance. Although both groups had remarkably similar community disposition scores at the beginning of the study, there was a moderate difference in the rate of growth between the two groups.

Among the seminar group, the difference between the average pretest ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) factor scores for the community domain was 0.25. On the community subscale, the average participant experienced an increase on 17 of the 19 items, ranging from 0.1 to 0.7 points. For the remaining items on the community subscale, one item showed no growth between the pretest and posttest assessments, while the other item showed a decrease of 0.1 points.

Among the non-seminar group, the difference between the average pretest ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) factor scores for the community domain was 0.14. On the community subscale, the average participant experienced an increase on 12 of the 19 items ranging from 0.1 to 0.4 points. For the remaining items on the community subscale, five items showed no growth between the pretest and posttest assessments, while the remaining two items showed a decrease of 0.1 and 0.2 points.

**Research Question #4**

Overall, the pretest pretest analysis of the ADI composite score between the seminar ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) groups did not reveal a statistically significant difference. Likewise, the posttest posttest analysis between the seminar ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) and non-seminar ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) groups did not reveal a statistical significance. In spite of the fact that the seminar group experienced a greater degree of growth and achievement, the pretest and posttest scores of the two groups were not entirely dissimilar from one another.

Among the seminar group, the difference between the average pretest ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ) factor scores for the ADI composite was 0.2. Collectively, the effects of the district-led leadership program appeared to have a statistically significant impact on the dispositions of its members.

Among the non-seminar group, the difference between the average pretest ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) and posttest ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) factor scores for the ADI composite was 0.08. Collectively, non-participation in the district's leadership program did not appear to have a statistically significant impact on the dispositions of those not involved in the program.

Taken as a whole, the results reveal some notable differences between the two groups. On the 36-item ADI assessment, the average individual who participated in the district-led leadership seminar experienced an increase on 31 items ranging from 0.1 to 0.7 points, experienced no change on 2 items, and saw a decrease on three items ranging from 0.1 to 0.3 points. For those who did not participate in the district-led leadership seminar, the average individual experienced an increase on only 18 items ranging from

0.1 to 0.4 points, experienced no change on 12 items, and saw a decrease on 6 items ranging from 0.1 to 0.2 points.

### **Discussion**

Based on the results of this study, the implementation of a district-led leadership seminar appears to have a significant impact on the dispositions of its members. While the findings of this study are promising, a degree of caution should be applied before generalizing these results to a larger population.

A closer look at the results from the student domain reveals that both the seminar and non-seminar groups exhibited strong dispositions throughout the study. Part of these findings can be attributed to the fact that both groups were not only populated with certified staff members who had extensive experience working with children, but had also been exposed to a wide variety of educational theories through their graduate coursework. On average, members of the seminar group had 8.9 years of teaching experience with the district, while members of the non-seminar group had an average of 11.3 years of teaching experience with the district. Likewise, members of the seminar group had accumulated an average of 53.1 graduate hours in education, while members of the non-seminar group had accumulated an average of 60.8 graduate hours in education. Considering the strong pedagogical background found among the study participants, it is not entirely surprising to discover that the initial student factor for both groups was relatively high, which in turn, explains why the increases in the student domain were somewhat limited.

While the results of this study indicated strong growth in the community domain for those who participated in the district-led seminar, it is interesting to note that that the



individuals who did not participate in the leadership seminar also experienced a significant rate of growth. Part of the increase may be due to a separate, community outreach program that was being developed by the host district at approximately the same time. This program, designed to strengthen the ties between the district and the community, required teachers to conduct a face-to-face meeting with the parents of the students they served prior to the start of the school year. The goal of this meeting was not to communicate school policies and procedures, but rather to foster an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, and open dialogue between the school district and the community. Although the objectives of the district's "home visit" program were more limited than the goals found in the leadership seminar, it's possible the community-based dispositions of the staff members involved in this study may have been unintentionally influenced by this external program.

Overall, the differences exhibited between the seminar and non-seminar participants may be primarily attributed to the alignment between the course content and the items found on the Administrator Disposition Index. The topic of emotional intelligence, for example, was not only addressed on multiple occasions throughout the leadership seminar, but was also reflected on multiple items found on the ADI including item #5 ("I anticipate responses of others and act to reduce negative impact"), item #12 ("I acknowledge achievement and accomplishment of others"), item #17 ("I am committed to ethical principles in the decision-making process), and item #31 ("I believe one should accept the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions"). Other course topics, including understanding and managing the process of change, harnessing the strengths of stakeholders for the benefit of the organization, promoting 21<sup>st</sup> Century

teaching and learning skills, diversity, community outreach, and professional accountability are likewise reflected throughout the Administrator Disposition Index. This alignment between the course content and the ADI helped to ensure that the participants in the leadership seminar were well exposed to the dispositions necessary to be a successful administrator in the host district.

Another factor that could explain the high levels of achievement and growth among the seminar participants may be attributed to the superintendent's commitment to individually meet with each of the seminar's participants on a monthly basis. These meetings not only provided the seminar participants with an opportunity to apply educational theory to their current practices, but also helped promote mastery learning of the course content. In addition, these meeting undoubtedly communicated to the participants that the district was placing a high priority on developing the leadership qualities of its staff members. As such, these meetings most likely served to motivate the seminar participants once they realized the degree to which the district was investing in their future potential.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

Considering the impact effective leaders can have on an institution, school districts would be well-advised to implement programs designed to proactively develop the leadership potential of their staff members. Leadership programs should be designed as an integral part of the district's overall improvement plan and should be constructed based on clear, well-defined competencies the organization is looking for in its administrative team (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Myung, et al., 2011; Schechter & Tischler, 2007). By nurturing the talent found within the organization, school districts will be able

to ensure that future leaders will not only be familiar with the goals of the district, but also have an in-depth understanding of the students, the organization, and the community it serves. Before enrolling in the program, however, leadership candidates should clearly understand that the completion of the course requirements does not guarantee a leadership position with the district. Like all other openings, leadership vacancies should be filled by those who possess superior abilities, not granted to others based on feelings of entitlement (Schmit-Davis & Bottoms, 2011).

The curriculum developed for district-led leadership programs should also engage the participants with project-based activities where candidates have the opportunity to put educational theories into practice (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007; Fry, et al., 2007). Rather than completing a series of disconnected activities unrelated to their position in the district, candidates should be required to solve problems the school is currently facing (O'Neill, et al., 2005; Orr, 2006). In order to adequately prepare future leaders for the real-world challenges they will eventually encounter, leadership candidates should be required to draw together diverse and conflicting sources of data that does not suggest an obvious solution to a problem (Militello, et al., 2009). In addition, these problems should require the candidate to go beyond simply applying the concepts of good managerial leadership, but should also require potential leaders to delve into the worlds of instructional and transformational leadership (Perez et al., 2011; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Future administrators need to recognize that the most important challenges before us are not those that involve improving institutional efficiency, but those that involve building the capacity of others.

Since effective leaders often leverage the strengths of others for the good of the

organization, leadership development programs should utilize a cohort structure where members have the opportunity to draw upon the strengths of one another. The cohort group should not only enable potential leaders to capitalize on the diversity of its members, but should also serve as an important source of emotional support and affirmation for those facing the challenges associated with leadership (Barnett, et al., 2000; Orr, 2007a). In addition to the cohort group, leadership development programs should not only utilize highly skilled mentors to help participants navigate the unwritten rules of the institution, but also coaches who possess in-depth knowledge of a particular skill (Daresh, 2004; Grogan, 2000; 2002; McKenzie, 1989). Likewise, school districts should recognize the advantages of forming partnerships with local colleges, universities, and other community-based agencies. Instead of seeing themselves as the sole advocate for students, school districts should adopt a collaborative approach where decisions, resources, and responsibilities are all freely shared with others (Breault & Breault, 2010; Teitel, 1999).

Finally, school districts that provide leadership development opportunities to their staff members must be willing to collect meaningful information in order to critically examine whether or not the program is producing the desired results. This involves developing a program with clearly defined outcomes that can be assessed by gathering measurable data over an extended period of time (Hess & Kelly, 2007; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). In addition to determining the impact a leadership program has on those who have completed the program, school officials should also strive to assess the effect the program has had on the students enrolled in the district (Corcoran, et al., 2012). Most importantly, district leaders need to have the courage to acknowledge that even a

well-developed program may need to be refined or possibly abandoned. As such, the evaluation of a leadership program should never be viewed with anxiety, but rather as an opportunity to discover how the district can change the system to better serve its students.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The results of this study clearly indicate the need for additional research in the field of leadership development. In order to determine if the results of this study are reliable, it will be necessary for future researchers to repeat this study using a larger sample size. Utilizing a larger sample may help researchers determine whether or not the growth of an individual's dispositions are related to his or her race, gender, ethnicity, education level, teaching experience, or other personal characteristics.

Researchers would also be well advised to replicate this study in school districts of varying demographic conditions in order to determine whether or not there is a correlation between the success of the seminar participants and one or more factors which define either the school district or the surrounding community. Conditions such as the size of the school district, its geographic location, the characteristics of its students, or the presence of other community-based resources may have a significant impact on the participant's ability to develop the dispositions needed to be a successful leader.

Finally, one area of research that appears to be particularly fertile deals with the connection between the success of the participants and the design of the seminar's curriculum. It may be determined, for example, that a more narrowly defined curriculum may be more beneficial to the participants than one that focuses on several distinct concepts. Likewise, future studies may reveal that adjusting either the length of the seminar or the activities required may also have an impact on the growth of the

participants' dispositions. Clearly, there is a great deal of work that still needs to be completed in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how school districts can enhance the dispositions of their certified staff members.

### **Summary**

The results of this study are highly significant to the field of educational leadership. First and foremost, this study indicates that the dispositions necessary to be a successful school leader can be developed through the implementation of a district-led, grow-your-own leadership program. By developing a curriculum that requires individuals to interact with stakeholders who have had different life experiences, leadership candidates will have the opportunity to engage in, and reflect upon, in-depth discussions about the diverse perspectives found in the school community. This exchange of information will lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the ideas and opinions held by the building's stakeholders. It is through these discussions that relationships among people are formed, which in turn, creates a climate that allows a leader's professional dispositions about students and the community to grow (Keiser & Smith, 2009).

Second, the data gathered from this study suggests that district-specific leadership programs have the potential to make a greater contribution to student success. Leadership preparation programs no longer need to be limited by the philosophy that the most effective leaders are those who improve systems that allow the organization run more efficiently. Instead, leadership programs should be designed to develop transformational leaders who are interested in improving individuals, changing cultures, and creating excitement about working with students and communities (McGowan &

Miller, 2001). With a solid understanding of the professional dispositions needed to be successful, future leaders will have the capacity to both nurture and draw upon the strengths of the stakeholders within the school community in order to improve the organization as a whole. By developing a collaborative culture where everyone is working toward a shared vision of the future, strong, transformational leaders will be able to align school improvement processes to focus exclusively on improving student success (Valentine & Prater, 2011).

Finally, this study also suggests that the selection of future administrators does not have to be a game of chance for superintendents. By articulating a set of specific beliefs that are embodied in the district's leadership program, superintendents can be assured that potential administrators from within the district will not only understand the district's stakeholders, but also the goals of the organization as well (Odden, 2011). Likewise, superintendents who are actively involved in developing the leadership capacity of a district's staff members will have an insight into those who have the ability to work collaboratively with others, synthesize information, and creatively solve problems currently facing the school district. This will allow superintendents to carefully select an internal candidate who has demonstrated his or her readiness for a leadership position rather than being forced to respond reactively to leadership vacancies as they occur (Peters, 2011).

District-led, grow-your-own leadership programs have enormous potential to provide school districts with a sustainable solution to the problem of ensuring that all schools are led by highly skilled administrators. By helping staff members develop the dispositions that are necessary to become a successful leader, school officials will be able

to unleash the hidden talents of both the district and the community in order to help each student reach his or her fullest potential.



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APPENDIX

Survey Instrument

Administrator Disposition Index (ADI)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am committed to high quality standards, expectations, and performances.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I motivate others to change behaviors that inhibit professional and organizational growth.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I believe all students are entitled access to the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I believe in mobilizing community resources to benefit children.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I anticipate responses of others and act to reduce negative impact.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I believe all people can learn.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am committed to the right of every child to a quality education.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am committed to an informed public.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I believe education is the key to opportunity and social mobility.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I believe a safe, supportive learning environment is essential.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I respond in a timely manner to others who initiate contact with me.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I acknowledge achievement and accomplishment of others.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I deal appropriately and tactfully with people from different backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I believe schools should prepare students to be contributing members of society.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I express verbal and/or non-verbal recognition of feelings, needs, and concerns of others.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I continuously do the work required for high levels of performance for myself and the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I am committed to ethical principles in the decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I believe administrators should work with faculty, staff, and students to develop a caring school community.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I believe families are partners in the education of their children.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. I believe in the involvement of stakeholders in management processes.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I believe student learning is the fundamental purpose of schooling.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I believe schools must hold high standards for learning.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I believe administrators should develop alliances and/or resources outside the school that improve the quality of teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am committed to the principles stated in the Bill of Rights.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I believe schools are an integral part of the larger community.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I believe diversity brings benefits to the school community.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I communicate necessary information to the appropriate persons in a timely manner.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I believe there are a variety of ways in which students can learn.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
29. I am committed to the inclusion of all members of the school community.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I believe it is important to dialogue with other decision-makers affecting education.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I believe one should accept the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am committed to collaboration and communication with families.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I believe administrators must take risks to improve schools to make them safer and more efficient and effective.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I believe learning is life-long for me and others.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I generate enthusiasm and work to influence others to accomplish common goals.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I believe there are a variety of ways in which teachers can teach.	1	2	3	4	5