Principal Preparation Programs for Effective School Leaders

by

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Principal Preparation Programs for Effective School Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Effective school leaders foster improved student learning and higher academic achievement. Many critics of university-based principal preparation programs fault universities for failing to improve efforts to prepare candidates to address the complex issues facing principals in today’s high stakes accountability environment. Each principal faces local, state, and federal pressure to influence continuous improvement in achievement results for every demographic group of students.

The challenge facing school districts is not the shortage of school administrators, but the shortage of qualified principal candidates who have the ability to collaborate with stakeholders, and the skill to develop an instructional program that ensures all students are learning and achieving at a high level.

To support the development of school leaders to lead schools in the 21st century, school districts and universities are joining forces. This qualitative case study examined the Aspiring Administrators Program, a principal preparation partnership program between the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU). The researcher conducted and analyzed course documents to better understand the nature of the program. Also, the researcher conducted and analyzed individual and focus group interviews to ascertain the perceptions of the program’s first cohort of participants, principal coaches, district personnel, and university faculty. This study particularly examined the goals of the program and the various program features intended to help achieve the goals. As well, the study explored the nature of the district/university collaboration that facilitated the program’s design. Finally, the study examined preliminary evidence that indicated the extent to which the program’s candidates were
acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for effective school leadership.

The results suggest that the Aspiring Administrators Program shows promise increasing the extent to which aspiring administrators obtain the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to improve school-wide achievement, resulting in the closing of achievement gaps.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Demand for new principals will almost surely be rising, and the nature of the work is changing by virtue of increased external demands for performance accountability. At the same time, it is far from clear that the nature of pre-service education is changing to meet the new demands of the work, or that the composition of the pool of potential principals, either in its demographics or its skills and knowledge, is changing sufficiently to meet the demands of the new work. (Elmore & Burney, 2000, p. 3)

The role of the 21st century public school principal has become complex and demanding within the atmosphere of high-stakes testing and accountability. The principal’s role has changed from “business manager,” based on 19th century private-sector theories of management, to instructional leader (Murphy, 2003). Schools have changed, and principal leadership has had to evolve in response to the transformation. Principals, as instructional leaders, are expected to have an effective teacher in every classroom to ensure student learning and academic success at each school. Public schools educate the majority of children in the United States. The public sector (parents, elected officials, and business community) expects that every school have an effective principal who is knowledgeable of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments, with the ability to work effectively with school personnel and stakeholders to ensure all students have access to quality education. The key to school improvement reform that boosts student learning is effective principal leadership (S. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005).
The task of every principal preparation program is to cultivate extraordinary school leaders who can effectively develop a community of learners where the fundamentals of teaching and learning permeate every classroom and lead to high academic achievement. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2003) identified 21 leadership “responsibilities” that correlate to increases in student performance and achievement. These, and similar findings, might lead one to conclude that successful schools rest firmly on the shoulders of effective principals (Cotton, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Principals are under considerable pressure to improve achievement at their schools. Over the last three decades, there has been an urgency to improve public education. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* detailed the need for more rigorous curricula in response to a decline in educational performance (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983). The public was highly critical of public schools because of the low achievement of American students in mathematics and science when compared to students in the international community. The report called for effective school leaders to improve achievement. As well, the report encouraged districts to hold school leaders accountable for results (Leithwood et al., 2004; Levine, 2005b).

In the last decade, the principal role has evolved to have greater demands as a result of district and school accountability based upon state achievement tests (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001). On January 2, 2002, President Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 into law. Under this ambitious plan, schools were required to ensure all students achieve proficiency on statewide standardized tests by the 2014-15 school year. All schools must achieve Adequately
Yearly Progress (AYP) targets set by the federal government. Schools receiving Title I dollars that fail to achieve AYP targets are subject to penalties and corrective action plans (USDOE, 2001).

No Child Left Behind was the reauthorization of President Johnson’s War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. No Child Left Behind was created to improve the achievement of students in targeted ethnic groups, with disabilities, in families with low incomes, and English-learner students by closing achievement gaps in the areas of mathematics and English Language Arts (USDOE, 2001).

President Barack H. Obama’s plan for the authorization of NCLB, A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (USDOE, 2010), reaffirms that every child in America deserves an excellent education. The reauthorization consists of modifications that include five major areas of reform for K-12 public education: (a) college- and career-ready students, (b) great teachers and leaders, (c) equity and opportunity, (d) higher standards and greater rewards for excellence, and (f) the promotion of innovation. The method of school funding changed from only the allocation of Title I funds based on a formula to states and school districts to include applying for the “Race to the Top” competitive grants. School Leadership Grants were made available to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of school administrators (USDOE, 2010). All of these proposed changes placed greater pressure on state departments of education, school districts, and principals to improve school reform efforts (USDOE, 2010).
President Obama’s blueprint accentuates the importance of having effective teachers and school leaders in every school. The proposed reform would direct states and school districts to develop systems to identify effective and highly effective teachers and principals based on student achievement. The blueprint stresses the importance of improving principal preparation programs and program recruitment making it imperative for states to monitor the effectiveness of traditional university-based and alternative preparation programs (USDOE, 2010).

Given the importance of principal leadership, it is crucial to consider the quality of principal preparation in universities today. This study will examine the “Aspiring Administrators Program,” a collaborative partnership between San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University for the preparation of urban school administrators to improve academic achievement in schools, closing the persistent achievement gap with affected groups.

Statement of the Problem

University-based principal preparation programs have been solely responsible for training approximately 88% of the principals in schools today (Levine, 2005a). University-based principal preparation programs have been described as woefully inadequate in developing future school leaders for effective instructional leadership. According to the Public Agenda Survey, 69% of principals and 80% of superintendents responded that the leadership programs in schools of education were “out of touch with the realities for what it takes to effectively run today’s schools and school districts” (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001, p. 31). Ninety-six percent of principals surveyed in the Public Agenda Survey indicated that their principal colleagues were more
helpful than the educational leadership preparation program they attended (Farkas et al., 2001). Others have claimed that school of education principal training programs were heavily theoretical, providing little opportunity for practical application, and, thereby, failing to provide knowledge and skills to address the centrality of learning issues that principals face daily (Hess & Kelley, 2007; Levine, 2005a; Murphy, 2003). In response to the school leadership paradigm shift and the call for the restructuring of principal preparation programs, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed standards as a guidepost for educational leadership preparation programs as they moved into the 21st century (Murphy, 2003).

Levine (2005b) was most concerned that if principal preparation programs did not respond appropriately by restructuring, our nation’s educational system would not be able to answer the challenge of “retooling current principals and superintendents while preparing a new generation of school leaders” (p. 5). Levine conducted a survey of principals, school of education deans, chairs, faculty, and alumni about their leadership training programs. In addition to the survey, he performed 28 case studies of schools and departments of leadership programs. In response to Levine’s survey of principal perceptions, 9 out of 10 principals stated that the school of education preparation programs “failed to adequately prepare them for classroom realities” and that the programs “lacked rigor and failed to focus on teaching and learning” (p. 30). The findings of the case studies were disconcerting. Levine concluded that there was incongruence with what was learned in the school of education and what principals said they needed to know to be an effective instructional leader. Additionally, Levine asserted that educational administration programs were the weakest of all the programs in the
nation’s schools of education. In his most stinging commentary, Levine labeled the majority of leadership programs as “inadequate to appalling” (p. 23).

Many agreed with Levine’s (2005b) declaration that principal programs needed to be revamped to prepare principals for the present-day complexity of school leadership (Finn & Broad, 2003; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). On the other hand, critics of the report, including the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), felt the report was myopic and ignored the major improvements that have occurred in leadership preparation programs (NCPEA, 2007).

The NCPEA (2007) soundly denounced Levine’s (2005b) criticism of leadership training programs as being short-sighted and inadequate. They argued that many changes have been made to improve principal preparation that Levine’s report did not take into account. Utilizing indicators such as improved student achievement data, entrance examinations, grade point averages, and a more diverse educational leadership pool, the NCPEA claimed that principal preparation programs continue to improve.

Both the NCPEA and UCEA rejected Levine’s criticisms. The educational community criticized Levine’s research methodology, claiming that the methodology failed to meet the requirements of good research required for graduate students (NCPEA, 2007). Michelle Young, Executive Director of UCEA, argued that the report had limited value because of questionable research procedures (NCPEA, 2007). Specifically, UCEA and NCPEA criticized the low survey-response rates (alumni—34%, faculty—40%, and principals—42%). Levine’s report also lost credibility with the UCEA because his
research team failed to interview leading professors in education leadership (NCPEA, 2007).

In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA), and research from leading professors of educational leadership, critically analyzed and provided recommendations to strengthen university preparation programs. There were eight NCEEA recommendations shown in Figure 1.

Schools of education began to implement the recommendations from NCEEA at varying levels. A critical improvement was the alignment of coursework to field-based activities, to develop the practical application of leadership skill sets to improve student learning to close the achievement gap. Several of the states in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Leadership Development Network made substantial reforms to improve the preparation of school leaders. The University of Louisville IDEAS program was developed in collaboration with area school districts to prepare aspiring administrators. The program is heavily field based inclusive of a sponsor-mentor component. The University of North Texas (UNT) and the Dallas Independent School District had 10 outstanding principals to nominate high-performing teachers. The district and university evaluated each nominated teacher for possible admission into UNT’s principal development program. In Mississippi, eligible school districts received state funds to support 1-year sabbaticals for qualified teachers to participate in state-approved university principal preparation programs. The prospective administrators agreed to serve for 5 years as administrators for the sponsoring school district. The preparation program curriculum was redesigned in these programs to focus on leading school improvement reforms to improve student achievement. In the state of Maryland, anyone recommended
1. **Educational leadership should be defined.** A common definition for educational leadership will help to clarify the framework of educational leadership.

2. **A National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA) should be established.** The establishment of a board will help to provide oversight to strengthen the field of educational leadership.

3. **Administrative preparation programs should be modeled on those in professional schools.** By using the structures of professional schools, it will provide a structure to strengthen the pedagogy of educational leadership.

4. **At least 300 universities and colleges should cease preparing educational administrators.** The identification of the ineffective preparation programs that lack a viable academic educational program should be cited for closure.

5. **Programs for recruitment and placement of ethnic minorities and women should be initiated by universities, school boards, state governments, federal governments, business and labor.** Continued emphasis must be placed on the intent to diversify the administrative pool reflective of the demographics within the region.

6. **The public schools should become full partners in the preparation of school administrators.** The partnership with school districts and university schools of education will provide authentic and practicum experiences to develop effective school administrators.

7. **Licensure programs should be substantially reformed.** The administrative licensure programs would be stronger if consistent criteria between programs and states were established.

8. **Professional development activities should be an integral component of the careers of professors and practicing administrators.** Well-planned and ongoing professional development is necessary for administrators to be responsive to the changing educational environment.

*Figure 1.* National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA) recommendations. Adapted from *The Good News About the Preparation of School Leaders: A Professor’s View*, by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), 2007, retrieved from http://cnx.org/content/m14496/latest/
by a school district who meets the degree and experience requirements can receive certification. Oklahoma offers alternative certification if a person has a master’s degree, passes the Oklahoma Principal Common Core Test, and a specialty test for elementary or secondary certification (Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003; Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

In addition to these critiques and changes occurring in educational leadership programs, the National Governors Association (NGA) emphasized the importance of preparing students to meet the needs of a globalized economy to compete nationally and internationally (Grossman, 2009). The report described two approaches for improving education in ways that build a quality workforce. The first approach requires an analysis of the state policies, regulations, and legislation that is pertinent to the education labor force. This approach calls for shifting funding away from unproductive practices and policies that do not result in high student achievement (Grossman, 2009). The second approach stresses: (a) the importance of the recruitment and selection of teachers and principals, (b) the training and licensure process, and (c) the development of an appropriate compensation structure for the retention of effective teachers and principals. The report emphasized the importance of selecting prospective principals carefully, strengthening principal preparation program curriculum and the refinement of course pedagogy to ensure principals develop skills to manage the complex issues confronted on a daily basis (Grossman, 2009).

School leadership must be a catalyst for improving education in ways that will lead America to have the great schools it needs today and for the future (Finn & Broad, 2003). In the Finn and Broad (2003) report, Better Leaders for America’s Schools: A Manifesto, the expansion of traditional educational leadership programs to include
alternative, unconventional avenues for recruiting American education leaders other than from the teacher ranks was suggested. The report stated that present-day leadership programs were stagnant, outdated, and failed to prepare school leaders, thus contributing to failing and mediocre school systems. Educational leadership preparation programs must provide school leaders skills to lead schools and transform low-achieving schools into high-achieving schools. School districts were challenged to find talented school leaders who can provide effective leadership. With the large number of school leaders retiring, finding the best qualified school leader is imperative (Finn & Broad, 2003; Lashway, 1999). The report suggests that there is not a shortage of educators who have been certified for school administration. Schools fail to achieve because of the lack of qualified men and women who can provide skillful, effective leadership. A strong correlation between credentialed school leaders from a university-based program and school achievement has not been firmly established by research. Thus, expanding the talent pool beyond the schools of education to identify promising candidates must be a consideration (Finn & Broad, 2003).

Principals are responsible for a myriad of demanding duties. They are expected to be competent as “educational visionaries and change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders” (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007, p. 1). Principals are expected to work effectively with teachers, staff, parents, community, and successfully implement school reforms that foster improved achievement for all students on statewide tests (Hess & Kelley, 2007). Principals are expected to comprehend, analyze, and use accountability data to adeptly improve a
school’s core instructional learning program. Principals must understand curriculum, instruction, and the cycle of continuous improvement to develop the capacities of teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Research on essential principal preparation characteristics and key curricular elements to support effective principal practice is evolving (S. Davis et al., 2005; Hess & Kelly, 2005). There is insufficient research that establishes strong linkages between the attributes of principal preparation programs resulting in higher achievement accountability data. University-based principal preparation programs must be structured to prepare effective school leaders who can meet the challenges encountered in 21st-century schools.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to research the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University collaborative partnership program for “Aspiring Administrators.” The principal preparation program utilizes innovative strategies in the development of potential school administrators to improve student learning outcomes in a large, highly diverse, urban school district. The case study research utilizing the inquiry process will discover how the preparation program develops the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of school leaders who make an impact on student learning and achievement. The data collection for the case study will include one-to-one, semi-structured, open-ended interviews; focus group; and a review of course syllabi. The study should provide information on the perspectives of program participants, university faculty, principal mentors, and university and district-level coordinators. Data analysis, the coding, and integrative interpretation will support the findings and what was
learned. With the partnership program continuing, the research findings will provide information regarding the challenges and successes contributing to the body of knowledge of district and university collaborative partnership programs for “Aspiring Administrators.”

**Research Questions**

This study will research the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU) collaborative partnership program for “Aspiring Administrators.” The following questions guided the research:

1. How did SDUSD and SDSU collaborate in designing the principal preparation program?
2. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions did the partners want program graduates to acquire?
3. What design elements did the SDUSD and SDSU partners include in the Aspiring Administrators Program that were intended to help candidates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?
4. What evidence suggests that the program is or is not succeeding in helping program graduates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

**Relevant Research and Scholarship**

Principal preparation that supports the development of skills and knowledge to improve school-wide achievement for all students is critical to a school’s success. Principal preparation programs emphasize the importance of: (a) the impact of effective school leadership on student achievement, (b) the importance of viable leadership programs that prepare effective school leaders, (c) the selection of suitable leadership
candidates, (d) the components of exemplary school leader preparation programs, and (e) the design and intent of the ISLLC standards to bolster and strengthen school leadership programs. The research and scholarship on these topics are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. This section provides a brief synopsis of research on these topics.

Many studies have examined the impact of school leadership on student achievement. Syntheses and meta-analysis of multiple studies have found that school leaders impact school-wide improvement and learning outcomes (Cotton, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005). Leithwood et al. (2004) concluded that effective school leadership makes a significant impact on student learning and is second only to the instruction provided by an effective classroom teacher in improving achievement. This is especially true in low-performing schools.

Effective leadership is a key to enhancing student learning. Leithwood et al. (2004) identified three crucial activities for effective leaders: (a) setting direction with a focus on student learning (including the analysis of data to monitor and inform instructional decisions), (b) developing people by providing targeted professional development to build their capacity and knowledge to support student learning success, and (c) restructuring the organization to fully support teaching and learning. Thus, comprehensive principal leadership training should prepare candidates to set directions, develop people, and restructure organizations in ways that improve a school to influence student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004).

School-effectiveness research indicates that strong administrative leadership is a key factor in schools with high student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano et al. (2005) analyzed studies
conducted over 30 years regarding the effects of leadership practices on student achievement. The meta-analysis indicated that principal leadership can have a profound effect on the achievement of students in schools. Twenty-one leadership responsibilities were identified that correlated with higher student achievement. Influenced by these findings, Marzano et al. developed a balanced leadership framework consisting of knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools leaders need to impact student achievement.

Candidate-selection processes have been another important focus of study and debate. Levine (2005b) asserted that the principal preparation selection process needs to be restructured because most participants self-select themselves. The admission criteria for most preparation programs have nothing to do with the applicant’s ability to be a successful school leader. Nor has the participant’s suitability for school leadership been used as a consideration for enrollment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). In some instances, students enroll in preparation programs to earn credits to obtain salary increases. They may not want to aspire to become school leaders. The selection of quality candidates must be a major consideration. The selection process must be re-evaluated to ensure that the most talented educators are selected (Cusick, 2002; Finn & Broad, 2003).

S. Davis et al. (2005) stipulated that school districts and university faculty must work in tandem to identify and encourage potential program participants to consider school leadership roles. Candidate-selection processes have an impact on the growing number of administrative vacancies in schools and the difficulties districts encounter in finding qualified school leaders. Vincent Ferrandino, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), expressed a concern that many
principals leave the profession early because of the extreme demands and responsibilities placed on school leaders (Finn & Broad, 2003). Grossman (2009) reveals that 50% of the principals leave the profession in the first 3 years.

At a symposium held at Michigan State University, superintendents and principals discussed the smaller number of qualified applicants for principal and assistant principal vacancies (Cusick, 2002). Cusick (2002) concluded that fewer people were applying for principal vacancies, and many of those who applied were poor candidates. Some school districts have solved this dilemma temporarily by rehiring retired administrators until suitable replacements have been found. Many educators with potential see the principal’s job as unattractive and demanding. Principals work more days a year with longer hours in a day, and the job is extremely stressful. Among other issues, principals must deal with parents, teachers, students, and the pressure of accountability from the school district, state, and federal governments (Cusick, 2002; Gravel, 2006).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) studied eight exemplary pre-service and in-service principal preparation programs in California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi, New York, Delaware, Georgia, and North Carolina. Per the research, it was concluded that a successful leadership development program must provide both pre-service and in-service professional training to develop and strengthen effective school leaders to be responsive to the critical challenges of school leadership. Darling-Hammond et al. emphasized that features of exemplary leadership programs included: (a) comprehensive and coherent curriculum aligned to standards (ISLLC Standards), with an emphasis on instructional leadership, (b) explicit emphasis on instructional leadership and school improvement, (c) integration of theory and practice using school-centered,
problem-based learning, action research, and cohort learning, (d) expert school practitioners and university faculty experienced with K-12 school-level leadership, (e) a highly selective process for identifying potential leadership candidates, (f) organized internships with principal experts to provide authentic leadership responsibilities at the school level working with a school community, and (g) university and school-district collaboration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Hess & Kelly, 2005).

In one case study of an exemplary principal preparation program, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) examined the difference the training made at the school-building level. The researchers observed graduates who were principals, conducted interviews with school staff, reviewed the achievement results, and examined the school’s organization. Information was gathered from interviews with program participants. The results of the study indicated that the participants of the exemplary principal development programs believed they were prepared. The principals were more committed to the principalship and spent more time strengthening instruction and building collaboration with their fellow principal colleagues who may not have participated in an exemplary principal development program (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

University-based principal preparation programs have been criticized for being ill-prepared and disconnected from the demands of school leadership needed for leading K-12 schools. Levine (2005b) developed a nine-point template for judging the quality of a school’s leadership program. Figure 2 includes the nine-point template for “Quality School Leaders.”
| 1. **Purpose**—goals that indicate the essential needs of school leaders with success attached to student learning |
| 2. **Curricular coherence**—the curriculum is designed to support the program goals and to provide the skills and knowledge-base needed for effective school leadership |
| 3. **Curricular balance**—a balanced integration of educational theory in the classroom and administrative practicum in the schools |
| 4. **University faculty composition**—faculty includes academics and school practitioners with school leadership expertise |
| 5. **Admissions**—criteria developed for the recruitment of students with the ability and motivation to become an effective school leader |
| 6. **Degrees**—high standards and degrees are appropriately awarded |
| 7. **Research**—high quality and useful to policy makers/practitioners |
| 8. **Finances**—resources support the program |
| 9. **Assessment**—educational leadership program must provide ongoing assessment and restructuring of schools to improve the academic performance when appropriate |

*Figure 2. Nine-point template for quality school leaders. Adapted from *Educating School Leaders*, by A. Levine, 2005b, New York, NY: Littlefield Publishers.*

To bolster the field of educational leadership, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), created the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). Joseph Murphy was selected to direct and coordinate the writing of the standards. Specifically, the consortium had two purposes: (a) to create the ISLLC standards to guide the role of school-level administrators, and (b) to support the reshaping of the educational administration preparation programs for school leaders (Hemmen, Edmondson, & Slate, 2009; Murphy, 2003). The school improvement framework developed by Murphy and Hallinger on school improvement was critical to the design of the ISLLC standards (Murphy, 2003).
The ISLLC began the arduous task of developing a clear set of curriculum content and performance standards to guide principal preparation in educational administration programs to train school leaders to improve student learning outcomes (Murphy, 2003). Seven ISLLC guiding principles steered the development of the six ISLLC standards. The principles stressed the following: (a) standards should reflect the centrality of student learning; (b) standards should acknowledge the changing role of the school leader; (c) standards should recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership; (d) standards should be high, upgrading the quality of the profession; (e) standards should inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders; (f) standards should be integrated and coherent, and (g) standards should be predicated on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community (Murphy, 2003).

The ISLLC standards were based on school effectiveness research, the purposes of school administration, and the appropriate function of school leadership. Social justice greatly influenced the writing of the ISLLC standards that emphasized that all students, regardless of race, class, disability, sexual orientation, or gender, receive a viable education that is accessible and equitable (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1996a; Murphy, 2003). Figure 3 includes the ISLLC Standards for 2008.

Forty-six states have used or aligned their state standards to the ISLLC standards to guide the work of administrator preparation training programs to train principal candidates on effective school leadership resulting in improved student achievement. To better address the specific needs of student learners in the state, California developed its
Standard 1:
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard 2:
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3:
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4:
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5:
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6:
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Figure 3. Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) 2008 standards.

own standards called California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELS). Figure 4 includes the CPSELS unique to California.

Nationally, the consortium’s work has had an impact on the principal’s licensure process, the Educational Testing Services (ETS) test, and the national job analysis study was aligned to the ISLLC standards (Tucker & Codd, 2002). The ISLLC standards spurred the dialogue about quality educational leadership to strengthen and improve educational leadership preparation programs across state agencies, professional associations, and institutions of higher education to impact student achievement (CCSSO, 1996a; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Research indicates that high-quality student performance is influenced by high-quality school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004).

The ISLLC standards were not wholeheartedly accepted by the educational community. Critics asserted that the standards were: (a) not based on credible empirical research to substantiate the conclusions; (b) relied on nonempirical ideas and beliefs; (c) not comprehensive, failed to identify competencies and skills; (d) vague and lacked specificity regarding the criteria needed to be successful; (e) written to include dispositions, of values and beliefs; and (f) the likelihood that the standards’ influence on the educational administration would take the control from state governments and professional organizations (English, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

**Methodology**

Preparing school administrators for the complexities of managing a school for academic success for all students is a goal for every school principal. Qualitative case study will be used to research the Aspiring Administrators Program, a collaborative
**Standard 1:**
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

**Standard 2:**
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

**Standard 3:**
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

**Standard 4:**
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

**Standard 5:**
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by modeling a personal code of ethics and developing professional leadership capacity.

**Standard 6:**
A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

partnership with San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU) that provides training in the development of school leaders who are knowledgeable and have the skill sets to improve the academic success of all students in a large, highly diverse, urban school district. The case study will be an empirical inquiry into the Aspiring Administrators Program, exploring the perceptions of the program participants in a focus group (Creswell, 2009). Open-ended, semi-structured questions will be used to interview: (a) university faculty who taught courses and helped to plan the partnership program, (b) district and university partnership coordinators, (c) principal coaches who provided mentorship, and (d) program participants to understand their perceptions of the SDUSD and SDSU collaborative partnership program. Additionally, there will be a review and analysis of collected data: course syllabi, program brochures, professional development agendas, and the partnership memorandum of understanding.

The case study will be an empirical inquiry into the SDUSD and SDSU collaborative partnership program, exploring the degree of, and in what ways, the partnership program prepares aspiring school administrators for the demands and challenges currently facing urban school leaders (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Weiss, 1998). Creswell (2009) explained that case studies provide a holistic view of a phenomenon. Qualitative research is the in-depth study of a single case, person, event, group, program, or institution utilizing the inquiry process. The developed research questions are well-suited for case study and descriptive analysis. They answer questions like “how” and “why” things happen (Noor, 2008; Yin, 1994). The case study will describe what happens in the preparation of potential school administrators in the Aspiring Administrators Program (Noor, 2008).
All potential interviewees will be contacted via electronic communication requesting their participation to be interviewed about their involvement and perceptions of the SDUSD and SDSU collaborative partnership program. The program participants will participate in a focus group to gather information regarding their perspectives and experiences. The semi-structured, open-ended questions are created to ensure each participant’s perspective will be disclosed, and not the perspective of the researcher. All interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes, patterns, and categories. Triangulation, comparability, and integrative interpretation will be used to identify findings and learnings from the research (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

A random purposive sampling of program participants will participate in a focus group. University faculty, university and district coordinators, along with mentor principals, will be selected to participate in an interview about the SDUSD and SDSU collaborative partnership program. All interviewees’ identities will be kept confidential and will be guaranteed anonymity. Names will be removed from interviews and replaced with numerical codes. The codes will be placed in a secure and locked location. Throughout the study, the identification and responses from participants will remain confidential.

Limitations of the Study

The study will be limited to SDUSD and SDSU’s collaborative partnership program for aspiring administrators with a specific district focus. The study limits the extent to which one might generalize the findings to any other school of education.
Program participants will include the first cohort of the collaborative partnership in the Aspiring Administrators Program. The purposive sampling of participants may not reflect the opinions of all program participants because of the limited number of participants. Variables such as prior teaching experience and years of teaching may impact the results of the study and will not be a consideration. The study will not provide data regarding the cohort members successfully acquiring administrative positions.

The researcher may have a bias when interpreting the data. The researcher is an area superintendent in the same district where the collaborative partnership program was implemented, and is a doctoral student at SDSU. Hence, the program participants’ responses may be influenced by the position of the researcher (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Tellis, 1997; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994).

**Significance of the Research to Theory, Practice, and Policy**

School leadership must evolve and be responsive in order to deal with the extensive educational changes. School districts, state governments, the federal government, educational scholars, and other stakeholders are challenging principal leadership development programs to reform the preservice principal preparation to ensure that an effective school leader is in every school. The educational system faces many complex challenges to ensure that all students learn and achieve while addressing student, family, and community needs with fewer resources. Accordingly, principal leadership development programs will be expected to produce graduates who can lead these complex organizations to better outcomes. Every principal preparation program must work to prepare principals to lead successful schools where students are provided rigorous curriculum, and a high level of teaching and learning resulting in high academic
achievement for all students. Principal development programs must be forward thinking in ways that prepare new leaders. At the same time, these programs must be reflective in ways that ensure continuous improvement. Preparing school administrators for the complexities of managing a school for academic success for all students is a goal for every principal preparation program.

This study will research the Aspiring Administrators Program, a collaborative partnership with SDUSD and SDSU, to provide training for teachers in their development as an aspiring administrator. The program is designed to provide sound educational experiences based on state and national standards for school leadership preparation with specific training uniquely designed for SDUSD. Finally, this research will provide feedback that could validate effective practices and highlight opportunities for improving the collaborative partnership program.

This study is significant because it will provide a useful framework for receiving and analyzing the collaborative program’s impact from the perspectives of the program participants, faculty, principal coaches, and district and university coordinators. The study will add to the literature of school leadership development for school leaders in the quest to improve school-wide academic improvement for all students in a large, highly diverse, urban school setting.

**Definition of Terms**

*Aspiring Administrator:* Emerging school leaders, aspiring candidates for the principalship.

*Cohort model:* The cohort model provides participant members of a group to work in teams in a supportive environment enhancing the learning experiences.
Collaborative Partnership: San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University working together to create a preparation program unique to the district.

District: San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD).

Elements: Program features used in principal preparation. Examples include learning focus and individual focus program requirements.

Goals: Desired outcomes.

Instructional Leadership: The construct describing school leaders, of maintaining a relentless focus on teaching and learning, leading complex change, and sharing leadership responsibilities (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Outcomes: Learning achievement for students; results of the principal preparation programs.

Principal: The instructional leader of the school responsible for effective school operations that foster positive student achievement, a safe and secure environment in which to teach and learn, and efficient use of resources.

Principal Coach: Also described as a principal mentor.

Principal Preparation Program: A university-based degree or certificate program that includes coursework and experiences designed to prepare candidates for a position as a school principal.

Processes: How content is delivered to participants in the programs, including delivery and program elements.

San Diego State University (SDSU): Also referred to as State College; state.

San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD): Also referred to as district

School leader: In this study, the term refers to the principal, instructional leader.
Strong leadership: A school leader who demonstrates the capability to lead schools into high achievement, developing trust within a school’s learning community.

University: San Diego State University (SDSU).

University-based principal preparation: University-conducted training for potential school leaders; principal development programs; traditional principal preparation programs.
CHAPTER 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to examine the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU) collaborative partnership program, the Aspiring Administrators Program, and its leadership development of the first cohort of aspiring administrators. This review of literature begins with the historical perspective of educational leadership preparation programs and the movement toward standards. Followed by an examination of school leadership and its impact on student achievement, the results of recent quantitative and qualitative research studies of effective school leaders will be considered. Attention will be given to the principals and student achievement connection. The examination of literature will consider programs that prepare school leaders to meet the challenges of present and future school administrators. Current program providers and various program components for effective principal preparations will be examined. Lastly, leadership preparation program reforms for school leaders will be addressed.

The school principal has a different job today, requiring different skill sets than were useful 10 to 20 years ago (Lashway, 2006). As the role of the principal continues to evolve, principal preparation programs must adapt accordingly. Historically, university-based principal preparation programs trained administrators to be fiscal and operational managers rather than instructional leaders responsible for improving teaching and learning outcomes (Hughes, 2005). Today, school leaders must be trained to understand and analyze accountability achievement data to inform instruction and facilitate the development of school-wide goals to improve school-wide achievement.
Many school leadership scholars and professional associations, including the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the American Association of Colleges of Teachers Education (AACTE), National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the Educational Leadership Constituents Council (ELCC) recognized the need to improve the training practices in the preparation programs that prepare school leaders for the 21st century school challenges.

**Historical Perspective and the Movement Toward Standards**

Educational leadership scholars and professional associations, since the 1940s, have engaged in discussions about establishing a knowledge base and guidelines for competent school leaders (Hoyle, 2005). In 1954, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was founded to provide voluntary accreditation for educational leadership programs (Hoyle, 2005). The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Kellogg Foundation established the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration (CASA) in 1955 to develop a set of standards for educational leadership preparation programs. In 1958, the standards were developed and published in the book *Something to Steer By* (Hoyle, 2005). In the late 1970s, to improve the quality of graduates from leadership programs, CASA began the process to revise the standards (Hoyle, 2005).

To develop a comprehensive set of standards for the preparation and licensure of administrators, in 1982 Paul Salmon, AASA director, appointed John Hoyle, AASA
Professor in Residence. Hoyle (2005) collaborated with CASA, professors of leadership programs, leaders of professional administrator groups, and practicing school administrators to critically review the earlier standards to make revisions. At the conclusion of their work, the *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* was approved by AASA and endorsed by the NASSP, National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Association of School Boards (NASB), curriculum scholars, and policymakers. The *Guidelines* became the criterion for licensure and the accreditation of educational leadership programs from 1983 to 1995 (Hoyle, 2005).

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* depicted the deficits in the country’s education systems with American schools failing to educate students to a high level of proficiency (NCEE, 1983). The report examined the qualities of elementary and secondary schools, and conveyed that the mediocre quality of education was threatening the nation’s future. The report created a sense of urgency and concern that educational institutions were not preparing students for excellence, but instead, for mediocrity. All sectors, including the federal government, state governments, corporate executives, and parents were concerned about failing schools and an uneducated populous (Levine, 2005b). The report called for rigorous instruction, improved teaching and learning, and effective school leadership to improve the schools (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). If the schools were failing, then the leaders of the schools were failing too. With this realization, the report concluded that effective school leadership was critical for superior academic achievement and accountability for school reforms (NCEE, 1983).
In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA) issued a report titled *Leaders for America’s School*. The report was critical of the preparation of school leaders in ways that created managers, not instructional leaders. The report cited the need to overhaul educational leadership programs to improve the skills and knowledge required to improve training for effective school leaders (Levine, 2005b). The report proposed the need to change principal preparation programs to improve curricular coherence, pedagogy; structures to develop the knowledge, skills, and personal dispositions to produce exceptional school and district leaders (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

The NCEEA expressed concerns about principal preparation program deficiencies. In particular, the NCEEA cited the lack of clearly defined effective leadership descriptors, the lack of a clearly articulated recruitment process for qualified leaders (with a special emphasis on enhancing the administrative ranks with underrepresented and women educators), and the lack of collaboration between school districts and institutions of higher education to develop relevant programs to address the complexities and the demands of school leadership. Most principal preparation programs failed to develop a coherent, sequential course of study that included the practical application of administrative experiences for aspiring administrators (Darling et al., 2007). Additionally, there was no systemic, coherent professional development to further develop and strengthen the leadership skills for practicing administrators in the nation as of yet (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005b).

During the mid-1980s, many organizations worked to develop and build up educational leadership. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration
(NPBEA) cited the need to establish a knowledge base for educational administration to improve the preparation of school administrators. The NPBEA published a report, *Improving the Preparation of School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform*, that clearly articulated the need to rethink educational leadership preparation for school leaders (Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995). Professional organizations such as the NAESP and the NASSP assumed an active role in restructuring of educational administration programs. The NASSP created Assessment Centers that were designed to improve the identification of elementary and secondary school leaders to develop highly skilled leaders with meaningful professional development (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Tucker & Coddin, 2002). The NAESP contributed to educational administration with the development of the Professional Development Inventory (PDI) to assess the level of competences and the establishment of Proficiencies for Principals in order to guide the professional development for aspiring new and veteran principals (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Tucker & Coddin, 2002).

The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) began a 10-year effort to identify an essential knowledge base for school leaders (Donmoyer et al., 1995). The knowledge base would be the legitimate authoritative body of core knowledge that school leaders would need to possess and employ. There were two phases to this project. In the first phase, UCEA, working with leading scholars from many universities to define the knowledge base, developed a system of documents called the Primis (Donmoyer et al., 1995; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Primis documents included an overview article, a case study, an annotated bibliography, and illustrative papers discussing one of the seven categories of knowledge explicitly detailed by the NPBEA (Donmoyer et al., 1995;
Jackson & Kelley, 2002). In this initial phase, the NPBEA had identified seven categories of knowledge to be explored and developed which included: (a) societal and cultural impact on schooling, (b) teaching, learning practices, and school enhancement, (c) organizational conceptual development, (d) comprehension of organizational processes and policy analysis, (e) leadership, management development and operations, (f) analysis of educational policy studies and politics, and (g) components of a moral and ethical school environment (Donmoyer et al., 1995). In the second phase, the initial topics were reviewed and expanded to seven additional objectives which included: (a) to evaluate the comprehensiveness of the structure of the seven domains making modifications and additions when needed, (b) increase the knowledge in each domain, (c) examine each knowledge domain for adequacy, (d) revise the content of each domain, (e) convey the knowledge of each domain, (f) ascertain the appropriate media for communication to a variety of audiences, and (g) identify ways to incorporate knowledge across domains (Donmoyer et al., 1995).

Establishing a critical unbiased knowledge base for educational leadership is not new. Criticism from educational leadership sectors question the capability of identifying a viable knowledge base in response to the structural and philosophical changes in educational leadership from the past, present, and future. As it pertains to education administration knowledge base, consideration must be given to what is known, who knows it, and what are the experiences of those who will interface with the knowledge. When the educational contextual paradigm shifts, it alters the knowledge base (Donmoyer et al., 1995). Knowledge is not objective but reflects the values, biases, and interest of the “knower” (Donmoyer et al., 1995, p. 6). When the knowledge base is not updated,
then the information can be out of date (Donmoyer et al., 1995). These are considerations to contemplate when establishing a knowledge base.

In the mid-1990s, concerned about the insufficiency of principal preparation programs, the NPBEA working with the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA), created the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) to improve and strengthen educational leadership for the 21st century (Murphy, 2005). The ISLLC began the work to develop standards that would greatly influence the educational administration knowledge base for effective school leadership (Murphy, 2005).

To strengthen principal leadership, the ISLLC standards initiative began in August 1994 (CCSSO, 1996a). Joseph Murphy facilitated the development of the ISLLC standards for the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (CCSSO, 1996a). It was a major effort to restructure the foundation of educational leadership affecting the knowledge and practices of preparation programs (CCSSO, 1996a).

The construction of the ISLLC standards embraced effective schools research for school improvement. The effective schools constructs used by researchers in the 1980s consisted of: (a) high student achievement, (b) equitable achievement evidenced in all student subgroups, and (c) the provision of value-added practices for improved achievement. The research findings for effective schools were used by the consortium to define leadership, to characterize the purposes of school administration, and to identify the responsibilities of school leaders pertaining to the conditions of learning that foster student achievement. The foci for the standards were school administration, student
learning, and the outcome of high academic achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Lashway, 2003; Lezotte, 2009; Murphy, 2005).

In 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium’s (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders was adopted by the full consortium of Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 1996a). The development of the standards was based on effective educational research, in collaboration with 24 state education agencies and representatives from various professional associations (CCSSO, 1996a). The structural design for the ISLLC standards was not based exclusively on the retooling of the behavioral sciences and management theories, but the development of an alternative pathway to reformulate school administration (Murphy, 2005). The standards impart a common core of knowledge, dispositions, and performances that would indicate effective school leadership for improved learning outcomes.

The ISLLC standards were developed to influence the design of educational leadership preparation programs to improve leadership skills of school practitioners, contributing to the knowledge base and the establishment of performance requirements for school leaders. Four key outcomes were identified by the consortium for graduates of educational administration programs: (a) the development of inquiry skills, (b) a high level of knowledge of teaching, learning, and school improvement, (c) the ability to work effectively with stakeholders, and (d) the development of a belief that all students can learn at a high level. The standards developed were readily accepted by most states and were seen as a way to improve educational leadership programs shifting from the administration of management to the centrality of student learning (Murphy, 2005).
The ISLLC standards influenced the design of the curriculum content and performance expectations that guide the preparation and professional development for many school leaders. The ISLLC standards were also used as the basis for the Educational Testing Service (ETS) development of the School Leaders Licensure Assessment which a number of states use as part of their licensure process. Even though many in the educational community embraced the ISLLC standards as a means to strengthen educational administration preparation programs, critics contended that the ISLLC standards were based on nonempirical ideals, making it difficult to prove the reliability and validity of the standards. Critics pointed out three areas of concern that pertain to the ISLLC standards: (a) the indicators required for a graduate to attain were not specified, (b) the values incorporated in the standards were a concern, and (c) the absence of technology integration was problematic (Murphy, 2005). The critics purported that standards alone were not enough to make systemic change in principal preparation programs. Additionally, criticism of the standards specified the lack of clearly delineated indicators and behavioral goals for effective school leaders. A firm commitment from all stakeholders, faculty, universities, districts, students, and state policymakers was necessary to ensure that restructuring occurred to improve principal preparation programs (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

Some states have developed their own leadership standards based on the ISLLC standards (S. Davis et al., 2005; Wallace Foundation, 2008). In 2001, representatives of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA), the California Department of Education (CDE), the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and the California Association of
Professors of Education Administration (CAPEA) developed the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELS) for administrators to be used in university principal preparation programs, licensure for credentialing, and administrator selection (WestEd, 2004). The CPSELS are aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure with almost the same the language. The major differences are the indicators for the six CPSELS that were developed to be more relevant to the state of California to focus on issues of California law and finance, California school organizations, and English Learners (WestEd, 2003).

Presently, one coordinated national system that promotes excellence in the licensing of administrators does not exist in the United States (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Licensure regulations vary from state to state and district to district. Traditional licensure requirements based on experience and coursework are still required for traditional and nontraditional educational leadership programs. The National Center for Education Information (NCEI) reports that 12 states offer alternate principal certification routes (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Local school boards in Florida set the alternative qualifications for principal candidates (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Michigan and South Dakota permit districts to set their own criteria for hiring principals (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Michigan does not require administrative certification, but the Michigan Board of Education is advocating for the reinstatement of the certification (Hess & Kelly, 2005). To provide nontraditional candidates opportunities for school leadership, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon have created alternative pathways (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

The initial standards produced by the ISLLC provided critical guidance to improve educational leadership and state licensure programs to strengthen the preparation
of school leaders. In 2006, the process to update the ISLLC standards was taken on by a committee established by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). The revisions reflect the dramatic changes of educational leadership that have occurred in the past decade and the importance of school leaders to improve instruction to raise student achievement (CCSSO, 2008). The ISLLC steering committee was comprised of state policymakers, school leaders, professors of education, and other scholars from the organization’s membership (CCSSO, 2008). In 2008, *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008* was adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (CCSSO, 2008).

The ISLLC 2008 standards provided state policymakers with information to strengthen the selection of program participants, and guidance regarding the knowledge base for preparation programs, licensure expectations, and outcome based trainings for school leaders. There were six themes that defined the *ISLLC 2008* standards: (a) setting a widely shared vision for learning, (b) developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth, (c) ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, (d) collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources, (e) acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner, and (f) understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural context (Wright & Gray, 2007).

The *ISLLC 2008* standards’ wording is similar to *ISLLC 1996*, with changes at the beginning of each standard that reads, “An education leader promotes the success of
every student.” Each of the ISLLC 2008 standards includes critical functions that clearly delineate the practices and attributes an education leader should possess and employ (CCSSO, 2008).

The school leader must consider and act upon social justice in the school setting to inhibit practices that repudiate the learning and achievement for historically underperforming and marginalized students. The ISLLC standards promote the ideals of social justice in educational leadership programs to prepare school leaders to understand the historical inequities of schools as a result of stereotypes and racism that inhibits student learning and achievement. It is important that school leaders understand, and work to eliminate, the inequities to ensure all students have access to a viable education regardless of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

The emphasis that principal preparation programs place on social justice varies. Effective school leadership has a moral purpose to provide an opportunity and access to achieve greater equity for diverse student learners regardless of the ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities fostering social justice on a school’s campus that is fair for everyone (Ryan, 2006). Theoharis (2007) conducted research with seven principals who exemplified social justice leadership at their schools where the achievement of the marginalized students had improved. The principals shared that the principal preparation did not prepare them for social justice leadership. The priority of the educational leader program did not address race, disability, English Learners, sexual orientation, and so forth, to ensure access and equity to academic programs for everyone. Social justice leaders must work to expand
their influence beyond just being a good leader. Table 1 compares the good leader to the social justice leader that exhibits a strong moral imperative for all students valuing diversity to ensure equitable access to core curriculum and proficient teaching.

Historically, certain student populations of students that include students from families with low socioeconomic, ethnic minorities and various cultural background, students with disabilities, and English Learners have not experienced a lot of academic success and contributes to the persistent achievement gaps. It is important that school leaders understand the issues of social justice and to work with their school’s community to provide equity and justice for all students to eliminate discriminatory and patterns of racism.

**Accreditation for Educational Administration**

Effective principal preparation programs that develop exemplary school leaders are important to the academic success of a school. It is imperative that high-caliber principal preparation programs provide school leaders the training to perform the occupational complexities of school leadership where all students learn and achieve. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) developed the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards, which were facilitated by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and assembled representatives from nine organizations (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration [NCPEA], the National Association of Elementary School
### Table 1

**Good Leader Versus Social Justice Leader**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good leader</th>
<th>Social justice leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Works with sub publics to connect with community</td>
<td>1. Places significant value on diversity, deeply learns about and understands that diversity, and extends cultural respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Speaks of success for all children</td>
<td>2. Ends segregated and pull-out programs that prohibit both emotional and academic success for marginalized children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Supports a variety of programs for diverse learners</td>
<td>3. Strengthen core teaching and curriculum and insures that diverse students have access to that core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Facilitates professional development in best practices</td>
<td>4. Embeds professional development in collaborative structures and a context that tries to make sense of race, class, gender, and disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Builds collective vision of a great school</td>
<td>5. Knows that schools cannot be great until the students with the greatest struggles are given the same rich opportunities both academically and socially as their more privileged peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Empowers staff and works collaboratively</td>
<td>6. Demands that every child will be successful but collaboratively addresses the problem of how to achieve that success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Networks and builds coalitions</td>
<td>7. Seek out other activist administrators who can and will sustain her or him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Uses data to understand the realities of the school</td>
<td>8. Sees all data through a lens of equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Understands that children have individual needs</td>
<td>9. Knows that building community and differentiation are tools to ensure that all students achieve success together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Works long and hard to make a great school</td>
<td>10. Becomes intertwined with the life, community, and soul of the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principals [NAESP], the National Association of School Boards [NASB], and the University Council of Educational Administration [UCEA]; Hemmen et al., 2009).

The group reviewed educational leadership preparation programs and designed performance-based standards that were closely aligned with the ISLLC standards.

In 2002, the NCATE standards were officially adopted and implemented by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) for the accreditation review of educational administration programs. The NCATE standards are national standards for administrative practice, and for preparation of principals, superintendents, curriculum directors and supervisors. Professional accreditation of principal preparation programs is under the purview of the ELCC (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Using the ELCC standards for accreditation, 67% of the educational leadership programs that undergo accreditation were successful (Nicholson, Harris-John, & Schimmel, 2005).

The ELCC standards have had a major influence on the structure of university and nonuniversity principal preparation programs. Aspiring school leaders who completed leadership programs that were successfully aligned to the ELCC standards learned the knowledge and developed the capability to promote success for all students. Preparation programs that successfully pass the accreditation process should result in better trained, knowledgeable school leaders. The NCATE ELCC standards used to evaluate principal preparation programs which include an internship component embraced the six ISLLC standards (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) understood the importance of developing standards that could influence the improvement of principal preparation programs. The ELCC standards were important to provide guidance for the
knowledge, skill sets, and professionalism needed for effective educational leadership programs (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

Quantitative and Qualitative Studies of Effective Schools for Improved Achievement

Principals are pressured from federal, state, and local governing bodies to lead their schools to improved student achievement. The principal’s role has changed with the increased high-stakes testing and accountability. The impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001 has affected school learning communities, principal workloads, and the leadership qualities principals must provide to schools in the 21st century (Crow, 2006). In this age of accountability, it is imperative that educational leadership programs effectively prepare school leaders with skills and knowledge needed to improve student learning and achievement (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

Marzano et al. (2003) conducted the analysis and synthesis of quantitative research on the instructional leadership of school principals and its impact on student achievement. More than 5,000 studies and dissertations were reviewed. Among those, 70 met the criteria of design, controls, data analysis, and rigor (Marzano et al., 2003). The 70 studies and dissertations involved 2,894 schools with approximately 1.1 million students and 14,000 teachers. The findings indicated a significant relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. The 21 principal leadership responsibilities were correlated to increased student achievement resulting in a 10% or more improvement in student performance and achievement, as evidenced by standardized test results (Marzano et al., 2005).
Marzano et al.’s (2003) balanced leadership defines the responsibilities, practices, knowledge, strategies, tools, and resources needed for effective leadership. Another important finding from the Mid-Continental Research Education Laboratory (McREL) research addressed the negative effects a school leader may have on a school’s culture and its achievement. If a leader’s focus is misguided and the wrong strategies are implemented, student achievement may be marginalized and gains may not be achieved (Marzano et al., 2003).

Thirty years ago, the Effective Schools Movement (ESM) began in response to The Equal Educational Opportunity Survey by J. S. Coleman that concluded that family background, and not schools, was the determining factor for student learning and achievement (Lezotte, 2009). The premise that “schools don’t matter” spurred the ESM to identify the attributes for student achievement. Ron Edmonds (1979) affirmed that families are critical in determining whether or not students flourish in school; however, it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that students achieve (Lezotte, 2009). To repudiate Coleman’s premise, Edmonds, Lezotte, and Brookover worked to locate achieving schools with a large concentration of minority students when compared to other schools of similar demographics (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2009).

Ron Edmonds (1979) promoted the idea that the type of school a student attends can impact student learning and achievement. The ESM research focused on students of color in urban schools who were successfully educated despite low socioeconomics and the limited educational background of their parents. The successful schools that educated students were compared to schools with similar demographics that were not successful.
These achieving schools were analyzed to determine the attributes that contributed to the success of its students (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2009).

Effective schools attributes that were associated for contributing to student learning success in high-risk schools were researched and identified. The Correlates for the Effective Schools Movement (ESM) for achievement were: (a) strong principal leadership, (b) a clear and focused mission, (c) a safe and orderly environment, (d) a climate of high expectations, (e) positive home-school relations, (f) an opportunity to learn, and (g) frequent monitoring of student progress (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2009; National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development Foundation, 1995).

Hallinger (2005) developed the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to determine the principal’s impact on student learning. Over 110 empirical studies have been completed using the PIMRS (Hallinger, 2005). The findings indicated that school principals contribute to school effectiveness by having a small effect on student achievement indirectly through their influence in schools and classrooms. The principal had a more significant effect on shaping the school’s mission and shaping the features of the school’s learning environment. The studies suggest that a strong school culture focused on high expectations, and the principal effectively communicating and shaping the school vision affect classroom instruction (Hallinger, 2005). Therefore, the relationship between effective principal practices and student achievement cannot be discounted.

O’Donnell and White (2005) conducted a quantitative study of randomly selected middle schools in Pennsylvania to identify relationships between the principal’s instructional leadership and student achievement, with the overall socioeconomic status
(SES) of each school as a secondary variable. At each participant school, the principal and four teachers completed Hallinger’s PIMRS, which required participants to record the frequency the principal performed the 50 specific instructional behaviors identified by effective schools research. The study included 325 middle level educators (75 principals and 250 eighth grade English and mathematics teachers). The researchers found that principal and teacher perceptions of the principal’s instructional behaviors were predictors of student achievement on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (O’Donnell & White, 2005).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) surveyed 98 principals and 2,764 teachers to understand the consequence of the school leader’s efficacy influence on student learning. The analysis of achievement data at schools in the study showed evidence of improved student performance levels due to the influence of the school leader (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) conducted qualitative case studies of three high-performing, high-poverty, rural high schools to determine the relationship between effective school leadership and student achievement. The researchers conducted 45 hours of interviews, wrote field notes, observed teaching at each school and attended district meetings and group functions. While the case studies focused exclusively on rural high schools, the findings suggested the efficacy of school leaders did have an effect on student achievement (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009).

Kathleen Cotton (2003) conducted a study of 81 research reports on the behaviors and instructional practices of successful principals that was utilized to improve student achievement. Cotton’s synthesis of educational research focused on principal behaviors
and student academic achievement. Twenty-six principal behaviors were identified that contributed to improved student achievement (Cotton, 2003). The principal behaviors can be categorized into five areas: (a) a clear visionary focus on student learning with high expectations for all students, (b) positive interaction and developed relationships with all stakeholders, (c) a school culture of shared leadership and continuous improvement, (d) comprehensive focus on instruction, and (e) a focus on accountability and the use of data to monitor student progress (Cotton, 2003).

Leithwood et al. (2004) identified four categories of successful leadership practices as core to successful school leadership. These practices include: (a) setting directions with a clearly articulated, shared vision that fosters the goals and expectations in an organization, (b) school leaders must develop the capacity of people to maximize their potential through professional development, supporting efficacy, and motivating staff to do their best work, (c) the school leader must work collaboratively with the learning community to provide opportunities for shared decision-making to modify or build structures in the learning environment that support all students’ learning, and (d) the organization must be managed by recognizing the important contributions of others in the learning organization and providing ongoing evaluation for organizational effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2004).

An effective principal must be a visionary leader who defines a school’s mission and goals that are embraced by the school community (Hallinger, 2005). Effective instructional leaders employ distributed leadership and value shared decision-making and collaboration with the learning community. The school leader must skillfully provide effective instructional leadership to improve teacher practices and student achievement,
while adhering to federal, state, and local policies and statutes (S. Davis et al., 2005; Hallinger, 2005).

Numerous studies have shown that certain principal behaviors affect student achievement. The studies concluded that instructional leaders who emphasized academic improvement in their school’s learning environment tend to help students achieve at higher levels (Hallinger, 2005). Additionally, instructional leaders who developed trusting relationships with their teachers, and worked collaboratively with them to facilitate learning by encouraging risk-taking to strengthen the teaching and learning processes to improve student achievement, also had an impact. Consequently, it can be presupposed that instructional leadership is significant to improve student achievement (O’Donnell & White, 2005; Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2010).

Effective principal leadership can have a profound influence over student learning at a school site, resulting in improved student achievement. Dufour and Marzano (2009) assert that the principal must not be just an instructional leader, but also a learning leader with a focus on the evidence of learning. Conversely, ineffective school leadership will have a detrimental effect on the teaching and learning resulting in low student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Marzano et al., 2003). Whether or not a principal’s leadership makes a significant impact on student achievement is a critical concern for school districts that are charged with the important work of increasing the learning outcomes and achievement for all students.

**Programs for Preparing School Leaders**

University-based educational leadership programs have been criticized for failing to keep pace with the ever-changing school leadership demands. In the competitive
market, university-based educational leadership programs no longer have a clear monopoly on training potential school administrators (Jackson & Kelley, 2005). Nicholson and Leary (2001) conducted a qualitative study of 180 principals in three states. In the study, principals shared their dissatisfaction with their preparation program because the program was more theoretical based, leaving them unprepared and having to learn on the job.

Effective school leaders must exercise strong instructional leadership to manage a school’s instructional program to improve teacher efficacy, student learning, and school wide achievement (Hallinger, 2005). At the helm of turnaround schools—the transformation from under-achieving to high-achieving—an effective school leader provides instructional and organizational leadership for teachers, students, and the school community-at-large (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Educational leadership preparation programs must be structured to address the needs of school leaders to prepare them for the monumental task of ensuring that all students learn. Nonachieving students face the possibility of failing in school, dropping out of high school, and having an unproductive life. To foster student success, effective leadership must cultivate a culture of learning to support student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2003).

With the increased accountability mandated of public schools, the focus of principal leadership has shifted to the centrality of student learning and achievement (Lashway, 2003). The heightened awareness of public scrutiny and school accountability is an important concern of every principal. The principal must adeptly work with stakeholders to build relationships to strengthen the school’s learning community (Crow,
For that reason, preparing school leaders to effectively meet the challenges in schools today must be the critical function of every educational leadership program (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Hess & Kelly, 2005). The principal’s job as an instructional leader is multifaceted, requiring a laser focus on instruction and knowledge of effective pedagogy resulting in learning outcomes for higher student achievement.

Educational leadership programs can no longer ignore the voices of former graduate students who report they were unprepared for school leadership (J. Davis & Jazzar, 2005). The Public Agenda Principal Survey indicated that 89% of the respondents believed that the educational leadership programs did not adequately prepare them for the realities of school leadership (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Inadequate principal preparation has caused many school leaders to have a false sense of confidence as they begin to perform their job responsibilities (Levine, 2005b). Educational leadership preparation programs must work to prepare capable principals for the demands of high accountability of schools today.

The Finance Project commissioned by the Wallace Foundation indicates that well trained principals actually make a significant difference in schools (Wallace Foundation, 2008). Effective school leadership preparation is vital to the success of a principal, the school community, and its impact on student achievement. Adopting leadership standards are not enough to guarantee the success of university-based principal preparation programs. Continuous evaluation of program quality for improvement is essential for the success of principal training programs in order to be responsive to the changing educational environment of the 21st century (CCSSO, 1996b; S. Davis et al., 2005).
Every school deserves an effective principal to work collaboratively with stakeholders to improve teaching and learning that results in improved student achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Hess & Kelly, 2005). To address the insufficient preparation of school leaders by university-based programs, many states have created alternative routes to certify school administrators by creating academies and for-profit programs. To improve principal training, some school districts, professional organizations, state departments of education, university-district partnerships, schools of leadership, and policymakers have developed their own programs to reform principal preparation programs (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Tucker & Codding, 2002; Wallace Foundation, 2008).

**Call to Reform**

Potential administrators now have options of state-run academies, district-run training programs, training offered by professional organizations, independent district-university partnerships, and profit and nonprofit programs. These programs are all competition for traditional university-based school leadership programs (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005b).

Hess and Kelly (2005) and other reformers contend that educational leadership programs need to be expanded beyond the traditional purveyors of training—the universities—to include alternative pathways to gain knowledge and skills that involve other providers. The question facing the reformers is: What should be done to bolster and improve the principal preparation programs? Reformers have identified three factors to be considered that require changes: (a) establish qualifications for candidate selection, (b) differentiate the types of institution that will provide preparation programs for present
and future school leaders, and (c) define the critical knowledge base and skills for school leaders (Hess & Kelley, 2005).

**Academies**

Principal academies are established with university-based schools of education and state departments of education. In 2001, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) reported that 26 states had principal academies, and by 2004-2005 a total of 30 states developed statewide principal academies. The training requirements for the principal academies range from summer institutes to information-laden websites to multiyear programs. The principal academies were designed for flexible schedules at convenient locations for current administrators, and preservice programs to prepare for teachers with leadership promise (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

**New Education School Programs**

The New Education School Programs are schools of education at the university level that have completed a comprehensive restructuring of their educational leadership preparation programs to meet the new challenges of school leadership. Aspiring administrators who are admitted to new programs are exposed to a new curriculum framework and coursework intended to prepare them to lead a school to excellence. The National Commission for the Advancement of Education Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) has acknowledged exceptional new programs that are innovative and have promising results (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Major reforms prevalent in the new programs include: (a) a shift to a cohort model; (b) focused clinical activities with field-based mentor internships; (c) alignment of courses to the national standards ISLLC or NCATE;
(d) demanding curriculum and participation; and (e) careful screening and selection process.

California State University, Fresno’s educational leadership preparation program was a new program developed with the support of the Danforth Foundation for the Preparation of School Principals. Cal State Fresno’s leadership preparation program is comprised of two tiers. Tier I is focused on instructional leadership. During Tier I, the aspiring school leader works as a master teacher intern to understand the demands of teaching, and to gain a high level of knowledge of exemplary instruction (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Upon successful completion of Tier I, individuals receive a provisional administrator license. Once a graduate is placed in an administrative position, they must then complete Tier II coursework which covers transformational leadership (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Individuals enrolled in the Tier II program take the NAESP Professional Development Inventory to develop an individualized plan to support the educational practices needs of the individual (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

**District and University Partnerships**

University-based principal training programs are beginning to respond to criticism by changing preparation programs to develop future school leaders who can successfully provide leadership and collaborate with stakeholders to improve the achievement of all students in this era of high accountability. Universities are beginning to establish partnerships with school districts to identify potential effective teachers to be considered for educational leadership training programs (Perez et al., 2010).

Several entities have begun exploring the collaboration of school districts and universities working together to improve the quality of principal training. The Wallace
Foundation has been instrumental in the development of district and university affiliates working together by providing funding and technical assistance for curriculum and assessments to improve the effectiveness of principal preparation programs specific to a district’s need. School districts in partnership with universities are better able to tailor the curriculum to impact the learning outcomes, experiences, and strategies for the leadership training programs to address the specific needs, challenges, and priorities of school districts. Providing quality training for school leaders who have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to improve learning outcomes for all students is very much needed. Additionally, the close working relationship of the district and university affiliates presents the opportunity for timely communication to monitor and receive feedback from program graduates to upgrade program quality and effectiveness (King, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010).

Several school districts of varying sizes and with various challenges received funding from the Wallace Foundation to support collaborative and innovative district-university partnerships. Each principal preparation partnership program identified an area of focus and developed innovative practices to improve principal preparation to increase the achievement of low-performing schools (King et al., 2010).

Boston Public Schools’ (BPS) superintendent established the School Leadership Institute and invited area colleges and universities to join in the development of “home grown” principals to lead schools to improvement. The BPS, in collaboration with the University of Boston, created the Ten Dimensions of Principal Leadership which delineated the program’s curriculum content, practicum experiences, and assessments. All prospective aspiring leaders went through a comprehensive selection process. Once
admitted into the program, the program participants had to make a 3-year commitment to the school district. Program participants were interns in district schools for a year, completed four formative projects and a summative project, and maintained a portfolio with reflective thoughts as part of the assessments. Upon successful program completion, the participants would be eligible for the Massachusetts Initial Principal License (King et al., 2010).

St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) was faced with numerous school leader retirements, declining student achievement, and the challenge of developing school leaders who were committed to instituting reforms to transform schools. The reform plan focused on strengthening the quality and effectiveness of school leaders through improved development, supervision, and evaluation. With funding from the Wallace Foundation, SLPS began a partnership with the University of Missouri, Columbus. In support of the leadership preparation program, the university agreed to waive tuition fees for participants. The partnership program was for a full year, including an internship component of almost a year. The program was “experience based,” and comprised of a two-part course that included an initial intensive 5-week summer session, weekly all-day seminars on standards-based topics, and a transitional summer session to help participants prepare for administrative positions. Upon successfully completing the program, the participants earned a master’s degree and principal certification. Program participants were required to work in the districts for 5 years or reimburse the districts’ cost (King et al., 2010).

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2009) worked with two universities and the Tennessee State Board of Education to redesign educational
leadership preparation for the state of Tennessee. From 2005 through 2008, East Tennessee State University and the University of Memphis served as pilot sites for the redesign with the purpose of taking it across the state. The pilot program consisted of the universities joining with one urban and two rural school districts (SREB, 2009). The redesign elements included a strong, collaborative university-district partnerships and the careful selection of highly qualified candidates. Utilizing a cohort training model that fosters peer learning and support, students experience intensive, authentic, field-based experiences with mentoring support from successful principals. A coherent research-based curriculum was designed to prepare the school leaders to successfully lead change to foster achievement for all students (SREB, 2009).

The Southern Regional Education Board (2009) research of effective principal preparation identified a number of elements learned from the Tennessee leadership redesign efforts that are critical to the development of school leaders. There needs to be increased collaborative partnerships between universities and school districts. Greater diligence is warranted in the selection of leadership candidates. A supportive cohort structure, along with rigorous, research-based course curriculum and an internship to experience real-world problems, are necessary to develop effective school leaders. Mentor experts are used to support the development of the prospective school leaders (Schmidt-Davis, Bottoms, & O’Neill, 2009).

Tennessee universities worked with the Tennessee Education Leadership Redesign Commission’s efforts to redesign leadership preparation to better prepare school leaders. As a result of the research, university and school districts are required to establish formal principal preparation partnerships based on the Tennessee Instructional
Leadership Standards (TILS). In addition to research-based curriculum, extensive practical leadership development experiences are required. The salary advancement policies were eliminated for educators who obtained a degree in school leadership without serving as a school leader. As a result of legislative action, greater authority is provided to principals over staffing and budget decisions. Per recommendation of the commission and state board of education, significant changes to Tennessee state law and State Board of Education policy for the licensing of school administrators was reformed (SREB, 2009). The licensing changes consisted of a flexible four-tiered licensing structure that recognizes different levels of leadership.

1. Instructional Leadership License-Aspiring (ILL-A): aspiring leader who has not yet completed training.

2. Instructional Leadership License-Beginning (ILL-B): Beginning in September 2009, a nonrenewable license for new school leaders for an initial 5-year license requiring a recommendation from an approved leadership program.

3. Instructional Leadership License-Professional (ILL-P): Leadership license renewable every 5 years, requiring a local education agency (LEA) recommendation.

**District-Based Programs**

District-based programs are generally established to address the unique needs of a school district. District-based programs partner with a local school of education to create a curriculum to train its own school leaders, and are often funded by school leadership grants (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Components of the district-based program are generally limited to district employees to develop a cadre of administrators, and offer real-time experiences tailored to a particular district. The district-based programs are not radically different from traditional principal preparation programs (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

**Nontraditional Providers**

Nontraditional providers that provide training for prospective school administrators have evolved because of the dissatisfaction of university-based programs. School administrators were not prepared to address the new demands of high stakes testing, accountability, and improved student achievement successfully. Therefore, alternative pathways to obtain administration certification have changed to include a variety of program structures that include nonprofit and for-profit programs.

**Nonprofit Providers**

The nontraditional administrative training programs vary quite differently from the traditional university educational leadership preparation programs. Nontraditional providers are categorized in two ways: nonprofit and for-profit programs. The New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Leadership Academy are nonprofit programs. A nominator network identifies and recruits promising school leaders from a variety of industries that have a proven record of working effectively with adults. The training program is comprised of a 6-week, 7-day
summer institute on educational research and business school literature in three strands: transformational, instructional, and organizational leadership. The residency includes working with three exemplary teachers, and having to show evidence of increased student achievement. The participant works with a building wide initiative, successfully overseeing a team with a focus on student achievement. After completing the program, a principal coach continues to work with the administrator in a postresidency (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

**For-Profit Providers**

University of Phoenix, Capella University, Walden University, Jones International University, and Touro International University are for-profit colleges offering education administration credentialing programs (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Generally, the features of the program include: (a) a heavy emphasis of online distance learning, and (b) with participants being self-selected. Three years of teaching experience is required with a focus on profitability. The programs abide by the state licensure rules, differ from traditional preparation programs, and are easier and more convenient (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 2010) blueprint has raised the bar to the extent that every student who graduates from high school is prepared for college and a career, regardless of race, income, language, or disability. Our nation’s schools must have skillful educational leaders now and in the future. Effective principal leadership is important for every school. Educational leadership preparation must meet the unique needs of the school community. Improved university-based principal preparation programs do not improve in a vacuum, but with active involvement and collaboration
with school districts; universities; professional organizations; foundations; and local,
state, and federal governments (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Robelen, 2008). If children
are not provided the best teaching and learning experiences, schools fail them. The
principal’s job is complicated, and effective school leadership is vital to the success of a
school.

Improved student achievement in schools; understanding the role of an
instructional leader; and working in collaborative environments with school
administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community can be a critical step in the
restructuring of university-based principal preparation programs. Twenty-first century
schools are changing, and principal preparation programs must be developed to train
effective school leaders to focus on the centrality of learning to promote high academic
achievement for all students in all types of school systems whether rural, suburban, or
urban (Lashway, 2003). Adopting leadership standards and adding assessments to
principal training programs will not guarantee program effectiveness and success
(Jackson & Kelley, 2002). It is important for principal preparation programs to be
evaluated for continuous improvement in order to be responsive to the changing
educational environment of the 21st century (Adkins, 2009; Anderson & Louh, 2005;
Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; J. Davis & Jazzar, 2005; S. Davis et al., 2005; Ellsberry,
1990; Erlandson & Zellner, 1997; Hughes, 2005; Lashway, 1999; Smith, 2004; Vornberg,

**Need for This Study**

Traditional university-based leadership programs have had inconsistent results in
preparing school leaders to steer a school toward excellence for all students to achieve
(S. Davis et al., 2005). Approximately 1.3 million high school students drop out of school annually (Editorial Projects in Education, 2009). Graduation rates are lowest for racial and ethnic subgroups of low socioeconomic status; males in particular are at highest risk (Swanson, 2008). The principal must be prepared to work with his or her faculty and stakeholders to create a school culture of high expectations where relevant and challenging curriculum engage students resulting in improved achievement for all students. University-based educational leadership programs, in many instances, have failed to consistently provide strategies and development for principals to lead schools to academic success of high achievement (Levine, 2005a). To address this preparation gap, many districts have developed their own programs for aspiring school leaders or have developed district-university partnerships with local institutions of higher learning.

Research must continue to examine the benefits and viability of restructured principal preparation programs that utilize district-university partnerships, and its contribution to the effective preparation of school leaders to improve schools to achieve academic success for all students (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Principal preparation programs have been challenged to prepare school leaders to foster the centrality of learning and to prepare students for future endeavors of college and/or career (USDOE, 2010). Students are facing higher standards of achievement and more stringent graduation requirements. The information obtained through this study will be useful for districts and universities as they work together to improve principal preparation programs.

In today’s high-stakes accountability environment, schools need dynamic and capable leaders. School learning communities are changing, and educational leadership
programs must change their strategies and practices to better serve school leaders to
prepare them to successfully educate all students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Hess &
Kelly, 2005).
CHAPTER 3—RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Many critics of university-based principal preparation programs fault their failure to improve their programs to address the complexity facing principals in public schools today (Farkas et al., 2001; Murphy, 2003). A critical component for school success is a highly qualified and competent principal that leads a school to academic success where students receive quality instruction to achieve at their optimum level. All school districts have the daunting responsibility to ensure that a competent principal leads every school to provide quality education for all students. The dilemma facing school districts is not the shortage of potential administrators, but a shortage of qualified principal candidates who can work successfully in a school to ensure that all students are learning and achieving at a high level (S. Davis et al., 2005; Farkas et al., 2001).

University-based preparation programs are no longer the sole entity for training principals. Alternative routes for principal preparation include profit and nonprofit preparation programs; school districts developing their own homegrown leaders; state departments of education academies; professional organizations that provide pre-service and in-service for aspiring, new, and veteran principals; and partnerships that lead to collaboration between school districts and universities (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

This study examined the Aspiring Administrators principal preparation partnership program between San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU) through the perceptions of the program’s first cohort, principal coaches, university faculty, and district and university program coordinators.
Research Design

Case study was the research method used for the empirical inquiry of the Aspiring Administrators principal preparation partnership program between San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU). Case study satisfies three tenets of qualitative research: describing, understanding, and explaining (Yin, 1994). Creswell (2009) explains that case studies provide the researcher with a strategy to explore in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or with individuals to collect data. The case study of Aspiring Administrators, a district-university partnership program, provides an opportunity to acquire detailed information regarding the perceptions of the first cohort, program developers, and from those responsible for program implementation. The case study will provide a descriptive account of the perceptions and experiences of what happens, inductive analysis, and the integrative interpretation of the findings concerning the district-university partnership program for aspiring administrators (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Weiss, 1998).

Qualitative interviews using semi-structured, open-ended questions were used by the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews with program coordinators (university and district), principal coaches, university faculty, and the first cohort focus group of aspiring administrators (Appendices A-D). The case study approach provided the program participants the opportunity to present their perspectives regarding the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.

The data collection included a review of course syllabi, and semi-structured, open-ended interviews with university faculty, focus group cohort participants, principal coaches, and district-level and university coordinators.
This study provided information about the processes utilized to prepare potential administrators from the SDUSD and SDSU’s partnership principal preparation program and contributed to the body of knowledge that supports the development of effective school leaders to improve student learning and achievement.

**Research Questions**

This study researched the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program. Generally, with case studies, the research questions answer questions like how and why things happen. Triangulation was employed to analyze the multiple sources of data to establish meaning, themes, and categories (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994).

1. How did SDUSD and SDSU collaborate in designing the principal preparation program?

2. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions did the partners want program graduates to acquire?

3. What design elements did the SDUSD and SDSU partners include in the Aspiring Administrators Program that were intended to help candidates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

4. What evidence suggests that the program is or is not succeeding in helping program graduates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

**Role of the Researcher**

Case study research involved the researcher as the primary data collection instrument to acquire information about the deeper meaning of a research topic (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Weiss, 1998). Per Creswell (2009), “A qualitative
researcher learns from participants’ lives but maintains a stance of “emphatic neutrality” (p. 72). Through the researcher’s inquiry and discovery, insights are disclosed to understand, make sense of, and interpret the phenomena of the experiences of program participants. For this research study, the following data gathering methods were used: interviews, and the analysis of documents. The use of interviews and semi-structured, open-ended questions provided opportunities for the discovery of emergent data. With case studies, research questions answer how and why things happen. The analysis of course documents and other materials provide a greater assurance that the findings reflected the depth and breadth of the case study. Triangulation was employed to analyze the multiple sources of data to establish meaning, themes, and categories (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994).

**Participant Selection Procedures**

Purposive sampling and voluntary participation was used to select participants for data collection for the case study. To obtain data for the case study, the first cohort of “Aspiring Administrators” voluntarily agreed to participate in a focus group. The cohort could not be required to participate in the focus group; therefore, participation was voluntary. The focus group was held in the evening, and each cohort member freely gave of their time. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher to identify individuals who were best suited to provide detailed, comprehensive information about the Aspiring Administrator Program. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because it was important to select and interview those who had a variety of experiences and roles in, and views of, the Aspiring Administrators Program. The sample size was dependent on
the number of individuals who agreed to the interview and those who volunteered for the focus group (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Weiss, 1998).

Specifically, the following procedures were used to recruit informants for this study. The researcher sent an email to the principal coaches to request their participation in an interview regarding the Aspiring Administrators Program research. Two principal coaches responded to the request. These principal coaches also were members of the design team for the Aspiring Administrators Program. To select possible faculty members for participation, the university coordinator provided guidance by indicating which faculty members played a role in the development and implementation of the Aspiring Administrators Program. The university coordinator identified two faculty members who served on the design team and taught courses in the program. Through email, I sent both a request to participate in the study and both agreed. To organize the focus group, I sent an email to the 16 Aspiring Administrators, requesting their participation in the study. I received three confirmations; however, on the day of the focus group a total of six Aspiring Administrators arrived to participate in the focus group. After granting their informed consent, all six participated in the focus group.

**Data Collection**

This case study utilized multiple data gathering methods: interview, focus group, and a review of documents (i.e., course syllabi, memorandum of understanding, etc.). Prior to the interview, the purposive sample signed the informed consent form and agreed to the audio-taping of the interview (Appendices E-H). The researcher conducted the qualitative face-to-face interview with the purposive sample of university faculty, principal mentors, and program coordinators. The semi-structured, open-ended questions
were designed to elicit the views and opinions of the purposive sample, providing them an opportunity to share their perceptions of the Aspiring Administrators partnership program between SDUSD and SDSU. When appropriate follow-up questions were asked, the qualitative interviews were relatively informal and structured in a conversation format, allowing the interviewees to share their perspective and views concerning the research (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994).

The focus-group approach fostered a supportive, relaxed environment, and afforded the opportunity for more people to be interviewed at once. Prior to the interview, the focus group signed the informed consent form and agreed to the audio taping of the interview. In-depth, semi-structured, open-ended questions promoted discussions, and sharing differing opinions and points of view. Program participants heard the opinions of others as they shared their own perspectives. The format encouraged flexibility and allowed the facilitator to explore unanticipated issues that came up during the discussion. Focus groups work best when the participants are equals; therefore, censoring comments would be less likely (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Weiss, 1998).

Course syllabi, the memorandum of understanding, and professional development documents were requested from university faculty and district staff for analysis and triangulation with other data sources. The analysis of course syllabi documents provided the researcher with opportunities for comparability of the views of program participants, and other interview subjects. Inductive analysis was used for coding and determination of patterns, themes, and categories with the transcribed interviews and documents. After the
themes and codes were developed, the researcher analyzed the findings using integrative interpretation to share what was learned (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Permission to conduct the study with SDUSD was obtained from the Director of the Research and Reporting Department. San Diego Unified School District required all research studies to be approved by an internal approval board. Before data collection, the researcher submitted the proposal to the review board for approval (Appendix I).

Confidentiality and Ethical Issues

Research design, planning, and reporting are in accordance with the ethical standards of behavior of SDUSD and SDSU. Full disclosure regarding the role of the researcher as a senior manager in the district, and having obtained administrative certification from San Diego State University, will be divulged.

All collected data will be held in strict confidence with only the researcher having access to the information and its source. Confidentiality is necessary to obtain honest answers from respondents. Requested documents of names and email addresses of research participants will be protected. Those participating in the in-depth interview and focus group will be guaranteed anonymity, and will be asked to consent to the interview being digitally recorded. The digitally recorded interviews and focus group will be transcribed. Names will be removed from interviews and replaced with numerical codes. The codes will be placed in a secure and locked location. Throughout the study, the identification and responses from participants will remain confidential. The written report will refer to aggregates so that no one person can be identified unless permission is received from that individual (Weiss, 1998).
The results of the study were used to understand the perceptions of participants in the first cohort regarding their preparation experiences in the Aspiring Administrators principal preparation partnership program between SDUSD and SDSU. The research was reported honestly with integrity and forthrightness. The findings provided detailed information regarding the strengths and challenges of the partnership program from the perspective of the cohort and those responsible for the program’s implementation.

**Limitations**

The study will be limited to SDUSD and SDSU’s Aspiring Administrators partnership program, which has an emphasis on urban school districts.

The qualitative case study is the ideal method of research to analyze the principal preparation partnership program between SDUSD and SDSU. Case studies are constructed to richly describe, explain, or assess and evaluate a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994). There are several possible limitations with the design and use of case study research. Case study methodology is viewed as microscopic because of the lack of cases that can be replicated.

Due to the small number of participants, it is difficult to assert generalizability to other principal preparation programs. The study limits the extent to which one might generalize the findings to any other school of education.

The student participants will include the first cohort of the Aspiring Administrators Program. The study will not provide data regarding the success of the cohort members in acquiring administrative positions. The purposive sampling of participants may not reflect the opinions of all program participants because of the limited number of participants.
The researcher is an area superintendent in the same district, and a doctoral student at SDSU. The researcher serving as the facilitator may be biased when interpreting the data. Program participants may not be completely honest or forthright. The program participants’ responses may be influenced by the position of the researcher (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Tellis, 1997; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994).
CHAPTER 4—RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings about the Aspiring Administrators Program, a collaborative partnership between the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego State University (SDSU). The collaborative partnership was a customized program established to train a cadre of school leaders to lead schools in SDUSD. This qualitative case study examined the viewpoints, opinions, and the perceptions of those involved with the Aspiring Administrators Program. This chapter begins with information about the data collection and analysis process. Then, the chapter provides important background information about the district and the program. Next, the chapter includes the presentation of findings associated with each research question. Finally, the chapter includes a summary of findings.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection included multiple methods: interviews, a focus group, and the review of course and program documents. The participants interviewed included: (a) two coordinators (one district and one university), (b) two university faculty who were members of the collaborative partnership planning team and provided instruction in the Aspiring Administrators Program, (c) two principal coaches who mentored the aspiring administrators, and (d) a focus group of 6 of the 16 students from the first Aspiring Administrator’s cohort.

I designed semi-structured, open-ended interview and focus group questions to garner information about the thinking and experiences of the program participants. The individual interviews and the focus group interview ranged between 30 to 90 minutes in length. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Each interview and focus group
included 10 to 12 questions (plus follow-up questions when warranted) to acquire viewpoints, opinions, and perspectives of these key informants related to the following four research questions:

1. How did SDUSD and SDSU collaborate in designing the principal preparation program?

2. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions did the partners want program graduates to acquire?

3. What design elements did the SDUSD and SDSU partners include in the Aspiring Administrators Program that were intended to help candidates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

4. What evidence suggests that the program is or is not succeeding in helping program graduates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

The researcher conducted the interviews by asking predetermined questions with probing follow-up questions to gather pertinent information. The transcribed interviews were carefully read, analyzed, and coded to identify patterns and themes, to explain the phenomenon, to draw meaningful conclusions, and to triangulate the data.

In addition to the interviews, the researcher carefully read the university course syllabi, reviewed the field work assignments, and analyzed the goals and objectives, core learnings, and the expected outcomes of the courses of study. The district-based professional development agendas and handouts were examined to determine the knowledge, trainings, and experiences provided to the aspiring administrators. The Aspiring Administrators Program memorandum was scrutinized to reveal the role of the
Background

Waters et al. (2003) emphasized the importance of developing effective school leaders who can address academic challenges through the analysis of data, the development of instructional structures, and the implementation of appropriate strategies for school-wide improvement. As a district, in year 3 of Program Improvement (PI) with responsibility for educating thousands of ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students, SDUSD district administrators recognized the importance of building the capacity of new school leaders to increase school achievement and rectify low achievement at some schools.

San Diego Unified School District is the eighth largest urban school district in the nation and the second largest in California. For the 2011-2012 school year, San Diego Unified Human Resources Department reported that there were 117 traditional elementary schools, 11 K-8 schools, 24 traditional middle schools, 28 high schools, and 13 atypical/alternative schools. The district served more than 117,000 students in pre-school through Grade 12. The student population was diverse: 46% Hispanic, 24% White, 11% African American, and 8% Asian. Sixty-six percent of students received free/reduced priced meals. Students who are English Learners represented 29% of the district’s enrollment (SDUSD, 2012).

San Diego Unified Human Resources Department shared that in 2011-2012, there were 269 school administrators in SDUSD, including 176 school principals, 3 Site Special Education Administrators, and 90 vice principals. Throughout the upcoming
7 years, 33% of the school administrators will be eligible for retirement. This number may be higher if a retirement incentive is offered by the district. Facing the reality of a large, diverse student population and a large number of administrators approaching retirement, SDSU needed to consider how it could help prepare new leaders who could meet the challenges posed by a large, diverse student population.

San Diego State University’s Department of Educational Leadership (EDL) has two programs leading to the California Preliminary Administrative Services Credential: the Regional Program and the SDSU/SDUSD Aspiring Administrators Program. In both the Regional Program and the Aspiring Administrators Program, students can pursue the credential only option, if they already have a master’s degree. To be eligible for the Regional Program, the applicant must successfully pass the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), and have been employed for 3 years in a credentialed teaching, pupil personnel services, librarian services, speech pathology services, or school nurse services position (SDSU, 2012). Applicants must submit an online SDSU/CSU application and the EDL Online Application. The following items must accompany the EDL application: official transcripts, a statement of Leadership Philosophy, two letters of recommendation, verification of experience, two recent evaluations, the CBEST examinations results, and a copy of a valid California credential (SDSU, 2012).

The Aspiring Administrators Program is comprised of six courses and two field experience courses that are required for the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential. There are a total of 24 units of coursework and field experiences designed to promote improved student achievement. The students must maintain at least a “B” in all required courses (SDSU, 2012). The aspiring administrators were assigned a successful
principal coach from SDUSD to serve as a mentor. The district program coordinator shared that the six district-based professional development trainings over the 18 months of the Aspiring Administrators Program were conducted in conjunction with the university courses. These trainings are organized and planned by district-level administrators.

The SDSU/SDUSD Aspiring Administrators Program is a collaborative partnership specifically designed to develop school leaders for SDUSD. It is limited to SDUSD teachers or other credentialed services personnel employees. The employees must be nominated by their principal or immediate supervisor. The candidate completes the online CSU/SDSU graduate application process and applies for the Aspiring Administrators Program. All interested candidates are interviewed by a panel of SDSU faculty and SDUSD administrators. A master’s degree is not a requirement to be accepted in the program. The cost of the credential program is approximately $12,000. Those selected for the program will complete 24 units of coursework and additional nine units for those without a master’s degree (SDSU, 2012).

Memorandum of Understanding

On June 22, 2010, the SDUSD Board of Education ratified a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that defined the Aspiring Administrators Program as a collaborative partnership between SDUSD and SDSU (SDUSD, 2010). The terms of the MOU included a clause that specified that the agreement would be automatically renewed every 2 years, unless a notice of termination from either one of the parties was exercised. The Aspiring Administrators Program was aligned to the California Professional
Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELS) and related national standards to provide educational leadership training for the specific needs of SDUSD.

The SDSU/SDUSD memorandum of understanding regarding the Aspiring Administrators Program specifies several program features intended to enhance program quality. Figure 5 highlights these features of the Aspiring Administrators Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDSU/SDUSD Aspiring Administrators Program Features (as described in the MOU between SDSU and SDUSD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborative partnership specifically tailored to the needs of San Diego Unified School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Joint planning and support from the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cohort model, offering additional value-added components and customized experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Six days of release time to participate in professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentoring from principal coaches, who are experienced, successful principals in SDUSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shadowing opportunities and field experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cohort system of support enhances learning experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Network of professional contacts within the district and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First opportunity to interview for administrative openings in the SDUSD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. Components of the SDSU/SDUSD Aspiring Administrators Program.*

Adapted from *Educational Leadership*, by San Diego State University (SDSU), 2012, retrieved from http://coe.sdsu.edu/edl/

In the MOU, both SDSU and SDUSD assumed distinct responsibilities and shared collaborative responsibilities. As shown in Table 2 and Figure 6, the MOU delineates the responsibilities of the SDUSD and the SDSU Department of Educational Leadership.

**Other Local Educational Leadership Programs**

Three other programs leading to the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential available to students in San Diego County are the University of San Diego
### Table 2

**Features of the Memorandum of Understanding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District responsibilities</th>
<th>Department of Educational Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and select principal coaches</td>
<td>• Develop course syllabi, compensate instructors, supervise field work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborate with university to provide professional development</td>
<td>• Ensure that credentials are approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) and ensure that graduates meet all California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL) and standards for the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide meeting space at no cost to the university</td>
<td>• Collaborate with district to provide professional development for leadership coaches and cohort participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fund 6 days of release for professional development activities</td>
<td>• Utilize the SDUSD administrators as guest lecturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grant a priority interview for eligible administrative opening</td>
<td>• Allow SDUSD administrators to apply for adjunct status as a volunteer to SDSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide use of a laptop during the duration of the program</td>
<td>• Pay 50% of the stipend paid to coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pay 50% of the stipend paid to coaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from *Board of Education Minutes, June 22, 2010,* by the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), 2010, San Diego, CA.

**SDSU-SDUSD Collaborative Responsibilities**

- SDSU and SDUSD will jointly plan the customization of the courses and field work to address the needs of the district. Each institution will identify members of the planning team.
- SDUSD will identify an administrator as coordinator of the program for planning, collaboration, and implementation.
- Department of Educational Leadership will identify a faculty member as coordinator of the program for planning, collaboration, and implementation.

*Figure 6.* Features of the memorandum of understanding (MOU): SDSU-SDUSD collaborative responsibilities. Adapted from *Board of Education Minutes, June 22, 2010,* by the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), 2010, San Diego, CA.
Aspiring Leaders Program, Point Loma Nazarene University, and the University of Phoenix courses that lead to the Administration and Supervision Certificate.

The Aspiring Leaders Program—Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA) at the University of San Diego is a 2-year, 24 units school administrator preparation program for working teachers. The ELDA program collaborates between USD and San Diego area school districts. The focus of the ELDA program is instructional leadership and practice-based learning. Program participants participate in a 40-day apprenticeship with exemplary principal mentors. The applicants are not required to possess a master’s degree to be admitted into the program. All applicants must submit an online application for graduate admission and the Aspiring Leaders supplemental application. The application process includes a written narrative, resume, CBEST passing score, official transcripts, copy of a Clear California Teaching Credential, and two letters of recommendation. For those students wanting to apply for the master’s degree, a third letter of recommendation is needed, and a statement of purpose addressing the Masters in Leadership Studies. The application is reviewed by faculty. If selected, the applicant is interviewed, observed teaching a lesson in a classroom, and must submit a writing sample. The cost of the credential program is approximately $30,000 with the possibility for discounts (USD, 2012). Figure 7 provides information regarding the features of the ELDA program for educational leadership at USD.

Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU), Preliminary Administrative Services Credential Program consists of 24 credential units, a total of 12 courses with the field work embedded into the coursework. The cohort program has a dual emphasis on academic excellence and moral ethical standards. The educational leadership program
• Apply credential coursework toward a master’s degree

• Discounted program tuition

• Cohort model fosters collaborative learning, support and networking

• Innovative use of educational technology

• Skill development in strategic planning, research and evaluation of actual school data

• Mentorship connections with principals abroad for dialogue on international issues in educational leadership

• Personalized apprenticeship placements with outstanding local district principals

• Training in Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT)

• Engagement with world class educational leaders through the ELDA Spotlight on Education speaker series

• Professional development and networking for alumni through summer institutes, and ELDA forums for principals, vice principal, and superintendents

*Figure 7.* Aspiring leaders program features—Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA). Adapted from *Department of Leadership Studies*, by the University of San Diego, 2012, retrieved from http://www.sandiego.edu/soles/programs/leadership_studies/.
will provide the coursework to handle the demands of a diverse and changing school environment. The credential program is an evidence-based program. The candidates develop a plan for their graduate work based on their prior knowledge, skills, and dispositions they bring to the program. The program is aligned to the California Professional Standards for Educational Leadership.

Prospective students must complete the online graduate application, submit two letters of recommendation from supervisor or colleagues, and must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 or higher with the exception of a 2.75 or higher for Master of Ministry degrees. The cost of the credential program is approximately $12,000+ (PLNU, 2012).

The University of Phoenix, Administration and Supervision Certificate Program, consists of 31 units, 14 courses, and 30-40 hours of field experiences. The curriculum is aligned to the national standards developed by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). The course of study focuses on a standards-based curriculum of instructional leadership, organizational management, technology management, and data driven decision-making. It includes a principal practicum that provides real-world, field-based experiences in school administration and supervision. The program does not specifically indicate the amount of time needed to complete the certificate program. The University of Phoenix website indicates that 27% of the students complete the program within “normal time.” To be admitted into the certificate program, the applicant must possess a master’s degree, have at least 3 years of valid contracted P-12 classroom teaching experience, have passed the CBEST, requires a Certificate of Clearance, Current TB test, possess a valid teaching/services credential, and a GPA of 3.0 on the graduate
degree transcript. The cost of the certificate program is approximately $18,000+ (University of Phoenix, 2012).

Research Question 1

How did SDUSD and SDSU collaborate in designing the principal preparation program?

Three themes emerged from the interviews regarding the nature of the collaboration that occurred as SDUSD leaders and SDSU faculty designed the principal preparation program. One theme centered upon the positive, productive spirit of collaboration that developed and grew throughout the design of the program. Another theme focused upon the extent to which the program was designed to respond to existing district needs. A third theme focused upon effective communication. While each of these themes overlap and influence each other, each one is described separately in this section.

Spirit of Collaboration

San Diego Unified School District and SDSU leaders cultivated a positive, productive spirit of collaboration as they worked together to design the Aspiring Administrators Program. This spirit of collaboration was described by Principal coach B who stated,

We really talked. It was very interesting and kind of an exciting partnership to be part of the development. It was nice to see San Diego State was so interested in what we needed to do to support our aspiring administrators.

Similarly, Faculty Member A commented, “We talked about what we were doing in the classrooms with our teaching that can be supported by San Diego State and by Unified
School District. We are ensuring that the upcoming administrators really have all that they need.” The spirit of collaboration may have been facilitated by the extensive involvement of both parties (SDSU and SDUSD) from the initial planning for the program. Principal coach B explained that a coordinator from the district and a coordinator from the university worked together to identify the planning team. The district coordinator explained that he sought to identify effective principals and the university coordinator explained that she identified faculty with a commitment to administrative preparation to participate on the planning team for the collaborative partnership. During the planning phase, this planning team comprised of several university faculty members and district staff (i.e., principals and central office administrators) met for about a year to discuss the needs of the district and to ensure the Aspiring Administrators Program effectively prepared educators for school leadership roles. Faculty Member B explained that early in the planning phase, the participants reached an agreement to review all the course syllabi to determine what courses needed to be modified.

The planning team participants described their joint work as “collaborative,” with considerable “give and take.” Participants from both partner organizations reported successful communication between SDUSD and SDSU. For example, Principal Coach A and a participant on the planning team, explained, “The planning team reviewed the course syllabus and gave the professors feedback. They [university faculty] actually changed some of the way they first rolled out the program.” Similarly, University Faculty Member A, also a participant on the planning team, stated, “We were very open to getting
feedback from the practitioners about what we were offering and how we could improve or revise those things to better meet the needs of the students.”

Initially, some faculty members might have questioned the workability of the partnership. For example, a University faculty member commented, “A challenge from the university faculty was their reticence about the collaborative program: whether it really was going to work. I only see it as differentiation. We’re adding a few things, very specific to the needs [of SDUSD].” The same faculty member explained that faculty reservations included whether the district would try to control the work in the classroom by dictating what they were to teach. As well, faculty members questioned the workability of the partnership because of the changing district leadership and district instability.

Perhaps, because of the inclusive nature of the partnership, faculty reservations did not persist. Faculty members on the planning team embraced the idea of working with the district. For example, Faculty Member B stated,

The partnership program actually stands to be a pilot for the rest of the country and other universities in terms of how we support aspiring administrators. We know that it doesn’t just take the theoretical, but actually having opportunities to do the work.

Faculty members reported that they saw the partnership as an opportunity to learn more about the needs of a school district, to adjust the course curriculum, and to focus the program’s field work in support of the goals of the collaborative partnership. Even though planning team members reported that the planning process was “time consuming,”
they perceived that the collaboration resulted in worthwhile improvements in the preparation of administrators.

The university and district planning teams discussed the requirements for the Aspiring Administrators Program and the benefits they wanted candidates to gain through a program taught by university faculty and district personnel. For example, principal coach B explained that through these discussions, suggestions for the courses and field work were generated. The university coordinator emphasized that the planning team’s goal was to provide a meaningful, focused, and coherent curriculum that would develop school leaders who could successfully address school complexities to effectively lead a school in SDUSD for improved achievement school wide. Planning team members reported that they made an earnest effort to work together to discuss and understand the district’s leadership development needs, the university’s role of support and to design the Aspiring Administrators Program accordingly.

At the same time that the planning team was focused on creating a program that prepared individuals to lead district schools, the university planning team members worked to ensure that the Aspiring Administrators Program met all standards and requirements of the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs) and the California Commission on Teaching Credential (CCTC).

Relevance to District Needs

The goal of the Aspiring Administrators Program, as articulated in the MOU, was to train effective school leaders who could improve school-wide achievement, resulting in the closing of achievement gaps (SDUSD, 2010). From the initial planning efforts,
SDSU and SDUSD leaders collaborated to create a program that would be relevant to the district needs. A University faculty member reported,

We did not want a “here’s what we have to offer you” kind of thing. We wanted actually to sit down, negotiate, and talk about what were the needs for SDUSD, what could we do, how could we do value-added and that whole bit.

Likewise, Principal Coach A related, “We talked about what we believe [are the needs of] not just principals; but also vice principals, and how we can make this a really focused cohort on meeting the needs of SDUSD.” As suggested in findings from Cotton (2003), Marzano et al. (2005), and Perez et al. (2010), the intent was to create an inclusive, collaborative process where the district and SDSU could formulate a plan to meet district needs for highly trained school leaders who could impact student achievement.

The effort to make the program relevant to district needs extended to the design of field experiences. Planning team members explained that they wanted the program’s customized field experiences to offer students practical opportunities to practice and apply the skills related to the standards, utilizing strategies that would improve the achievement of all students and close achievement gaps. Principal Coach A explained, “There was a focus on leadership versus management. People can run schools operationally, but can’t influence the behavior of people towards a vision. We need people who can be good managers, as well as good leaders.” So, the planning team worked together to plan both coursework and fieldwork experiences so that leadership candidates would gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to lead improvements in student learning results in SDUSD schools.
To be relevant for SDUSD, the program could not simply provide an easy route to an administrative credential. Principal Coach B reported,

When we were working with San Diego State, we really did talk about making sure that it wasn’t easy. That it was real, and that they really learned a lot of things; instead of just paying a bunch of money and getting their credential.

Both district and university representatives reported that the district needed administrators who could influence change in schools, manage the operational aspects of budgets and personnel, and create an instructional program that increased student achievement in highly diverse schools.

The district and university planning team members worked together to understand and respond to the specific leadership needs of the district. Discussions led to the parties developing a deeper understanding of both the district needs and the specific ways in which the district was attempting to address those needs. For example, University Faculty Member B shared: “San Diego Unified used Data Director [a data management system]. The instructor of the curriculum course is building in Data Director in a conscious way into his course.” The planning process provided university faculty an opportunity to better understand the goals the district hoped to attain, the processes the district was using to pursue those goals, and the ways in which the program could be shaped to help the aspiring administrators develop knowledge and skill related to the use of those processes.

Effective Communication

Effective communication was another factor that influenced the planning efforts for the Aspiring Administrators Program. The open dialogue between SDUSD and
SDSU contributed to the development of a common understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of the aspiring administrators. Principal Coach A stated:

We met with San Diego State faculty regularly. We talked about the memorandum of understanding. We talked about all the components and how we thought it would be a beneficial program not only for students, but for the district that the students would be learning from the district personnel. We really talked. San Diego State was so interested in what we needed to do to support our aspiring administrators.

Openness seemed to influence effectiveness in communication. Principal Coach B emphasized the openness of communication across the university faculty, the program coordinators (district and university), and the principal coaches. Principal Coach B stated:

They’d [university faculty] show us their plans and like what their syllabus was for the students, the aspiring administrators. We talked about what we thought would be maybe more meaningful or more aligned to the district. It was collaborative. It wasn’t just go and talk and leave. Those meetings went for 2 to 3 hours. They invited us to be partners. I felt like it was a real partnership with San Diego State.

Effective communication might have also been enhanced by a shared passion to see the program succeed. The district and university coordinators were responsible for executing a course of action in the development of the Aspiring Administrators Program. Throughout the first year’s program, the coordinators maintained on-going communication, met periodically to coordinate activities, and developed processes to
support the collaborative partnership between the district and the university. Both coordinators made comments in the interviews that evidenced a similar passion for the program and a desire to see it succeed. For example, the university coordinator excitedly explained, “I have a very strong passion for these kinds of partnerships. I think as an organization, we have to work together.” Similarly, the district coordinator stated:

I just think that this is a great opportunity for there to be collaboration between us, as a large urban district, and a large California State University that could help us continue to improve and expand our leadership capacity within the district.

It is perhaps important to note that communication was enhanced as the various parties worked on specific important planning tasks, in contrast to spending time talking about improving communication. For example, communication among the principal coaches and the program coordinators strengthened through the planning of the district-based professional development sessions. Principal Coach B shared:

We worked together with the district, the district liaison and SDSU liaison. We planned professional development. We worked with the other principal mentors to talk about what we thought were timely issues that the aspiring administrators would need to know as they moved through the program and then into leadership roles.

In summary, the SDUSD and SDSU efforts to design the Aspiring Administrators Program were characterized by a positive, productive spirit of collaboration that developed and grew throughout the design of the program. Both district and university planning team members offered evidence that suggested that they were eager to work with and learn from each other as they developed this joint venture. Also, the design
effort was focused upon responding to existing district needs. District needs were examined carefully and efforts were made to address them directly. Finally, the design process benefitted from open, effective communication. Planning team members openly shared issues and discussed opportunities. They seemed to share a passion to create a program that would work to meet district needs.

Research Question 2

What knowledge, skills, and dispositions did the partners want program graduates to acquire?

Both interviews and program documents revealed that the program partners envisioned an Aspiring Administrators Program in which graduates would acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with all six of the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs). In pursuit of this overarching goal, the program partners also wanted program graduates to know how to work with stakeholders and build a vision for improved student achievement. Also, the program partners wanted graduates to be able to use data to influence school improvement, particularly in ways that would help close achievement gaps. Additionally, they wanted graduates to be able to manage a school operationally and work with a wide array of stakeholders. This section describes some of the evidence associated with these findings.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Related to CPSEL Standards

The university and district partners worked to ensure that the Aspiring Administrators Program’s course of study was aligned to the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs). The CPSELs standards call for the preparation of school administrators who will promote the academic success of all
students by ensuring a viable instructional program that fosters the following: (a) the
development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of shared vision; (b) the
advocacy for and the sustaining of a school culture conducive to student learning and staff
professional growth; (c) the effective management of the school organization in a manner
that is supportive of a safe, operational, learning environment; (d) the active collaboration
with families and diverse community members to support their needs; (e) responsible and
ethical leadership, and (f) understanding of the larger school learning community to
ensure success for all students (WestEd, 2004).

The Aspiring Administrators Program partners endeavored to ensure that program
graduates acquired the knowledge, dispositions, and skills that related to the CPSEL
standards. In particular, the program partners ensured that each of the six standards was
addressed thoroughly in at least one of the university courses and across the field
experience tasks. University Faculty Member B stated, “We need to meet certain
requirements for certification, but at the same time we want to contextualize it.” The
University Coordinator explained, “The students need conceptual understanding of
leadership, that what we [University] do. [What] San Diego Unified does is how do you
put that into action.”

The alignment with the CPSEL standards was also evident in the program
documents. For example, the CPSEL standard one endorses a vision of learning for
improved academic achievement for all students. The university course syllabi and
course descriptions for EDL 610-Curriculum Design and Management, and EDL 652-
Instructional Improvements and Evaluation indicate that the courses support the active
involvement of school leaders working with school stakeholders through shared
leadership and decision-making to ensure all students achieve stronger learning outcomes. The vision promoted through this coursework is also aligned with CPSEL standard five focused on ethics because the courses promote leadership attention to every group of students in ways that will eliminate achievement gaps (WestEd, 2004; SDSU, 2012).

Among the various CPSEL standards, the Aspiring Administrator Program creators gave particular attention to CPSEL standard two that ensured program participants would acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to change a school’s culture and instructional program in ways conducive to student growth. The field experience course (EDL 660) provided the aspiring administrators hands on experience with leading school improvement efforts by assembling a team of stakeholders and developing and implementing an improvement plan for a specific group of students. By requiring aspiring administrators to engage and work with stakeholders, the field experience also focused on CPSEL standard six, which emphasizes stakeholder relationships. California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders standards four and six were emphasized in EDL 640, Leadership in School-Community Relations (WestEd, 2004; SDSU, 2012). The aspiring administrators learned the importance of embracing cultural proficiency, while working in a highly diverse school environment. They learned the importance of working and honoring all school community stakeholders in the quest to improve student achievement. An aspiring administrator shared, “You have to work with everyone. You are listening to them, you’re communicating. I kind of learned not to look down [at others], but let’s do it together and I like that.”

California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders standards five and six were emphasized throughout the program. The coursework and fieldwork required
aspiring administrators to evidence ethical and responsible leadership in ways that addressed the moral imperative of ensuring a quality educational experience for every student with high levels of achievement for every demographic group. An aspiring administrator commented, “I think everybody [all of the aspiring administrators] has kids at heart and has the potential to be a great leader.” Coursework and fieldwork helped ensure that aspiring administrators kept “kids at heart” as they addressed day-to-day leadership functions. As well, coursework and fieldwork helped ensure that aspiring administrators knew how to work with a variety of school community stakeholders to better understand the underlying issues that influenced the school’s achievement status. As well, aspiring administrators learned to promote stakeholders’ participation in implementing the improvement plan.

**Development of a Shared Vision**

The aspiring administrators learned the importance of a school leader’s role in creating a viable shared school vision. An aspiring administrator stated, “[I] learned the importance and value of a really good vision and how that it is the driving force of everything you do as a school leader.” In particular, however, aspiring administrators learned the importance of building a vision with the school’s stakeholders, instead of developing it alone. Key to developing a shared vision is effective communication. An inspiring administrator reported, “Communication was a core learning in the program.” The aspiring administrator reflected that effective communicating was important to generate meaningful involvement of all stakeholders in creating and sustaining the school’s vision. The aspiring administrator learned that the school leader must effectively
communicate the vision and its rationale; otherwise, the stakeholders may not wholeheartedly embrace it.

The course description for the first course in the course sequence, EDL 610, Educational Leadership, emphasizes the importance of vision. The description states that students will be introduced to the “importance of vision and the process for developing, sustaining, and communicating that vision to achieve higher student achievement by actively and meaningfully including stakeholders.” The aspiring administrators learned how the school’s vision helps to focus the energies of school community to improve the academic achievement for students. The aspiring administrators learned that without a unified vision, inclusive of all stakeholders, the vision would be disjointed, resulting in a lack of instructional focus which could contribute to low achievement. If a school does not have a clear vision, then the work could be easily taken off course, and academic improvement would not be achieved at the highest level possible.

**Culture and Diversity**

The aspiring administrators learned about the importance of culture and the issues of diversity as they pertained to a school’s learning environment and student achievement. The university course of study emphasized the role of the school leader in confronting and taking actions to eliminate practices of racism, sexism, and classism to ensure that all students have equitable and accessible learning opportunities (Edmonds, 1979). The school improvement field experience required the aspiring administrators to work with a team of stakeholders to improve the achievement of a specific group of students to close the achievement gap. University faculty members explained that class discussions with the aspiring administrators highlighted the pervasive nature of racism,
stereotypes in schools, and its effect on student learning. The aspiring administrators
learned about the nature of persistent achievement gaps, and the leadership necessary to
ensure that all students have access to challenging curriculum and high quality
instruction. University Faculty Member B stated:

We’re preparing them [aspiring administrators] to look at data and to make
informed decisions. I think it is important to look at all students and to look at the
subgroups. When I go into the schools, I see people that are color blind. They’re
forgetting about the fact that this is a Mexican kid or this is a Somali kid. We
need to look at every individual kid and look at what they bring, the same with
staff, and the same with parents.

As recommended by the findings of Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005), the
aspiring administrators gained a higher level of sensitivity regarding cultural stereotypes
and the effects of racism on the education of students as a result of the university course
of study.

The aspiring administrators learned that school leaders have the responsibility to
ensure that all students receive a viable education irrespective of their race, culture,
gender, language, or socioeconomics. An aspiring administrator reported,

The diversity issues we talked about were even more important because of how
diverse our class was. There wasn’t one group talked about who didn’t have a
representative [in the cohort]. Anything we talked about there’s people to say,
well it’s a stereotype or that’s kind of how it is, which was helpful.

The aspiring administrators believed that the variety of ethnicities and diversity of the
cohort was beneficial to their understanding different perspectives on race and cultural
diversity. This diversity contributed to a heightened awareness of the social justice issues of educational access and equity for all students.

**Data Use to Improve Instruction and Close Achievement Gaps**

One important set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions emphasized in the Aspiring Administrators Program focused upon the analysis of data to inform instructional decisions. The program was designed to help ensure that aspiring administrators could support Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in using data to improve student achievement and to close the achievement gap.

Data analysis was the focus of coursework, fieldwork, and professional development experiences. The program creators wanted aspiring administrators to be able to use data to improve teaching and learning and generate higher achievement for all students. Principal coaches personally explained how Data Director was used to support the monitoring of teaching and learning at the school site. Specifically, Data Director provided formative student assessment information necessary to conduct ongoing data analysis. This analysis is used by individual teachers and grade level teams to identify curricular and instructional needs for school improvement. The course of study emphasized the importance of school accountability data (hard and soft) and its analysis to inform instructional decisions. University Faculty Member B illustrated this point by stating the following:

Our conversations in our courses were always based on that premise: It’s not just the hard data, but also the soft data. As we look at your stakeholders, how many are involved? How many students are being suspended? We are constantly
looking at data and having conversations about how to improve instruction. It’s all related to how we improve instruction based on data.

In the program’s field experience, the school improvement plan project required the aspiring administrators to analyze a school’s accountability achievement data and dissect the information regarding whole school achievement results, as well as the results for various demographic groups. This training provided the aspiring administrators the knowledge to monitor achievement data, hone their data analysis skills, and improve school-wide academic achievement.

Also, it is important to note that the fieldwork task listed above was designed to encourage program graduates to scrutinize the achievement of different demographic groups of students. The program participants learned about achievement gaps and the social justice roles they should play in eliminating those gaps. Given the diverse student population of the SDUSD and the substantial achievement gaps, the program partners believed that aspiring administrators must possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for helping educators close achievement gaps. One aspiring administrator explained:

Knowledge of the achievement gap is important for a school leader to know exactly where the student populations are. This will allow the leader to know what the next steps should be to guide the process to, not only close the achievement gap, but to eliminate it by using sound research proven strategies to increase achievement for all students.

The Data Director-focused, district-based professional development session provided the aspiring administrators a general overview of the program and the types of
data it provides. Data Director is a web-based data and assessment management system that allows you to view disaggregate and analyze student data. The program provides access to 5 years of California Standards Test (CST) data, California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), California English Language Development Test ( CELDT), benchmark results, and demographic information to support analysis of student achievement data. These data assist leaders and teachers in identifying curricular strengths and challenges to inform instruction and planning. The aspiring administrators utilized the Data Director program to support their field experience projects, aimed at improving the achievement of underperforming groups of students at their schools.

**School Management and Work With Stakeholders**

The Aspiring Administrators Program’s courses provided school leaders knowledge and skills to effectively manage a school operationally and to work successfully with all stakeholders (teachers, staff, students, parents, and community). In particular, the program partners wanted aspiring administrators to be able to manage schools and work with stakeholders in ways that would improve student learning and achievement in ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse schools. For example, in course EDL 600, the course description specifies that aspiring administrators would learn about “management issues relative to school leadership, including an understanding of legal and financial principles important to the functions of school and district administrators.”

The aspiring administrators learned about the complexities associated with various legal and fiscal issues. One aspiring administrator reported:
I feel like I have a way better big picture of the whole thing [school operations] and so sometimes when people say something, I see both sides. I can see when my principal’s saying, you know I made the choices because of this and I know there’s more behind it. I can see she’s making good choices as a leader to do what’s best in the name of the students.

In addition, to understanding budgets, and the impact of policies and procedures, the aspiring administrators must be able to effectively communicate the rationale and the pros and cons for decisions (WestEd, 2004). Field experience tasks required aspiring administrators to work with various stakeholders to develop and implement action plans. The aspiring administrators had to examine the practical legal and fiscal implementation of their plans and communicate with stakeholders in ways that built understanding and support.

In summary, the program partners designed the Aspiring Administrators Program to ensure that program graduates possessed a variety of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. They wanted graduates to possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to each of the six CPSEL standards and they designed coursework, fieldwork, and other professional development experiences accordingly. More specifically, the design of the program emphasized the development of a shared vision, the understanding of culture and diversity, and the use of data to improve student learning and close achievement gaps. As well, the program emphasized knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to the management of school operations in ways that appropriately and constructively engaged all stakeholders.
Research Question 3

What design elements did SDSU and SDUSD partners include in the Aspiring Administrators Program that were intended to help candidates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

The Aspiring Administrators Program included a variety of structures that were intended to help candidates acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective school leadership in SDUSD schools. Particular elements included (a) the candidate selection process, (b) the university curriculum, (c) the district-based professional development offerings, (d) the cohort learning structure, (e) principal coaches, and (f) the evaluation process.

Candidate Selection

Both partners, SDUSD and SDSU, actively participated in the candidate selection process for the Aspiring Administrators Program. The program brochure explains that prospective program participants must be nominated (Appendix J). Program candidates do not self-select to participate in the Aspiring Administrators Program. The nomination process is a filtering system to ensure the inclusion of highly qualified persons. In a focus group interview, an aspiring administrator reflected:

We were all very highly selected from our schools, to be basically chosen for the program. There is a screening process . . . to make sure that they’re getting candidates that aren’t just coming for an administration credential, or to get units; [but] somebody who could have the potential to become an effective leader of change.
Other members of the first cohort of aspiring administrators reported that they felt honored to have been recognized for having the potential to become a school administrator. As several researchers (Cusick, 2002; Finn & Broad, 2003; Levine, 2005b) have emphasized in effective preparation programs the importance of a selection process. The aspiring administrators took the nomination process and the opportunity to participate in the program seriously.

The district coordinator explained that, to recruit aspiring administrators, he sent an email to all principals and district level administrators to request nominations for the Aspiring Administrators Program (Appendix K). Principals received a program informational brochure and the nomination criteria. The solicitation email emphasized that at the school level, the ideal nominee is a teacher who has demonstrated a willingness to embrace district initiatives and is supportive of the cohort learning approach for the Administrative Credential and/or master’s degree course of study. The nomination process was most beneficial because it was the first step toward the identification of potential aspiring administrator candidate. The nomination process attempted to eliminate the possibility of accepting into the program anyone who might not be serious about school leadership. The administrators were expected to nominate a candidate who was an exemplary classroom teacher, highly competent, professionally responsible, usually viewed as a leader, and has the potential to be an administrator. If the nominee was successfully admitted into the program, the nominating principal was expected to have a close working relationship with the nominee to support their development throughout the program.
The principal had the initial responsibility to ensure competent individuals are in the nomination pool for the Aspiring Administrators Program. Whether or not the principal is competent to recommend a viable nominee was not directly factored into the selection process. University Faculty Member B commented:

No process is going to be perfect. That’s a good process if the principal is good and has good judgment. Not all principals are excellent, and that applies to everywhere, not just in San Diego Unified. There’s a human factor in terms of the nominating piece.

The nomination of prospective candidates for the Aspiring Administrators Program might work well, if the nomination comes from a competent principal. The program may be compromised if an ineffective principal recommends a candidate who may not be the best candidate. The nomination would be a cause for concern if it is based on some frivolous criteria of limited value (e.g., friendship). Presently, there is no rubric to provide a principal guidance for the nomination process. There were no specific criteria that identified the qualifications of a principal who could make a nomination to the Aspiring Administrators Program. These could possibly be weaknesses with the nomination process, if the principal’s decision is based on favoritism and other measures other than what was noted in the recruitment materials.

Once a candidate is nominated, they attend an orientation meeting, and are invited to apply for the Aspiring Administrators Program. The district provided three incentives for participation in the program. First, the program provided access to professional development on district initiatives and programs to strengthen the aspiring administrator’s preparation for district leadership opportunities. This was important because no other
educational leadership program could boast this level of district support. Second, when aspiring administrators completed the program, the district promised support with the credential application process, and finally, the district promised to provide an interview when program graduates applied for an administrative position. In a focus group, a candidate in the Aspiring Administrators Program stated,

This was a cohort of the district. We were told there would be a lot of assistance on the back end in getting a position. That affected my decision to do it through this program, because at the end we were going to have some help from human resources to apply for positions. That influenced my decision on the front end.

Levine (2005b) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) reported that leadership preparation programs should be selective to ensure that graduates would be likely to be able to lead schools successfully. The Aspiring Administrators Program selection process was designed to be rigorous and selective. Principal Coach B, who was part of the planning team stated, “You just don’t get to be in this program because you want to. These folks go through a pretty intensive application process to be selected. They fill out an application, write something, and go through an interview process.” The Aspiring Administrators Program’s application process included: (a) a nomination from the school’s principal or certificated manager, (b) the completion of the graduate SDSU admission criteria for the educational leadership program (for both regional and collaborative programs), (c) submittal of the Aspiring Administrators Program application and a letter of interest, and (d) the program’s entrance interview.
San Diego State University’s Regional Educational Leadership Program differed from the collaborative partnership because the program participants self-select themselves, and they are not interviewed as a condition for admission.

In spite of the efforts to create a more rigorous admissions process, some program participants questioned whether the process was sufficiently rigorous. For instance, University Faculty Member A commented:

For the first cohort, I think, we were a little too lenient on who we brought in. Some of the folks were not prepared for the leadership program. I mean [some of the candidates accepted were not] the best prepared individuals with a real understanding of what the principalship is about, not in terms of details, but in terms of commitment, and in terms of the academic readiness. Next time, we really looked at who was coming through and did they have those components in place, the disposition to do the job.

Some of the program partners discussed the challenges that result when candidates are unprepared for the work required for school leadership. They emphasized the importance of having candidates who are academically ready and who are committed to investing the time associated with the classroom hours, the readings, collaborative projects, the research, and the level of work required for a graduate level program.

The entrance interview is a part of the selection process that is unique to the Aspiring Administrators Program. University Faculty Member A commented:

I think it’s good that we have interviews. It is a combination of SDSU and SDUSD people that do the interviews. It gives us additional information about
the students. We know that the people coming in are folks the district supports; and the person has great potential within the district.

The Aspiring Administrator Program candidates shared that the interview with a panel comprised of district personnel and university faculty somewhat intensified the application process. An aspiring administrator reported, “I felt the interview was very intense. Not intense in a negative way, but an intense like this is serious.” The interview was formal with six predetermined questions and a rating sheet. The entrance interview provided an opportunity for each candidate to share personal information about themselves, reasons why they would like to be considered for the program, and their readiness for graduate level work.

The district and university coordinators explained that after all aspiring administrator candidates completed the application process, the district and university coordinators met to jointly decide which applicants would be admitted into the program. The coordinators reviewed the nominee recommendation, the application, the letter of intent, and the weighted interview to determine whether the candidate qualified for admittance. Generally, candidates who received an exemplary recommendation, had meaningful leadership experiences as a teacher leader, and scored high on the interview were admitted. Those aspiring administrator candidates, who were admitted, received an acceptance letter and were invited to an orientation meeting and program reception.

**University Curriculum**

The Aspiring Administrators Program’s university course of study was a major structure intended to help candidates acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective school leadership in SDUSD schools. Both the university and
district coordinators discussed how the program was designed to develop school leaders who could lead SDUSD schools to improve student achievement, prepare students for college, careers, and the 21st century global economy. The curriculum was devised to provide the school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that would enable them to lead a school toward improved student achievement in an increasingly complex educational environment of common core standards, statewide standardized testing programs, Federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements, and California requirements associated with meeting the Academic Performance Index (API) growth expectations.

The Aspiring Administrators Program’s planning team tailored the coursework and fieldwork to be comprehensive, rigorous, coherent, and thought-provoking to develop effective school leaders who could address the cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the district in ways that would improve achievement and close achievement gaps. An aspiring administrator stated:

I felt like [the program] really challenged me and forced me to grow and think about things in a different way. . . . I actually had to really think. There were times that I thought it was unreasonable, but it really wasn’t an unreasonable challenge.

The university course of study paired theoretical knowledge with practical application of strategies to train school leaders for effective school leadership to improve the achievement for all students.

The same course titles were used for the Regional Program as for the Aspiring Administrators Program. To support the Aspiring Administrators Program’s goals and
objectives, the university faculty revised the courses to support the needs of the district.

Figure 8 includes a list of Educational Leadership (EDL) course descriptions.

It is important to note that the university curriculum includes several courses, but also includes two field experience classes (EDL 660 A and B). The field experiences challenged the aspiring administrators to apply knowledge they acquired in coursework in real efforts to improve student achievement in a school. As the description in Figure 8 explains, the field experience course required aspiring administrators “to identify a targeted group of students and provide leadership for teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to develop a plan and implement strategies directed at increasing achievement for these students.” Aspiring administrators had to engage with stakeholders, help them look at data in ways that allowed them to see and understand achievement gaps, and then lead those stakeholders to create a workable plan of action for improving learning results for a specific group of students at their school. An aspiring administrator stated, “I didn’t know that it was [so] rigorous to put together a school improvement plan. It was not a perfect process.” University Faculty Member A commented, “The strength of the program because things are not done in isolation. Everything is done in tandem to support each other. It’s all related to how do we improve instruction based on data.” The field work provided meaningful experiences for the aspiring administrators to grapple with the task to improve student achievement. An aspiring administrator shared, “The field experience for the Aspiring Administrators Program provided me with first-hand opportunities to experience and view what the job entails beyond [the] books.”
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<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDL 630</td>
<td><strong>Curriculum Design and Management</strong></td>
<td>This course addresses the essential role of the principal as an instructional leader. Data-driven decision making, professional learning communities, curriculum, and instructional issues, and leading diverse schools in efforts to improve student achievement and closing the achievement gap are emphasized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 600</td>
<td><strong>Principles of Educational Administration</strong></td>
<td>This course focuses on various management issues relative to school leadership, including an understanding of legal and financial principles important to the functions of school and district administrators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 660</td>
<td><strong>Field Experience</strong></td>
<td>Field experiences engage aspiring administrators in the real work of leading for school improvement in student achievement. Candidates will work at their school site, under the guidance of their site administrator and university supervisor, to identify a targeted group of students and provide leadership for teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to develop a plan and implement strategies directed at increasing achievement for these students. Field experiences are directly linked to the content of coursework. In addition, aspiring administrators participate in a three-day shadowing experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 610</td>
<td><strong>Educational Leadership</strong></td>
<td>This course introduces concepts, attributes, and characteristics of leadership associated with the challenging contexts of various educational environments. Student are introduced to the importance of vision and the process for developing, sustaining, and communicating that vision to achieve higher student achievement by actively and meaningfully including stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 652</td>
<td><strong>Instructional Improvements and Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>This course introduces aspiring administrators to various models of supervision and evaluation in elementary and secondary schools. Emphasis is placed on a blending of practical application and well-grounded conceptual understanding. This concepts of supervision and coaching as processes for leading and directing change and school improvement are emphasized.</td>
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_Figure 8. Aspiring Administrators Program course sequence. Adapted from* Educational Leadership*, by San Diego State University (SDSU), 2012, retrieved from http://coe.sdsu.edu/edl/
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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>EDL 660</td>
<td><strong>Field Experience</strong></td>
<td>Work begun in the Fall semester of EDL660 will continue, and candidates will participate in a second three-day shadowing experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 640</td>
<td><strong>Leadership in School-Community Relations</strong></td>
<td>This course provides an opportunity for aspiring administrators to learn how to work effectively with families and community members; recognize the goals and aspirations of diverse families; respond to diverse community interests and needs; and mobilize community resources in service of student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 655</td>
<td><strong>Communication, Problem-Solving and Decision Making in PK-12 Systems</strong></td>
<td>This capstone course synthesizes concepts and field experiences from previous courses and emphasizes how school leaders develop school cultures conducive to collaboration and a collective sense of responsibility for student learning. Specific strategies in communication, decision-making, problem solving, and conflict management relative to the visionary leader as a systems thinker are explored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 690*</td>
<td><strong>Methods of Inquiry</strong></td>
<td>This is the first of a 3-course research sequence for those pursuing the master's degree. This course provides an overview of educational research, focusing on understanding research and using research as an educational practitioner. Students are introduced to various quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 795A*</td>
<td><strong>Research Seminar</strong></td>
<td>Master’s students will begin research on a project related to cultural competencies for educational leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDL 795B*</td>
<td><strong>Research Seminar</strong></td>
<td>Master degree students complete research project.</td>
</tr>
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*Master’s Degree Additional Courses

*Figure 8. Continued.*
As the course description indicates, the field experience was “directly linked to the content of coursework.” Students had practical opportunities to apply and practice the concepts they learned in courses as they worked on actual problems of student achievement in real schools. The close relationship between coursework and fieldwork may help increase the likelihood that aspiring administrators will acquire the necessary skills and dispositions to do the work, in addition to the theoretical knowledge about important school improvement issues. An aspiring administrator stated, “I think all the coursework from the program from every class, the professor’s experience, good examples of what they did, helped you to learn.”

Through this course of study, the aspiring administrators learned that a school principal cannot singularly improve a school’s achievement. An aspiring administrator reported:

What stood out—is just knowing that it’s going to take everyone working together to achieve that success, involving everyone and not just being a dictator. It takes everyone working together. It’s like having a democratic type of structure where you’re involving all the stakeholders.

The aspiring administrators learned how important it is for the principal to gain support from and be responsive to the school’s students, teachers, staff, parents, and community.

The Improvement Plan

An important part of the year-long field experience was the development of a specific plan to improve achievement at the aspiring administrator’s school. University Faculty Member A explained:
We did a study a few years ago with folks in the department on principal preparation programs. We found that field work experiences really had to be tied to school improvement, not just going out there doing discrete tasks. Tasks that worked together to really improve instruction in a school, for a subgroup, or for a grade level, whatever it was, but based on data.

The school improvement plan project required the aspiring administrator to work with a team of school stakeholders (teachers, parents, community, and staff) to develop a plan to improve the achievement for an underachieving group of students. The aspiring administrator had to be knowledgeable of the achievement data to provide leadership in the development of goals, plan the project, and execute the strategies to improve achievement. As a result of the field work project, the aspiring administrators learned to look at all facets of a school site. An aspiring administrator shared:

> Putting together a school improvement plan was definitely one of the most helpful things that I’ve learned. It was rigorous to put together a school improvement plan. You have to incorporate all the different aspects of the school community. I learned so much about [the] school site.

Jackson and Kelley (2002) and Leithwood et al. (2004) found that school leaders need to be able to analyze achievement data, establish goals, foster team collaboration, support the development of teacher leaders, and plan strategies to improve student learning and achievement. The improvement plan project provided the aspiring administrators a practical opportunity to practice all of these skills.
District-Based Professional Development

In addition to coursework and fieldwork, the Aspiring Administrators Program featured a district-based professional development program. There were 2 full-days of professional development each semester for a total of 6 days during the course of the 18-month program. The principal coaches, district and university coordinators identified important topics, reviewed district initiatives and programs, provided activities for leadership development and opportunities for mentoring. The principal coaches and central office administrators were the trainers for the aspiring administrators. Principal Coach B related, “We worked with the other principal mentors. We talked about what we thought were timely issues that the aspiring administrators would need to know, as they moved through the program and into a leadership role.”

Professional development provided the aspiring administrators an opportunity to learn from the principal coaches’ experiences and school leadership challenges. Principal Coach A reported, “We met with our mentees. We did a 360 Leadership Profile scale with them. We talked about their leadership and then where they felt they may grow.” Some aspiring administrators reported that a meaningful part of the professional development was when the principal coaches shared their own personal leadership stories as a beginning school administrator. They shared mistakes, lessons learned, and their journey from a teacher to a school principal.

The researcher reviewed the professional development agendas, materials, and ascertained information from the interviews and focus groups to identify the information learned by the aspiring administrators. The professional development topics included the utilization of the district data management system, developing as an instructional leader,
strengthening teacher practices for effective teaching and learning, development of teacher leaders, distributed leadership, and the impact of change. Figure 9 indicates the district-based professional development topics. Following Figure 9, a brief description of each professional development topic is provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District-Based Professional Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Data Director, SDUSD Data Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), District Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Response to Intervention, a focus on effective instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teacher Development and Distributed Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>• McREL Balanced Leadership and Implementing Change</td>
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Figure 9. Aspiring administrators first cohort professional development topics.

**Data Management Program**

The district-based professional development program provided the aspiring administrators training with Data Director, the district’s management system. The training provided the aspiring administrators an opportunity to become more adept with Data Director Program to access school accountability achievement data for analysis. Data Director training was also included in the university course and field work. The aspiring administrators developed skills at dissecting and scrutinizing a school’s accountability achievement data. Principal Coach A reported, “We talked about Data Director. We talked about some issues that we had that were specific to SDUSD and the professors incorporated that into their classes.”

In the professional development sessions, the principal coaches provided the direct school application by demonstrating how they use Data Director to support instruction and to inform their practice as school principals. The aspiring administrators
learned to utilize the Data Director program proficiently to acquire relevant achievement data to focus instructional decisions for school-wide improvement.

**Professional Learning Communities**

The aspiring administrators learned about Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), as a district initiative. The aspiring administrators learned about the attributes of PLCs that improve instructional practices and student learning to positively impact school-wide improvement. This training emphasized the importance of sharing leadership opportunities and building the capacity of others. Reflecting this understanding, an aspiring administrator stated, “You (as principal) don’t have to do everything. You can build on other people’s strengths.” Consistent with the recommendations of Dufour and Marzano (2009), the aspiring administrators learned the importance of developing grade-level PLCs for effective collaboration to strengthen lessons and to improve teacher pedagogy that results in improved student learning.

The university coursework complimented the district-based professional development program. Through the field work project, the aspiring administrators learned strategies to work collaboratively with a team to develop a PLC and an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). They learned that the ILT provides guidance for setting school goals and identifying targeted professional development to address school needs. To garner support and buy-in from teachers, the aspiring administrator learned that they must effectively communicate with teachers to engage them critically in the analysis of achievement data, and to utilize shared decision-making for meaningful professional development and support (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).
Balanced Leadership and Change

The aspiring administrators learned about McRel’s Balanced Leadership, the importance of change, the 21 leadership responsibilities for effective school leadership, and their impact on a school’s achievement. They learned that each of the 21 leadership responsibilities have a differential impact on a school’s achievement (Marzano et al., 2003). The 21 leadership responsibilities are included in the district’s principal evaluation. The aspiring administrators learned about the principal’s evaluation document structure and the focus on school leadership.

The aspiring administrators learned that when leading for change, reflection is important. For example, one aspiring administrator stated:

Understanding the change and the change process was incredibly important.

The role of reflection and that people respond differently to change was a core learning. As the leader, you might not perceive it as a major change; however, other people may perceive it as massive and life altering. I think constantly reflecting on how’s it going was a key part of the vision.

The program participants became knowledgeable of first-order change as an extension of practice, rather than a radical change of behavior. The aspiring administrators learned that, for second-order change to occur, there is a complete break from the past with the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Second-order change is more difficult for an organization to manage successfully. The aspiring administrators learned that to institute change effectively, it cannot always be done quickly, but small steps sometimes are more plausible (Marzano et al., 2003).
Response-to-Intervention

Through the district-based professional development, the aspiring administrators learned about Response-to-Intervention (RTI), a district initiative that fostered effective instruction for all students. It was important for aspiring administrators to understand RTI to ensure all students experienced a challenging and appropriate instructional program. An aspiring administrator reported, “We went to Rosa Parks [Elementary School], we talked about RTI, and we actually saw that in progress. [It] was a tangible model that we walked away with.” The aspiring administrators learned that Tier I is the universal design for learning (UDL) and that instruction supports the learning for 80% of the student learners with instructional differentiation. Tier II supports 15% of the learners with a high level of support and interventions, such as small-group instruction. Tier III supports the 1% to 5% of the learners with the highest level of support, from special education testing and staff if warranted, or from other intensive interventions.

Instructional Leader

Strong principal leadership is crucial to school wide improvement and higher academic achievement for all students (Edmonds, 1979). During professional development, the principal coaches provided information about instructional leadership practices needed for effective school leadership. An aspiring administrator shared, “We’re getting the message that we need to be in classrooms every single day as leaders.” The aspiring administrators learned about the importance of daily classroom observations to supervise teachers, monitor instruction, and improve teaching and learning practices for higher student achievement. It was emphasized that supervising, coaching, and providing instructional feedback in response to the observations strengthens the teaching
proficiencies of the classroom teacher. The daily instructional observations provide the instructional leader insight for professional development trainings to strengthen instruction on the school site. The coaching and instructional feedback to teachers provides input to strengthen the teaching practices and the identification of possible professional development trainings.

The aspiring administrators learned that the practice of closely working with the stakeholders contributes to a positive school climate. The aspiring administrators learned the importance of developing a school climate with the support of teachers, staff, and students to create a learning environment conducive for rigorous teaching. School climate, if positive, fosters a high level of student learning that results in high academic achievement.

**Distributed Leadership**

The aspiring administrators learned that distributed leadership with stakeholders is important when developing a system of support to improve a school’s achievement. Distributed leadership fosters the collaboration of stakeholders, the development of teacher leaders, and the engagement of parents and community in solving issues regarding student achievement. The aspiring administrators learned the importance of including stakeholders in developing a shared vision to engender the commitment of stakeholders to work together to increase academic achievement for all students. As one aspiring administrator reported, “You have to work with everyone. [You] involve the stakeholders; you have to listen to them.”

The aspiring administrators learned that collaboration is successful in an environment where everyone is treated with respect. It is important for the school leader
to work closely with stakeholders to understand the values and expectations the school community has for the children. Open, honest, and transparent communication is important for effective shared decision-making. When stakeholders are provided an opportunity to collaborate, they are more receptive of school goals and are more likely to work hard to solve school wide issues and concerns (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004).

**Cohort**

The Aspiring Administrators Program utilized the cohort structure to enhance the development of the aspiring administrators in preparation for school leadership positions. All members of the aspiring administrator’s cohort were employees of SDUSD. Even though the cohort participants came from different schools in the district, they shared a common contextual background which contributed to their cohesiveness as a group. An aspiring administrator commented:

> I think [us] all being from SDUSD was huge. I felt that unified us immediately. It gave us that instant connection. We could vent, share, and celebrate all the same things. Everybody was up to speed on everything. I think that made for really good dynamics in the cohort.

Their common experience and background knowledge of the district’s programs, initiatives, and district-wide applications provided the aspiring administrators a basis for a collegial relationship. As a result of those experiences, the cohort participants gained a deeper level of understanding of the district’s needs. As suggested by Basom, Yerkes, Norris, and Barnett (1995), because of the collaborative nature of the program, the cohort developed a relationship of trust to share their perspectives and to learn from each other.
The structure of the Aspiring Administrators Program’s course of study provided opportunities for the cohort of aspiring administrators to learn both individually and collectively. The nature of the cohort design and the coursework of the Aspiring Administrators Program required students to work and learn collaboratively. They worked closely with their cohort colleagues; planned projects together, encouraged each other, acknowledged each other’s perspectives, and shared a variety of experiences. An aspiring administrator reported, “There’s no mediocrity. We all gave 120% because of the dynamics of the group. We wanted to be the best.” As Wesson, Holman, Holman, and Cox (1996) found, as a result of collaboration on group projects, the academic performance of the cohort may have risen individually and collectively.

The collaborative experiences of the cohort contributed to the building of trust which may have improved learning outcomes. The aspiring administrators depended on each other to successfully complete the collaborative projects. The learning outcomes from the collaborative projects and presentations prepared the cohort to plan and problem solve together. Everyone had to complete their part and fulfill their responsibility related to the projects. The cohort activities provided opportunities for the aspiring administrators to strengthen their communication skills, organize, plan, and execute the steps of a project. University Faculty Member A stated, “The students really get to know each other. They support each other, have built trust, and have each other to depend [on] in this complex, difficult era of principal leadership.” Basom et al. (1995) found that cohort members’ working relationships contributed to the development of supportive networking for the duration of the program and in the future. The use of a cohort model in the Aspiring Administrators Program may have resulted in similar benefits.
Principal Coaches

The District Coordinator is responsible for selecting the District Leadership Coaches. An email was sent to all SDUSD principals to apply to serve as leadership coaches for the Aspiring Administrators Program. The email provided program information and the expected qualifications (Appendix L). Those interested principals submitted a statement of interest to the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Support Services. Those principal coaches selected received a stipend of $500.00 per semester. Figure 10 includes the list of the qualifications for prospective principal coaches.

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<th>District Leadership Coach Qualifications</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Five years of experience as a principal.</td>
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<td>• Previous experience as a coach/mentor.</td>
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<td>• Success in raising student achievement.</td>
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<td>• Understanding of current literature, trends, and development in the field of curriculum, assessment, instruction, staff development and organizational development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strategies for assessing system-wide staff development needs, visioning processes, and bringing about effective change and continuous improvement in large urban school systems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strategies for collaboration and team building.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understanding of District organization, operations, policies, and objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Principles and practices of administration, supervision, and training with a focus on reflective practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interpersonal skills using tact, patience, and courtesy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to use a variety of coaching and mentoring approaches.</td>
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Figure 10. District qualifications of principal coaches. From Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Support Services, personal communication, February 27, 2012.

Each principal coach was assigned four to five mentees. The principal coaches mentored, provided support and guidance to aspiring administrators throughout the program. The principal coaches built relationships with the aspiring administrators, and in some cases provided support after the Aspiring Administrators Program had ended.
Working with the university coordinator, the principal coaches were instrumental in the decision to use the 360 Leadership Profile Inventory to identify areas of growth for each aspiring administrator. The principal coach reviewed the profile data with the aspiring administrator and discussed their leadership and areas for growth. Principal Coach B stated, “I met with them [mentees] three or four times for an hour here and there. The mentorship was just about building relationships. We [principal coaches] have different styles and different levels of interaction with our mentees.”

As part of the fieldwork (EDL 660 Field Experience), each aspiring administrator was required to shadow their principal coach. Shadowing the principal coach consisted of two, 3-day shadowing experiences. University Faculty Member A commented:

In the collaborative [partnership], we have 6 days a year where students actually get into the schools to work with principals to see what’s going on. It was a unique experience to ensure the aspiring administrators get into schools with the best.

The aspiring administrators shadowed their principal coaches by observing them as they fulfilled their day-to-day responsibilities as site administrators. The aspiring administrators observed the practices of these effective principal coaches. After each shadowing experience, the aspiring administrators used guiding questions to write reflections about their shadowing experiences.

The principal coaches believed that the shadowing and mentoring experiences were a vital component to the Aspiring Administrators Program. Principal Coach B shared, “They [aspiring administrators] learned by being here. When somebody comes here to shadow me, I have them spend a day or so with my vice principal because that’s
the work they’re going to really do.” The principal coaches worked to support the implementation of the Aspiring Administrators Program’s through the practical application of school leadership in a mentoring capacity.

The aspiring administrators perceived that their experience shadowing a principal coach on their school site was valuable. The diversity of the schools provided the aspiring administrators an opportunity to see effective school leaders from different vantage points, in both high and low socioeconomic schools. The aspiring administrators learned how academic success was developed in these different school environments through the leadership of the principal coaches. The shadowing experience illustrated for the aspiring administrators that leadership approaches must be tailored to address the unique needs of each school. An aspiring administrator stated, “I liked having the shadowing all day. That’s where you learn the most.” Aspiring administrators reported that the opportunity to observe several principal coaches with different leadership styles and strengths was beneficial. All aspiring administrators agreed that the principal coaches were most helpful in connecting the research on school leadership to actual practice.

At the end of the program, all aspiring administrators participated in mock job interviews. The interview panel included one university faculty and a principal coach. The interview was similar to a job interview; however, the questions were aligned to the specific standards aspiring administrators had been expected to learn throughout the program. Ninety-four percent of the aspiring administrators successfully passed the mock interview the first time. The interview was rigorous with honest, direct feedback given to the aspiring administrator. In discussing the one aspiring administrator who did not pass
the mock interview the first time, a principal coach shared, “We said [to the aspiring administrator], ‘you wouldn’t get hired with that interview.’ I felt really good about the program. I think it did prepare them.”

**Evaluation Process**

The Aspiring Administrators Program featured an evaluation process that facilitated continuous improvement of the program. The communication structures included feedback forms, exit surveys, and informal conversations with district and university personnel to evaluate progress. The information shared ranged from critiques of the program and comments of supportive confirmation. The candid communication resulted in program changes that occurred more readily. This may have been a benefit of the Aspiring Administrators Program.

Formal and informal structures provided ample opportunities to evaluate and provide input about the Aspiring Administrators Program. The aspiring administrators provided written and oral feedback regarding the course of study, field work projects, and professional development. Input from cohort participants was shared throughout the program. Program Coordinator B stated, “I really like to think of the ongoing evaluation [as] the most important; the constant communication, [and] the constant conversations.”

As a result of the input received, program revisions were made to improve leadership development in the Aspiring Administrators Program. An aspiring administrator commented:

They took our input seriously. Our first semester was super impacted. [For] the next cohort, they took what needed improvement and they made a lot of changes. There were some stuff that were major issues with the way the classes were
organized and the way things happened. They made a lot of changes as far as course length and what comes when.

Another source of evaluative data was provided by the exit survey. The university coordinator shared:

We did an exit survey. There were some scheduling things that we did. The biggest change we made, and I really thank San Diego Unified because I think people really knew it needed to change, but until we had partners at the table just kind of saying you know this needs to change, it easy not to do it. In the past we had our field experience, which is the target group population . . . started in the spring and ended the following fall. The problem is that didn’t really follow very well a calendar for the school when you get test scores. So we pushed that back. We had to have more sections.

Formal feedback was elicited after each professional development session. A feedback form was provided to garner input from the participants about their learning experiences, concerns, needs, and questions. Additionally, an Aspiring Administrators Program evaluation survey was developed and conducted by SDSU to ascertain the perspectives from the aspiring administrators regarding the program and their ideas to modify and improve the program. Program Coordinator A stated, “The feedback we get from them has also been very valuable. What we’re doing with cohort two is really having a definitive focus on leadership.”

Formally, at the end of each course, aspiring administrators evaluated the various components of the course. As a result of the feedback garnered, revisions were made to the course of study and the field work.
The Aspiring Administrators Program provided multiple opportunities for aspiring administrators to communicate information informally with faculty. University and district program leaders reported that all feedback from the aspiring administrators was taken seriously. As a result of the input received from the first cohort of aspiring administrators and district staff, the sequence of courses was revised, and the field experience tasks were reviewed and adjusted.

The faculty and aspiring administrators established a rapport of open communication. In an aspiring administrator’s focus group, one candidate reported, “The most beneficial part of the program was having the instructors available. If something became difficult, you can always email them, you can talk to them, and you can meet with them.” The faculty members worked closely with the students, monitored their progress, and detected difficulties the students were having with an assignment. At times, the aspiring administrators expressed their concerns regarding assignments because of the rigor of the course and field work. When the aspiring administrators openly shared their concerns or issues regarding a course and/or field work, faculty responded with adjustments. The Aspiring Administrators Program Coordinator B reported, “We really listened to each other. We continually evaluated what we’ve done in both classes, in professional development, and in the mentoring process. We changed it, if we thought it needed some improvement or didn’t work well.” The faculty was responsive and was committed to ensuring that the learning experiences were positive and constructive.

The district coordinator shared areas for consideration for improvement for the Aspiring Administrators Program, recognizing that continuous opportunities for
evaluation and feedback from cohort participants informed ongoing improvements to the program.

To strengthen the collaborative program for future aspiring administrators cohorts, the district coordinator reported a need to: (a) provide a higher level of training for aspiring administrators in the use of the Data Director program to disaggregate data in ways that lead to improved student achievement, (b) incorporate into the district-based professional development examples of strategies from schools where achievement gaps have closed, and (c) continued aggressive recruitment for a diverse cadre of quality principals.

To enhance the collaborative partnership, the university faculty members shared the need to: (a) develop benchmark measures and/or rubrics to guide the field work, (b) develop a stronger synthesis activity to demonstrate the essential learnings of the collaborative program, (c) develop a plan to continue supporting the district’s effort to build leadership capacity, (d) identify more principal coaches so as not to burnout a coach with multiple mentees, and (e) cultivate innovative adaptation strategies when the field becomes saturated, in order to expand the depth of leadership support in the district in ways that extend beyond principal preparation.

The aspiring administrators candidly shared their thoughts on areas to strengthen the Aspiring Administrators Program. One of the issues raised related to the extent to which nominating principals understood the program. At some schools the nominating principal was very supportive and helpful, but at others schools this was not the case. An aspiring administrator reported:
I felt that when I entered the program, my site principal was not 100% understanding of what the expectations were. It would have made a difference had they had a meeting to explain the expectations. Some of the principals didn’t really know what was expected. It’s not that they wouldn’t have helped; they just didn’t know how to help because they didn’t know what we were trying to do.

The aspiring principals recommended that principals have an orientation that described the program’s expectations. It should be noted, however, that some aspiring administrators did not experience this problem.

The aspiring administrators also had recommendations related to the district-based professional development provided through the program. To strengthen the professional development, an aspiring administrator offered the following suggestion:

If the vision and the whole purpose were to change instruction, and the focus is on students, then we needed to be in classrooms seeing students as a part of the professional development time. In our district professional development, we were only in classrooms one time. I think that was a missed opportunity to put examples [of] kids’ faces and teachers work to connect it to the philosophy and the professional development.

Finally, the aspiring administrators criticized the district for failing to provide adequate in-service regarding steps on how to apply for an administrative position. The candidates shared that in their last class the district coordinator presented a short 10-minute presentation on how to apply for the credential. An aspiring administrator stated, “I feel like the expectation was a letdown. We were told we want you to be part of our district, we want you to apply for jobs, and there was zero follow-through. We didn’t
even get, this is what you need to do to apply.” Per the aspiring administrators, the short presentation was inadequate to guide the aspiring administrators through the process after the completion of the Aspiring Administrators Program.

In summary, several features of the Aspiring Administrators Program may have been helpful in promoting the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions the program endeavored to develop in aspiring school leaders. The candidate selection process might have helped to increase the likelihood that aspiring administrators would succeed in developing the desired attributes. Additionally, the program provided a breadth of experiences including a university curriculum with integrated coursework and fieldwork, aligned to the desired learning outcomes, and the CPSELS. An important part of the fieldwork was the development of an improvement plan that required candidates to practice the skills, knowledge, and dispositions the program intended to develop. All of this was enhanced by a program of district-based professional development that centered upon practical topics that related to key program learning outcomes. Students engaged in the coursework, fieldwork, and professional development in a cohort model. Also, students had opportunities to benefit from the mentorship of successful principals who modeled many of the attributes the program was desired to promote. And finally, the program benefitted from extensive evaluation opportunities that allowed for input, reflection, and program improvement.

**Research Question 4**

*What evidence suggests that the program is or is not succeeding in helping program graduates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?*
The Aspiring Administrators Program was created to train prospective school leaders for the SDUSD. Program Coordinator A stated, “Our whole goal is to build leadership capacity within our district.” If the goal of building leadership capacity for the district is achieved, program graduates must have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to influence positive changes in learning outcomes for schools that serve diverse populations.

The findings in response to Research Question 2 suggest that the Aspiring Administrators Program is focused upon the development essential skill sets, knowledge, and dispositions. The findings in response to Research Question 3 suggest that multiple program features are likely to help aspiring administrators acquire these skills and perspectives. This final research question, however, explores the evidence of the program’s success in leading candidates to acquire these sets of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

It is important to note that data collection for this study occurred during the final semester of the first cohort’s matriculation through the Aspiring Administrators Program. Therefore, several sources of evidence of success (e.g., demonstration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in leadership positions) were not yet available. The evidence addressing the issue of program success was acquired primarily through statements from the aspiring administrators, their principal coaches, and the university faculty.

Given these limitations, there was evidence that the course of study, the field work project, and the district-based professional development were helping the aspiring administrators acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective school leadership. There was a strong consensus among the aspiring administrators interviewed
that they were prepared to influence improved learning results in schools. An aspiring administrator shared:

I would say the [Aspiring Administrators] program really shows you a lot. I think it’s also going to be a learning experience the first time you get in [a] school. I think we have the tools that we need based on the program.

Similarly, another aspiring administrator reported, “I feel prepared to be a school leader. We went through the steps and qualities of an effective leader.” The aspiring administrators felt confident that their training prepared all of them for school leadership. An aspiring administrator confidently stated, “I don’t think there is anybody [in the cohort of aspiring administrators] we would doubt could be a really good, high-quality leader.”

Additional evidence of the program’s success was provided by the SDSU/SDUSD partners. Several of the principal coaches and university faculty members described evidence of aspiring administrators demonstrating their understanding and ability related to important leadership capacities.

The aspiring administrators completed the improvement plan to improve instruction and achievement for a subgroup of students. They presented their field work projects in a symposium-like format. The field work was aligned to CPSELs standards with the intent to improve the achievement of an underachieving group. The field work experience was tied to school improvement. They learned to analyze achievement data, organized a team of stakeholders, communicated information to stakeholders, and created an atmosphere of urgency to improve the achievement of a subgroup of students. Through the coursework, they learned the importance of accountability. They collaborated with stakeholders in the development and implementation of a plan of
action to improve the instruction for a subgroup based on data. A university faculty member commented:

It [Aspiring Administrators Program] really prepared someone to work in a diverse urban school district. We’re preparing and training people to be aware of No Child Left Behind. We prepared them to look at data and to make informed decisions, which I think is important to look at all students and to look at subgroups.

The aspiring administrators embraced the philosophical basis of social justice for educational equity to ensure all students were provided the opportunity to receive a viable instructional program, as evidenced by the improvement plan that was developed by each program participant. A principal coach shared:

I feel that they [aspiring administrators] really were about students. I did go to class one day and listened in on some of the projects [field work]. They had to do a little case study where they did some research on a certain group and then talk about the strengths. I think that [was] probably the strongest quality. They were strong candidates.

Actual accomplishments in field experiences provided evidence that aspiring administrators were acquiring the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions for school leadership. Aspiring administrators and the program faculty reported that candidates were demonstrating these capacities in their field experiences. An aspiring administrator reported that:

I feel prepared to be a school leader. I think, in part, that the school improvement plan is still in place [at school]. We went through the qualities of a good leader.
It requires being courageous to have those difficult discussions about data, student achievement gaps, underachieving student populations and instruction . . . what does quality instruction look like to ensure that all students are achieving.

The improvement plan was central to the development of the skills, knowledge, and disposition of the aspiring administrators as effective school leaders that impacts increased school achievement. Similarly, a university faculty member reported: “I think . . . we’re giving them the skills and knowledge to really walk into a school [to] make those things happen. They can move kids along and make sure everybody’s achieving.”

The aspiring administrators learned the significance of their personal vision and the shaping of a school vision to guide the work. They understood that every school is different and that flexibility is central to student learning and school-wide improvement. An aspiring administrator shared:

I felt like we went back to our own personal vision at every class and so that just kind of helped solidify myself as to what I am as we go to take that next step. It [the personal vision] has to definitely mold into the [school] community. I feel like I’m going to be flexible with it because, in each course, I flexed it a little bit more. I thought about it in different perspectives. It’s all very important to me when I step into my first site. I’m going to know how to manipulate my own vision to meet the needs of that site.

Most of the aspiring administrators understood that the job of a school leader was very challenging. Through the field and coursework they gained the dispositions to do the job, or, in a few cases, they exited the program. A principal coach shared, “Two of the people I had out of the five had high standards for themselves and never complained
about the workload.” Because of the demands of the program, a few dropped out of the program. A principal coach shared that a couple of the remaining aspiring administrators did not portray strong leadership skills. They had difficult relationships with their site principal, complained about their site principals, and complained about the number of assignments required in combination with their workload.

The first cohort of the Aspiring Administrators Program finished the program at a time when the district was immersed in a budget crisis. There were few administrative openings in the district within the first 6 months after the completion of the program; nonetheless, several program graduates applied. Among those who applied, one of the aspiring administrators successfully interviewed and was appointed to a vice-principal position.

In summary, even though the data collection for this study occurred during the program’s infancy, there was evidence of the program’s success in helping candidates acquire the knowledge, skills, and disposition essential to lead schools toward improved teaching and learning for all students. This evidence came from the aspiring administrator’s performances in field experience activities. Future research should explore additional sources of evidence to determine if program graduates implemented the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions once they entered into administrative positions.

**Summary of Research Findings**

In addition to providing background information about the Aspiring Administrators Program, this chapter reported findings associated with four research questions. The first research question explored how the program partners worked to
design the Aspiring Administrators Program. The evidence suggests that the efforts to design the Aspiring Administrators Program were characterized by a positive, productive spirit of collaboration that developed and grew throughout the design of the program. Also, the design effort was focused upon responding to existing district needs. Finally, the design process benefitted from open, effective communication. The nature of this collaboration may have been important in influencing the program’s success.

The second research question explored the knowledge, skills, and dispositions the program creators expected aspiring administrators to develop. The evidence suggests that the program partners designed the Aspiring Administrators Program to ensure that program graduates possessed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to each of the six CPSEL standards. More specifically, the design of the program emphasized the development of a shared vision, the understanding of culture and diversity, and the use of data to improve student learning and close achievement gaps. As well, the program emphasized knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to the management of school operations in ways that appropriately and constructively engaged all stakeholders.

Beyond understanding what the program creators wanted program graduates to learn, it was important to understand how the program creators shaped the program accordingly. Thus, the third research question focused upon the program features that were intended to promote the desired learning. The evidence suggests that there may have been several salient features, including the candidate selection process, integrated coursework and fieldwork, aligned to the desired learning outcomes, district-based professional development centered upon practical topics that related to key program learning outcomes, a cohort model, and mentorship from successful principals who
modeled many of the attributes the program desired to promote. Also, the program benefitted from extensive evaluation opportunities that allowed for input, reflection, and program improvement.

The final research question examined the extent to which the Aspiring Administrators Program was succeeding in developing the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions in leadership candidates. Even though the data collection for this study occurred during the program’s first year, certain evidence affirmed the program’s success effectiveness. This evidence came from the comments of the aspiring administrators, their professors and district leaders, and from the aspiring administrators’ performances in field experience activities.

In total, the findings suggest that the Aspiring Administrators Program provided a comprehensive and coherent curriculum aligned to CPSEL standards. The program shows promise for preparing aspiring administrators for school leadership in a large, diverse, urban district. The Aspiring Administrators Program is preparing leaders who are more likely to possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to improve academic achievement for all groups of students. In Chapter 5, the researcher will present a summary of the study, the implications for future research, the limitations of the study, and the conclusion.
CHAPTER 5—SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapter 4, I presented findings concerning the Aspiring Administrators Program. The findings were generated from an analysis of the interviews of the program coordinators, faculty, and principal coaches; a focus group of aspiring administrators; and the review of course syllabi and program documents. This chapter includes an overview of the study, a discussion of how the findings complement and add to existing research literature, a review of the studies limitations, implications for school leadership preparation programs, and implications for future research.

Overview of the Problem

Hess and Kelly (2005), Levine (2005b), and Murphy (2003) have criticized traditional university-based educational leadership programs for failing to prepare principals to manage the complex issues facing schools regarding school achievement accountability and the preparation of students for college, career, and the 21st century global economy. They challenged universities to expand their preparation of school leaders beyond the theoretical approaches to encompass practical application of strategies to develop effective school leaders.

Levine (2005a) contended that the educational leadership curriculum was out of touch with the realities facing school leaders. The Public Agenda Survey of principals and superintendents suggested that administrators were unprepared for school leadership because of detached and incoherent leadership preparation curricula that failed to provide the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective school leadership (Farkas et al., 2001).
The Public Forum of Education reported that only 25% of principals were prepared to be effective instructional leaders (Barnett, 2004). However, research has shown that instructional leadership can impact student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005).

Today, because of the criticism of educational leadership programs, universities are working to reform their school leadership programs to provide candidates the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to improve academic achievement for all students (Barnett, 2004; Hess & Jackson, 2005; Levine, 2005a). S. Davis et al. (2005) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) substantiated the importance of school districts and universities working together to support the development of school leadership focused on improving school-wide achievement.

This qualitative case study examined one example of a school district and university working together to prepare school leaders who could influence school-wide improvements in academic achievement. The study explored the perceptions, ideas, and perspectives of the university faculty, program coordinators (university and district), principal coaches and the aspiring administrators regarding the program, its development, goals, features, and effectiveness.

Specifically, the study sought answers to four research questions:

1. How did SDUSD and SDSU collaborate in designing the principal preparation program?

2. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions did the partners want program graduates to acquire?
3. What design elements did the SDUSD and SDSU partners include in the Aspiring Administrators Program that were intended to help candidates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

4. What evidence suggests that the program is or is not succeeding in helping program graduates acquire the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

**Methodology**

The research method was a qualitative, single case study. To answer the research questions, the study analyzed data collected from interviews of university faculty members, program coordinators, and principal coaches; a focus group of aspiring administrators; and a review of course and program documents. Interview and focus group questions were semi-structured and open-ended. The responses were analyzed, triangulated, and interpreted to identify patterns and discover themes. Prior to the interviews, the interviewees signed an informed consent form and agreed to the audio-taping of the interview. The audio-tapes were transcribed. The semi-structured, open-ended questions were designed to elicit views, opinions, and perceptions about the Aspiring Administrators Program. When appropriate, follow-up questions were asked. The qualitative interviews were relatively informal and structured in a conversation format, allowing the interviewees to share their perspectives and views concerning the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994).

The focus-group approach fostered a supportive, relaxed environment, and afforded the opportunity for more people to be interviewed at once. The focus group worked well because the participants were equals; therefore, they were less likely to
censor their comments. Prior to the focus group, each participant signed an informed consent form and agreed to the audio-taping of the session. The audio-tape was transcribed. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were used for the focus group to promote discussions and the sharing of differing opinions and points of view. Program participants heard the opinions of others, and they candidly shared their own perspectives. The format encouraged flexibility and allowed the researcher to explore unanticipated issues that emerged during the discussion (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Weiss, 1998).

Course syllabi, the memorandum of understanding, program recruitment materials, and professional development documents were requested from university faculty and district staff for analysis and triangulation. The analysis of course and program documents provided the researcher opportunities to compare statements in official program documents with the views of program participants and triangulate the interviews with other data sources. Inductive analysis was used to code data and determine patterns, themes, and categories.

**Findings and the Research Literature**

The case study findings provided insights regarding the Aspiring Administrators Program collaborative partnership between SDUSD and SDSU, and its preparation of school leaders. The findings complement and deepen existing research literature related to school leadership preparation programs. This section discusses the major findings from this qualitative case study and explains how the findings relate to other research findings.

Schmidt-Davis et al. (2009) described the need for increased collaborative partnerships between school districts and universities in designing and implementation
leadership preparation programs. Similarly, King et al. (2010) and Southern Regional Education Board (2009) described several promising preparation program partnerships between school districts and universities. The present study of the Aspiring Administrator Program adds to this literature by describing characteristics of the collaboration among the major partners. The manner in which universities and school districts collaborate may influence the viability of collaborative program efforts. In particular, this study found that the efforts to design the Aspiring Administrators Program were characterized by a positive, productive spirit of collaboration that developed and grew throughout the design of the program. Also, the design effort was focused upon responding to existing district needs. Finally, consistent with the findings of King et al. (2010), the design process benefitted from open, effective communication.

The present study also explored the knowledge, skills, and dispositions the Aspiring Administrators Program partners expected candidates to develop. Hess and Kelly (2005) reported that exceptional preparation programs aligned coursework and fieldwork to standards for the preparation of educational leaders. Findings in Chapter 4 explain that the program partners designed the Aspiring Administrators Program to ensure that graduates possessed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to each of the six CPSEL standards. More specifically, the program design emphasized the development of a shared vision, the understanding of culture and diversity, and the use of data to improve student learning and close achievement gaps. As well, the program emphasized knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to the management of school operations in ways that appropriately and constructively engaged all stakeholders.
To best understand a leadership preparation program, it is important to ascertain which program features may be influencing or promoting the desired results. Chapter 4 includes evidence of several important features of the Aspiring Administrators Program. Other researchers have found that these may be salient factors in influencing the effectiveness of leadership preparation programs. For example, Chapter 4 describes the candidate selection process for the Aspiring Administrators Program. The selection process was rigorous and required recommendations from the candidate’s current administrator. Grossman (2009) emphasized the importance of rigorous candidate selection for school leaders. Levine (2005b) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) criticized the lax candidate selection processes of many leadership preparation programs. Hess and Kelly (2005) recommended strengthening candidate selection processes as one of three important strategies for bolstering principal preparation programs.

Another Aspiring Administrators Program feature focused upon the integration of coursework and fieldwork, aligned to desired learning outcomes. The program’s district-based professional development component added to this blending of theory and practice focused upon real school improvement issues. The Aspiring Administrators Program’s fieldwork focused upon real-world dilemmas that principals face daily. The fieldwork project involved the development of an improvement plan to improve academic achievement at a school. Levine (2005b) emphasized the importance of this type of balanced integration of educational theory in the classroom and administrative practicum. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) described this type of integration as a feature of exemplary leadership preparation programs.
Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), Schmidt-Davis et al. (2009), and Southern Regional Education Board (2009) also found that cohort models and expert mentorships were features of exemplary leadership preparation programs. In the present study, a cohort model was described as an important feature of the program design. As well, the Aspiring Administrators Program included mentoring from leaders who were successful principals.

While the Aspiring Administrators Program included these various important features, the program also benefitted from extensive evaluation opportunities that allowed for input, reflection, and program improvement. This type of ongoing evaluation and improvement was identified by Levine (2005b) as part of his template for developing quality school leaders.

One important contribution of this case study may be related to description of the strategies the program partners used to prepare aspiring administrators to help schools close achievement gaps. The pursuit of social justice and the emphasis on improving the academic performance of underachieving groups of students was an underlying focus of the Aspiring Administrators Program. The aspiring administrators learned about equity, access, and pervasive discriminatory and racist practices that impede student achievement and contribute to the achievement gaps among students. The Aspiring Administrators Program prepared school leaders to work actively to eliminate practices that marginalize students and their achievement. Particularly, the aspiring administrators analyzed the achievement trends of various demographic groups, determined curricular areas of strengths and weaknesses, and organized a team of stakeholders to plan and implement a course of action. The aspiring administrators had to communicate effectively and work
collaboratively with stakeholders (teachers, staff, and parents) to identify and execute strategies to improve the achievement of an underperforming group of students in ways that helped close achievement gaps.

Consistent with the recommendations of Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) and Leithwood et al. (2004), the Aspiring Administrators Program was challenging and was structured to provide candidates experiences that would develop their leadership skills so they could improve achievement for all students. As a case study of a promising leadership preparation program, the present study deepens the existing research literature in ways that affirm the importance of a focus on standards, the strengthening of candidate selection processes, the blending of theoretical and practical orientations, the use of cohort models, and other important program features. Consistent with recommendations from existing literature, the aspiring administrators learned the importance of (a) establishing a shared vision, (b) working collaboratively with stakeholders with shared leadership and decision-making, (c) learning about local district programs and initiatives, (d) managing school operations efficiently, (e) analyzing data (hard and soft) to establish instructional goals, inform instructional decisions, and to monitor academic progress, and (f) strengthening the pedagogy of classroom teachers (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2004; Levine, 2005b; Marzano et al., 2005).

While the study complements existing findings, it also contributes to the research literature on leadership preparation programs. In particular, this case study offers insights into the qualities of a collaborative partnership that might be important in building and sustaining such a partnership. Also, this case study illustrates specific programmatic strategies designed to prepare leaders to help close achievement gaps in schools.
Limitations of the Study

The qualitative case study was limited to the San Diego Unified School District’s (SDUSD) and San Diego State University’s (SDSU) collaborative Aspiring Administrators Program. Studies of other collaborative partnerships may yield different results for a variety of reasons.

For example, some school districts may not pursue leadership preparation with the same focus and urgency. San Diego Unified School District serves a large urban population with diverse ethnic groups, a large percentage of English Learners, and a significant population of students with disabilities. The lack of achievement among the district’s English Learners and students with disabilities led the state to designate SDUSD as a program improvement district. District leaders understood the need to prepare leaders who could work with stakeholders in ways that would improve academic achievement and close achievement gaps. The collaborative partnership was probably influenced significantly by SDUSD’s specific needs.

Another possible limitation may relate to the small sample of participants. Program participants included candidates from the first cohort of the Aspiring Administrators Program. Other participants included program coordinators (district and university), university faculty, and principal coaches. The purposive sampling of participants may not reflect the opinions of all program participants because of the small sample size. Variables such as prior teaching experience and years of teaching may impact the results of the study and were not a consideration. The study did not consider the present teaching assignment of cohort members (e.g., if they taught at a
high-achieving or a low-achieving school, or if they taught at an elementary or secondary school). If sampling addressed these variables, results might have been influenced.

The study did not provide data regarding the extent to which cohort members successfully acquired administrative positions or succeeded in improving teaching and learning in administrative positions. Indicators of program success were limited to candidate’s perceptions, the perceptions of program leaders, and reports from students and program leaders regarding their fieldwork projects.

It is also important to note the researcher’s bias and the possible ways in which the researcher may have biased the study participants. The researcher is an area superintendent in the same district where the collaborative partnership program was implemented and is a doctoral student at San Diego State University. Hence, the program participants’ responses may have been influenced by the position of the researcher (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Noor, 2008; Tellis, 1997; Weiss, 1998; Yin, 1994). To minimize the likelihood that the researcher influenced the accuracy of findings, multiple sources of data were collected (including interviews, focus groups, and various artifacts). These data were reviewed, triangulated, and analyzed to help ensure that the findings accurately reflected the case being studied.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Schools need leaders who can ensure that all students are provided a viable education that prepares them for the challenges of college, careers, and 21st century life. Schools are continuing to evolve and change, and educational leadership programs must adapt. Continued research is needed to provide greater insights concerning the
improvement of educational leadership programs and the development of school leaders. Therefore, the researcher suggests the following recommendations:

1. A study should be focused upon aspiring administrator graduates who successfully acquired school administrator positions to assess the program’s effectiveness after a period of 1 to 5 years. The study should assess the graduates’ effectiveness in influencing improved achievement results. The study should yield information about the program’s effectiveness in providing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to lead school-wide improvement efforts.

2. A longitudinal study should examine student achievement in schools that have an administrator who was trained in the Aspiring Administrators Program. In particular, this study should examine achievement trends for underperforming groups of students and examine the extent to which achievement gaps are closing in schools.

3. A study should examine the perspectives of teachers at a school site where the school administrator was trained in the Aspiring Administrators Program. The study should ascertain the teachers’ perceptions of the school leader’s leadership practices and the extent to which the leader has influenced changes in teaching and learning.

**Implications for Leadership Preparation Programs**

The Aspiring Administrators Program is in the early stages of development. The findings from this initial study suggest that the collaborative partnership may have successfully equipped school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed
to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. If these initial findings continue to be affirmed through subsequent research on the Aspiring Administrators Program, and/or if research on other collaborative programs suggest that similar program features influence similar outcomes; then, the following program may have important implications for other school leadership preparation programs. Assuming that the preliminary results are sustained, school leadership preparation programs should consider the following:

1. Collaboration between districts and universities matters. Universities and school districts should work together to create leadership preparation programs that are grounded in research and theory, while simultaneously being grounded in the change efforts that are the focus of schools and school districts.

2. Field-based experiences are essential. Programs should ensure that aspiring leaders have opportunities to engage in real efforts to improve student learning and close achievement gaps in real schools. These field experiences can increase the efficacy of school leaders to address improvement needs successfully.

3. Candidate selection processes should be rigorous. Districts and universities should work together to strengthen selection processes in ways that ensure that the only candidates accepted into the program are those who have a substantial likelihood of developing into effective school leaders.

**Conclusions**

The Aspiring Administrators Program’s design elements are important to the development of effective school leaders. The quality of the collaboration, built upon a
shared sense of urgency, may be critical to such joint efforts. University and school
districts must continue to work together to develop programs to address educational
challenges. The Aspiring Administrators Program benefits from a clear focus on the
knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the program seeks to build in every candidate.
Boldly, the program has attempted to identify the attributes and skills leaders need in
order to improve achievement and close achievement gaps in schools. As well, the
program has attended to those attributes and skills through candidate selection processes,
coursework, fieldwork, mentoring, professional development, and a variety of other
processes. I am encouraged that the Aspiring Administrators Program has taken a
courageous course of action to prepare leaders who can help eliminate achievement gaps
and address the institutional racism that inhibits equitable access to a viable education for
all groups of students. I am further encouraged that the program is taking a thoughtful,
promising, research-informed approach to implement that course of action well.
REFERENCES


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*Foregrounding fieldwork in leadership preparation: The transformation capacity of authentic inquiry.* Unpublished manuscript. Educational Leadership Department, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.


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APPENDIX A

Questions for Coordinator

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview about the partnership principal preparation program with San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University.

Please read the informed consent form and sign. Thank you.

1. How did the partnership program begin?

2. What is your role in the collaborative partnership program?

3. How often do you meet to review the progress of the program?

4. What is working very well in the partnership program?

5. What are the challenges?

6. What program changes are needed to ensure the best training possible for the Aspiring Administrators?

7. What changed from the first cohort to the second, . . . third?

8. How is the partnership program evaluated for effectiveness?

9. What areas were called out as area of concern?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share?
APPENDIX B

Questions for Faculty

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview about the partnership principal preparation program with San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University.

Please read the informed consent form and sign. Thank you.

1. How long have you worked at San Diego State University in the school of education leadership? What other experiences do you have in the development of school leaders at the university level?

2. Research has been particularly critical of university principal preparation program as not preparing school leaders for the job for today. How has the partnership addressed this criticism of university based preparation programs?

3. Is this your first experience of working in partnership with a school district and a university? If yes, why were you interested in the partnership program? If no, what were the other school districts and university partnership experiences and your role?

4. In your opinion, how is the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program different than the independent San Diego State University principal preparation program?

5. What has been your role in the development of the joint principal preparation program of SDUSD and San Diego State University?

6. How would your role be different in the independent university-based principal preparation program?

7. What were the admission process and selection criteria used for the Aspiring Administrators? How different was this process to the independent university-based principal preparation program? Would be a candidate versus who would not be selected?

8. A feature of the SDUSD and SDSU partnership is the preparation school leaders for success in a large urban school district. In your opinion, does the principal preparation program successfully prepare prospective school leaders for service? How?

9. How is the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program monitored and evaluated for effectiveness?
10. In your opinion, after working with the first cohort of the principal partnership program, what worked well? Was a challenge? What would you change, if anything?

The proposed interview should last about 30 minutes. I look forward to the opportunity for your participation with this research.
APPENDIX C

Questions for Focus Group

1. Why did you apply for the Aspiring Administrator’s Program?
2. Do you feel that the application process for the program was appropriate? Why?
3. What changes would you make to improve the program?
4. What core learnings from the program were most helpful in your development as a school leader?
5. What additional information would have been useful?
6. What was the most beneficial part of the program? Why?
7. Do you feel that you are prepared to become a school leader? Why?
8. What features of the program would you consider a strength? Why?
9. What was the most challenging part of the program? Why?
10. What did you like about the program? Why?
11. What did you least like about the program? Why?
12. Was the program what you expected? Yes, explain. If not, why?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share?
APPENDIX D

Questions for Principal Coaches

1. How were you selected to become a principal mentor for the “Aspiring Administrators” program?

2. What are your primary duties as a principal mentor? How many times did you meet with your mentee? Was that adequate?

3. What was your role in the development of the “Aspiring Administrators” program?

4. How often did the mentors meet and plan?

5. From your perspective, what do you think is a strength of the program?

6. What was most challenging about the “Aspiring Administrators” program for mentees? For you as mentors? Why?

7. If you could change something, what would you change? Why?

8. What were some of the strongest qualities in the mentees? Weaker qualities?

9. Do you think this program should be continued? Why?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share?
APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Letter: Principal Coaches

Hello,

My name is Shirley Wilson. I am a student in the Pre-K-12 Educational Leadership Ed.D. program at San Diego State University and hold the position of Area Superintendent in San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). I am conducting a study of the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program to learn about the different perspectives about the training provided for the aspiring administrators in a large urban school district. The findings of the research will be used to improve the “Aspiring Administrators’ Program” for preparation of school leaders in an urban district.

You will be asked to contribute to this study by participating in an interview. The interview will provide you to opportunity to share your experiences and perspectives about the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program for “aspiring administrators.” Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate.

The research involves minimal risk to the participants. Participants may experience the following difficulties:

1. You may feel uncomfortable talking about the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.
2. You may not be able to make a commitment to the meeting time due to your job responsibilities.
3. You may feel uncomfortable speaking and discussing your perspectives in the to be included in a study.
4. You may be uncomfortable speaking openly and honestly with the researcher because of her role in SDUSD.

If you feel uncomfortable answering questions, or sharing your thoughts or perspectives related to the “aspiring administrators” partnership program, you can choose to discontinue the interview.

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Participants will have contributed to a study that could be of benefit to district and university leaders responsible for principal training and professors in the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.
The results will be reported in a dissertation that I will complete as a requirement of my Ed.D. program. The results may at some future time be reported in a peer review journals and professional presentations.

Your name will be coded to match the data collected from the focus group interview. All names in work published by the researcher will be pseudonyms. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. Quotes from the interviews may be used for the publication findings, but you will not be identified by name. Your participation will remain confidential and will not be reported to any administrator or employee of SDUSD or any other district. Additionally, your name will not be reported to anyone at San Diego State University or any other university.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous. Responses will be recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego Unified School District or San Diego State University. If you do decide to participate, you are free to stop your participation at any time without penalty.

Do you want to participate: □ Yes □ No

Print Name: ___________________________________________

Signature: _____________________________________________

Today’s Date: _________________
APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Letter: Program Coordinators

Hello,

My name is Shirley Wilson. I am a student in the Pre-K-12 Educational Leadership Ed.D. program at San Diego State University and hold the position of Area Superintendent in San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). I am conducting a study of the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program to learn about the different perspectives about the training provided for the aspiring administrators in a large urban school district. The findings of the research will be used to provide insight from the program participants that may strengthen the “Aspiring Administrators’ Program” preparation of school leaders in an urban district.

You will be asked to contribute to this study by participating in an interview. The interview will provide you the opportunity to share your experiences and perspectives about the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program for “aspiring administrators.” Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate.

The research involves minimal risk to the participants. Participants may experience the following difficulties:

1. You may feel uncomfortable talking about the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.
2. You may not be able to make a commitment to the meeting time due to your job responsibilities.
3. You may feel uncomfortable speaking and discussing your perspectives in the to be included in a study.
4. You may be uncomfortable speaking openly and honestly with the researcher because of her role in SDUSD.

If you feel uncomfortable answering questions, or sharing your thoughts or perspectives related to the “aspiring administrators” partnership program, you can choose to discontinue the interview.

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Participants will have contributed to a study that could be of benefit to district and university leaders responsible for principal training and professors in the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.
The results will be reported in a dissertation that I will complete as a requirement of my Ed.D. program. The results may at some future time be reported in a peer review journals and professional presentations.

Your name will be coded to match the data collected from the focus group interview. All names in work published by the researcher will be pseudonyms. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. Quotes from the interviews may be used for the publication findings, but you will not be identified by name. Your participation will remain confidential and will not be reported to any administrator or employee of SDUSD or any other district. Additionally, your name will not be reported to anyone at San Diego State University or any other university.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous. Responses will be recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego Unified School District or San Diego State University. If you do decide to participate, you are free to stop your participation at any time without penalty.

Please feel free to contact me with question by email or phone at the following: swilson1@sandi.net or 619-725-5584.

Do you want to participate: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Print Name: ___________________________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Today’s Date: _________________
APPENDIX G

Informed Consent Letter: Program Participants

Hello,

My name is Shirley Wilson. I am a student in the Pre-K-12 Educational Leadership Ed.D. program at San Diego State University and hold the position of Area Superintendent in San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). I am conducting a study of the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program to learn about the processes used in the training for aspiring administrators for a large urban school district. The findings of the research will be used to strengthen the “Aspiring Administrators’ Program” for preparation of school leaders in an urban district.

You will be asked to contribute to this study by participating in focus groups of the first co-hort of program participants. The focus group will provide you the opportunity to share your experiences and perspectives about the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program for “aspiring administrators.” Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate.

The research involves minimal risk to the participants. Participants may experience the following difficulties:

You may feel uncomfortable talking about the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.

You may not be able to make a commitment to the meeting time due to your job responsibilities.

You may feel uncomfortable speaking and discussing your perspectives in the presence of colleagues.

You may be uncomfortable speaking openly and honestly with the researcher because of her role in SDUSD.

If you feel uncomfortable answering questions, or sharing your thoughts or perspectives related to the “aspiring administrators” partnership program, you can choose not to discontinue the focus group participation.

There is no compensation for participation in this study.
Participants will have contributed to a study that could be of benefit to district and university leaders responsible for principal training and professors in the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.

The results will be reported in a dissertation that I will complete as a requirement of my Ed.D. program. The results may at some future time be reported in a peer review journals and professional presentations.

Your name will be coded to match the data collected from the focus group interview. All names in work published by the researcher will be pseudonyms. Focus group interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. Quotes from the interviews may be used for the publication findings, but you will not be identified by name. Your participation will remain confidential and will not be reported to any administrator or employee of SDUSD or any other district. Additionally, your name will not be reported to anyone at San Diego State University or any other university.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous. Responses will be recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego Unified School District or San Diego State University. If you do decide to participate, you are free to stop your participation at any time without penalty.

Do you want to participate: □ Yes □ No

Print Name: ___________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________

Today's Date: _________________
Hello,

My name is Shirley Wilson. I am a student in the Pre-K-12 Educational Leadership Ed.D. program at San Diego State University and hold the position of Area Superintendent in San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). I am conducting a study of the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program to learn about the different perspectives about the training provided for the aspiring administrators in a large urban school district. The findings of the research will be used to improve the “Aspiring Administrators’ Program” for preparation of school leaders in an urban district.

You will be asked to contribute to this study by participating in an interview. The interview will provide you to opportunity to share your experiences and perspectives about the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego State University principal preparation partnership program for “aspiring administrators.” Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate.

The research involves minimal risk to the participants. Participants may experience the following difficulties:

1. You may feel uncomfortable talking about the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.
2. You may not be able to make a commitment to the meeting time due to your job responsibilities.
3. You may feel uncomfortable speaking and discussing your perspectives in the to be included in a study.
4. You may be uncomfortable speaking openly and honestly with the researcher because of her role in SDUSD.

If you feel uncomfortable answering questions, or sharing your thoughts or perspectives related to the "aspiring administrators" partnership program, you can choose to discontinue the interview.

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Participants will have contributed to a study that could be of benefit to district and university leaders responsible for principal training and professors in the SDUSD and SDSU principal preparation partnership program.
The results will be reported in a dissertation that I will complete as a requirement of my Ed.D. program. The results may at some future time be reported in a peer review journals and professional presentations.

Your name will be coded to match the data collected from the focus group interview. All names in work published by the researcher will be pseudonyms. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. Quotes from the interviews may be used for the publication findings, but you will not be identified by name. Your participation will remain confidential and will not be reported to any administrator or employee of SDUSD or any other district. Additionally, your name will not be reported to anyone at San Diego State University or any other university.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous. Responses will be recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego Unified School District or San Diego State University. If you do decide to participate, you are free to stop your participation at any time without penalty.

Please feel free to contact me with question by email or phone at the following: swilson1@sandi.net or 619-725-5584.

Do you want to participate: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Print Name: ___________________________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Today’s Date: _________________
APPENDIX I

San Diego Unified School District Research Proposal Review Letter

February 14, 2012

Ms. Shirley Wilson
1330 Fernbrook Ct.
El Cajon, CA 92019

Dear Ms. Wilson:

San Diego Unified School District’s Research Proposal Review Panel was happy to review your application to conduct research in San Diego Unified School District on a “Principal Preparation Program for Effective School Leaders.” The committee has decided to approve your request.

Your district sponsor, Sid Salazar, stands ready to support your efforts in the district. You and he will need to submit a completed Memorandum of Agreement prior to your starting work in the district.

At completion of the study, our office and Sid’s would greatly appreciate an electronic copy of the final report on your findings, which will be posted on the district web site (or linked via a provided URL).

If you have any questions or if I can be helpful to you in any way, please contact me at (619) 725-7193.

Sincerely,

Peter D. Bell, Ph.D.
Director

c Sid Salazar

Peter D. Bell
Director
Research and Reporting Department
P - 819-726-7153
F - 819-726-7187
pdbell@sandi.net
APPENDIX J

Aspiring Administrators Program Brochure

THE POWER OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Program Principles

1. Standards Based. The program is standards-based, with content and field experiences meeting state and national standards for school leadership preparation.

2. Collaborative Partnership. The district and the university partners equally in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of specific components of the program in order to address the needs and experiences of both constituents.

3. Cohort Approach. SDUSD participants in the credential program as a cohort enrolled only in district coursework in order to provide a community of support and network for students and cohort members.

4. Field Experiences. Field-based experiences are central to the program, allowing participants the opportunity to immediately apply course-based knowledge and skills to real-world situations.

5. Mentoring and Coaching. Students will be assigned an experienced site-based mentor who will serve as a mentor and coach.

Estimated Costs

Tuition/Fees**

$10,350 for entire credential program
$14,220 for entire master’s degree

**Subject to change. Based on fee structure as of Fall 2011.

Taskstream membership at $29 per year
Books estimated at $500.00

For further information, contact:
Dr. Sid Salazar, Assistant Superintendent, SDUSD, (619) 739-7772
OR
Dr. Patti Chance, Educational Leadership Chair, SDSU (619) 594-4674

A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
ASPIRING ADMINISTRATORS PROGRAM

Unique to this collaborative partnership, SDSU and SDUSD work together to include content within each course specifically tailored to the needs of San Diego Unified District administratives. Faculty joined with SDUSD personnel to develop syllabi for all courses in order to ensure the specific topics such as budgeting and finance, leadership development, and teacher evaluation are adequately addressed. Further, classes will be held in SDUSD facilities in order to maximize accessibility of cohort students. Finally, students will be assigned coaches, experienced principals selected by the district, who will provide additional mentoring, for students.

Value Added Components

- Integrated field experience
- Alignment of field experience with course work
- Mentoring
- Professional development with principal coaches
- Experienced faculty with practitioner background
- PK-12 University Partnership
- Inclusion of skills and knowledge unique to district
- First opportunity to interview for administrative openings
- Opportunity for an intern credential at any time during the program of study

Screening & Application Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nomination from principals</td>
<td>Dec 2011-Feb 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Meeting</td>
<td>late January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications Due to SDSU</td>
<td>April 1, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CU Mentor: <a href="http://www.cuseminar.edu">www.cuseminar.edu</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Materials Due to Dept.</td>
<td>April 1, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Early April, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates Notified of Acceptance</td>
<td>April 30, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>May 12, Aug. 22, &amp; Aug. 25, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes Begin</td>
<td>August 29, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX K

Aspiring Administrators Program Nomination Email

Wilson Shirley

From: Curl Teri
Sent: Wednesday, December 14, 2011 8:41 AM
To: All Atypical School Principals Group; All Charter School Principals Group; All Elementary Principals Group; All Middle/Jr. High Principals Group; All Senior High Principals Group
Cc: All Area Superintendents List; Meyer Nellie; Harling Jennifer; Petti Chance
Subject: Aspiring Administrators Program Nominations
Attachments: SDSU and SDUSD Aspiring Admin Brochure 2012.pdf
Importance: High

This message sent on behalf of Dr. Sid Sulzaw, Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Support Services, SDSU, and Dr. Patti Chance, Chair and Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, SDSU.

Action needed no later than 3/1/2012

Dear Principals:

We are beginning our recruitment for the Aspiring Administrators program for Fall 2012. Attached is the program brochure describing an exciting opportunity for exceptional teachers in your schools who are interested in pursuing a career in administration. This will be our third year of collaborating with San Diego State University (SDSU) as we guide students to infuse their future leadership practice through a mentoring program. We are seeking teacher leaders who have demonstrated a willingness to address the initiatives of our District and engage in a cohort approach to pursuing an Administrative Credential and/or Master’s degree.

We would like every site principal to identify teachers who you believe have potential as an administrator. Please verify the teacher is interested in this program, and submit your nomination(s) no later than March 1, 2012 to Teri Curl, tcurl@sandi.net. Nominees will be contacted and invited to an informational meeting at a later date.

A separate message will be sent to all certificated District staff. Those interested in participating will need to have the endorsement of their principal. We will request that interested staff send an email to their principal indicating their interest in the program. Principals can then forward the message, along with their endorsement, to tcurl@sandi.net.

Your support is vital to the continuing success of this District partnership. Please contact our office with any questions, 619-725-7772.

Sid Sulzaw, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Instructional Support Services

Teri Curl
Administrative Assistant
Instructional Support Services

4160 Normal St., Rm. 2161
San Diego, CA 92103
APPENDIX L

Principal Coach Recruitment

Wilson Shirley

From: owner-all-area-suupts@lists.sandi.net on behalf of Curie Teri <tcurl@sandi.net>
Sent: Monday, June 18, 2012 10:50 AM
To: All Atypical School Principals Group; All Elementary Principals Group; All Middle/Jr. High Principals Group; All Senior High Principals Group
Cc: All Area Superintendents List, Kovaks William; Meyer Nellie; Patti Chance
Subject: TIME SENSITIVE: Seeking District Leadership Coaches
Attachments: SDSU and SDUSD Aspiring Admin Brochure 2012.pdf
Importance: High

This message has been sent on behalf of Std Salazar, Ed D., Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Support Services.

Application deadline: June 30, 2012

Dear SDUSD Principals:

San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) has developed an Aspiring Administrators Collaborative with San Diego State University (SDSU). As part of the collaborative, we are seeking qualified principals to serve as District Leadership Coaches for students enrolled in the 3rd cohort of the program beginning in Fall 2012. Each principal will work with up to five students and will receive a stipend of $500.00 per semester. Please review the attached program brochure for more information.

All students in the collaborative are teachers in the district who were identified by principals as showing great promise as future administrators. They will be earning their administrative credential and/or masters degree from SDSU.

Specifically, the District Leadership Coaches will be asked to provide the following:

- Mentoring, support, and coaching for up to five District teachers enrolled in the Aspiring Administrators Program on various aspects of leadership and administrator responsibilities.
- In collaboration with SDSU faculty and SDUSD personnel, assist in the planning and development of six professional development days designed for Aspiring Administrators.
- Collaborate with the planning team for the Aspiring Administrators program

We recommend that interested principals have the following qualifications:

- Five years of experience as a principal.
- Previous experience as a coach/mentor.
- Success in raising student achievement.
- Understanding of current literature, trends, and development in the field of curriculum, assessment, instruction, staff development, and organizational development.
- Strategies for assessing system-wide staff development needs, visioning processes, and bringing about effective change and continuous improvement in large urban school systems.
- Strategies for collaboration and team building.
- Understanding of District organization, operations, policies, and objectives.
- Principles and practices of administration, supervision, and training with a focus on reflective practice.
✓ Interpersonal skills using tact, patience, and courtesy.
✓ Ability to use a variety of coaching and mentoring approaches.

If you are interested in becoming a District Leadership Coach, please reply via email to ysalazar@sandi.net (cc: ssalazar@sandi.net) with a brief statement of interest by June 30, 2012. All statements will be reviewed and qualified candidates will be invited to an interview. Final selections will be based on statements of interest, interview results and consultation with area superintendents.

Please contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Thank you!

Sid Salazar, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Instructional Support Services
San Diego Unified School District
4100 Normal Street, Room 2101
San Diego, CA 92103
(619)725-7772
ysalazar@sandi.net