A McREL Report Prepared for

Stupski Foundation's Learning System

Leadership

About McREL

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) is a nationally recognized, private, nonprofit organization dedicated to improving education for all students through applied research, product development, and service. Established in 1966, McREL now maintains a staff of around 110 in its Denver, Colorado, office.

This report is part of a larger set of reports prepared by McREL for the Stupski Foundation. The views, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily express the viewpoint of the Foundation. Please e-mail any inquiries to Linda Brannan at info@mcrel.org.

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Executive Summary

This document is one of eight reports prepared to support the development of a new Learning System, a development effort that is the first step in a major initiative undertaken by the Stupski Foundation. The Foundation endeavors to improve the life options of all students, especially urban youth of color and youth of poverty, whom we refer to as "Our Kids," by fundamentally redesigning the education system. This report was created collaboratively by researchers from McREL with guidance from officers of the Stupski Foundation. Its purpose is to provide members of a "Design Collaborative" team—consisting of practitioners, parents, students, and researchers—with a review of key findings from existing literature to support their efforts to develop the Leadership component of the Stupski Foundation's Learning System.

Research methodology

McREL researchers, in collaboration with Stupski Foundation staff members, generated the following key research questions to guide this review:

1. What do school-level leaders need to know and be able to do to increase the success of children of color and poverty in a re-designed educational system that emphasizes college readiness?
2. What types of systems (e.g., preparation, support, evaluation) need to be in place to ensure school-level leaders are successful in meeting the needs of children of color and poverty?

These two questions focused an extensive review of scholarly (i.e., peer-reviewed publications), "fugitive" literature (i.e., reports self-published by reputable foundations, associations, and other professional organizations), and professional wisdom from long-standing practitioners in the field of education

Key findings

Findings presented in the report fall under five areas: 1) actions that contribute to increased learning for students, 2) leading from a social justice perspective, 3) recruitment and preparation programs, 4) mentoring programs for school-level leaders, and 5) performance-based evaluation systems for school-level leaders.

Actions that contribute to increased learning for students

The following findings emerged from the research regarding the actions that contribute to increased learning for students:

- Maintain a focus on teaching and learning.
- Hire and keep effective faculty.
- Build leadership capacity within the school and district.

Leading from a social justice perspective

The following finding emerged from the research regarding social justice leadership:

- Address issues of race and poverty candidly.

Recruitment and preparation programs

The following findings emerged from the research regarding recruitment and preparation programs for school-level leaders:

- Recruit proactively.
- Expand exemplary preparation programs.

Mentoring programs for school-level leaders

The following findings emerged from the research regarding mentoring programs for school-level leaders:

- Sustain mentorship programs for extended periods, ideally one to two years.
- Recruit and thoroughly train mentors.

Performance-based evaluation systems for school-level leaders

The following finding emerged from the research regarding evaluation systems for school-level leaders:

- Integrate evaluation with substantive professional development.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, four options are offered for how the Design Collaborative might proceed with its efforts.

Option 1: Redefine the role of the school principal

One option the Design Team may consider is to engage in an effort to redefine the role of the school principal. Research suggests that when school leaders are able to focus on their duties as instructional leaders, they can have a significant, positive influence on student achievement. Thus, school administrators should be allowed to focus explicitly on their responsibilities as instructional leaders and where possible, be relieved of other responsibilities, such as building management. Potential benefits of this option are providing an opportunity for principals to lead based on their strengths and increasing the number of individuals interested in school leadership. A possible challenge or drawback of this option is general public and education industry resistance to change.

Option 2: Develop a culturally responsive leadership preparation program

Research has shown that school culture—the attitudes and beliefs of leaders, teachers, and students in the building—is a strong predictor of student achievement. Thus, identifying the expectations for and developing a rigorous program of culturally responsive leadership could strengthen the school culture. Potential benefits of this option are the expansion of leadership programs designed for the specific needs of urban schools and the acknowledgement, rather than avoidance, of diversity. Challenges and drawbacks to this option include agreeing on the relevant leadership responsibilities and practices needed for culturally responsive leadership and agreement about the relevancy of this focus for preparation programs.

Option 3:
Expand effective leadership preparation and retention programs

Attention must go to expanding leadership preparation programs that help principals become more effective leaders of instruction and support principal longevity in schools serving Our Kids. The research literature highlighting effective preparation program characteristics and the impact of influential mentoring programs is promising. Supporting further development and distribution of these programs could have a major effect on student achievement. Benefits to this option include a stronger focus on the development of leadership capacity and an opportunity for experienced leaders to share their professional wisdom through mentoring programs. A challenge or drawback to this option is increasing cultural understanding—both within the profession and in broader society—of the time and effort needed to become a world-class school leader.

Option 4:
Refine effective principal evaluation programs and support systems

Many of the criteria on which principals are measured and evaluated bear little resemblance to the responsibilities that are most likely to influence student achievement in their schools. An opportunity exists to refine and expand evaluation systems for school leaders—systems that would focus their attention and professional growth on key leadership responsibilities known to be associated with increased student learning. A potential benefit of this recommendation is substantive feedback to guide ongoing development of effective principals. A major challenge to this option is overcoming the stigma often associated with critical feedback—providing it in such a way that recipients can use it and accepting it as a means to improvement and not as punitive judgment.

Final thoughts

School leadership influences student success. Further, the research literature has clarified the responsibilities and practices of effective leaders (e.g., Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), the characteristics of successful preparation programs, including the importance of ongoing mentoring support (e.g., Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007), and the efficacy of principal evaluation systems that provide substantive feedback (e.g., Wallace Foundation, 2009). Full implementation of these practices requires adequate funding and perhaps more important, public will. The research is clear; the commitment to follow through on its recommendations is less so.

Introduction

Purpose of this document

This document is one of eight reports prepared to support the development of a new learning system, a development effort that is the first step in a major initiative undertaken by the Stupski Foundation. The report was created collaboratively by researchers from McREL and officers of the Stupski Foundation. The Foundation endeavors to improve the life options of all students, especially underserved urban youth of color and youth of poverty, whom we refer to as "Our Kids," by fundamentally redesigning the education system.

This report was created collaboratively by researchers from McREL and officers of the Stupski Foundation. Its purpose is to provide members of a Design Collaborative team with a review of key findings from the existing literature addressing the critical research questions related to the Leadership component of the Learning System and to offer recommendations for the development of this component. In all, the eight reports cover these topics:

- Assessment
- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Student Supports
- Systems Diagnostics
- Leadership
- College Readiness
- Our Kids

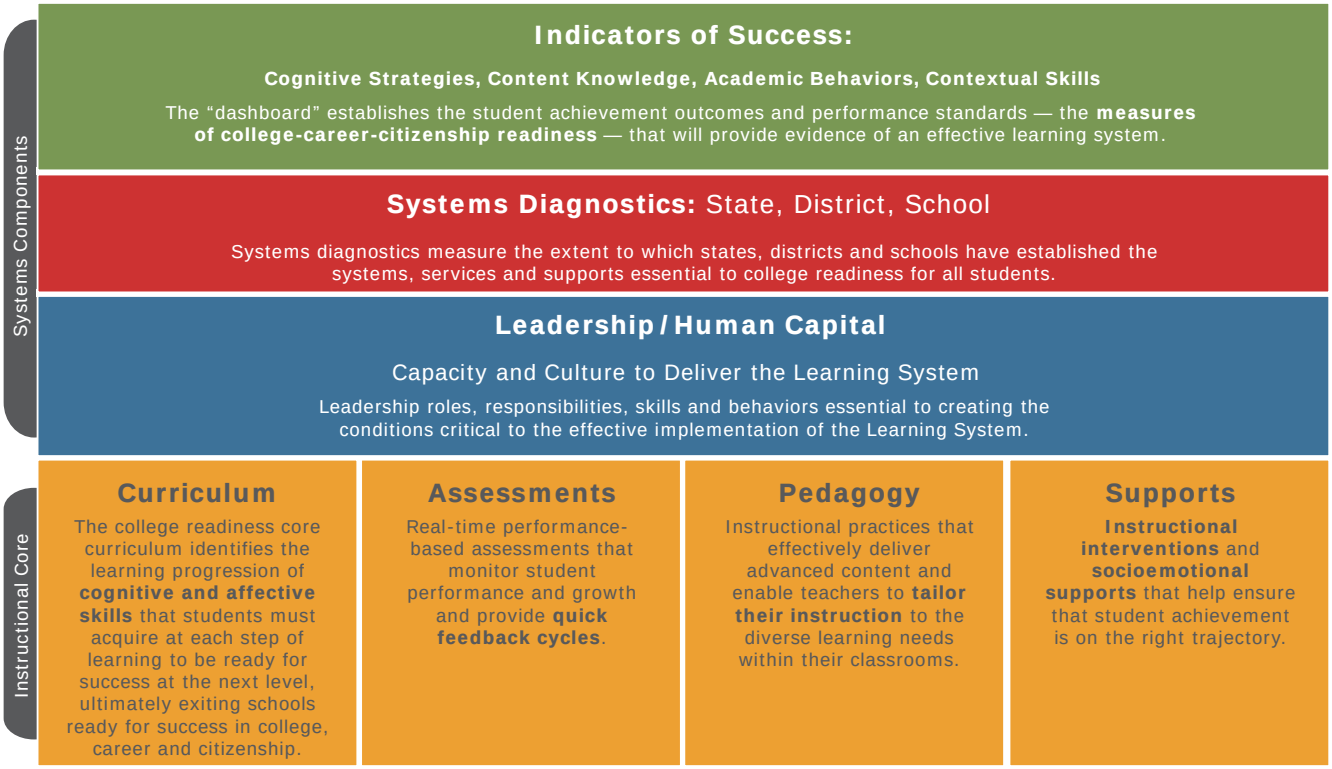
The first section of this report provides salient findings that emerged from a review of the literature. The second section offers a discussion of the findings along with several recommendations—framed as four options—for how the Design Collaborative might proceed. A brief concluding discussion follows. Summaries of the studies and literature reviewed for this report are provided in a separate document.

About the Learning System

The Learning System is the product of the Stupski Foundation's extensive examination of research, best practices, and emergent theories of action for improving education opportunities for all children. It is deeply rooted in the Foundation's mission to foster innovation in public school systems so that all students graduate ready for college, career, and success—as well as the notion that the United States' education system, in its current state, is incapable of accomplishing this goal. As stated on the Foundation's Web site, "The basic components of what public education systems need to teach all students to world-class standards, particularly those students for whom public schools are their only option, do not exist in any coherent, accessible or evidence-based way" (Stupski Foundation, n.d.).

Thus, the Foundation has focused its philanthropic efforts on supporting the "fundamental reinvention" of the American system of public education into one that prepares all children for the challenges of life, career, and citizenship in the 21st century. To accomplish this objective, the Foundation launched a multi-year, cross-sector collaboration among researchers and practitioners from inside and outside education to develop a new and comprehensive learning system. In its June 2008 *Strategy and Program Overview*, the Foundation posited that this system includes seven components, shown in Figure 1. The indicators of success are dependent on a definition of college readiness, which is addressed in the respective report. Although Our Kids is not an explicit component of the learning system, it is the basis for the work the Foundation is committed to in the education sector. Our Kids are a targeted population of students that the public education system has historically underserved. As such, the populations of students of color and students of poverty warranted a separate report.

Figure 1: The Learning System



About "Our Kids"

The Stupski Foundation is committed to addressing the academic needs of underserved populations, in particular, students who are of color *and* in poverty (which comprises 42% of African American students and 37 percent of Hispanic students) (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005). Despite a dramatic rise in minorities enrolling in college (a 50% increase from 1995–2005), fewer minorities appear to be graduating. As shown in Figure 2 (see p. 7), in 2006, fewer minorities aged 25–29 reported having obtained an associate degree or higher than their older peers (aged 30 and over) (American Council on Education, 2008). This trend marks an important reversal in advances in educational opportunities for minorities and may mark the first time in history that a generation of students has demonstrated less educational attainment than its predecessors (American Council on Education, 2008).

Overview of methodology

McREL researchers followed a five-step process for translating findings into recommendations.

Step 1: Identification of key hypothesis

After conducting an initial survey of relevant literature, Stupski Foundation staff members identified the following hypothesis to guide the literature review for the Leadership component:

Leadership and human capital issues represent major obstacles toward the system's ability to adequately prepare students of poverty and color for success.

Step 2: Identification of research questions

McREL researchers, in collaboration with Stupski Foundation staff members, further refined this hypothesis to focus on the school-level leader and generated these questions:

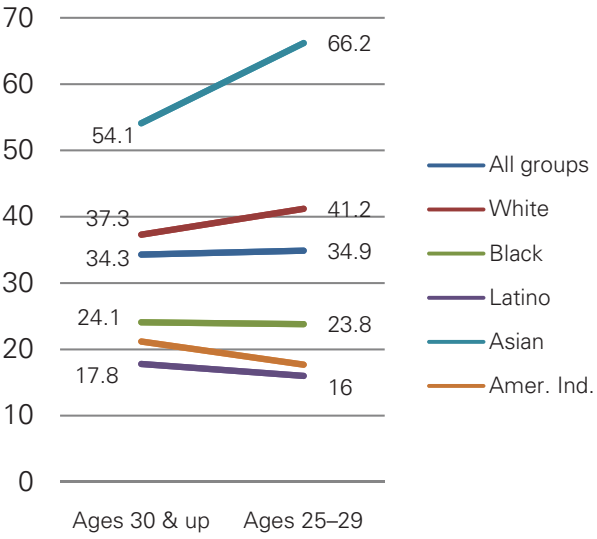
1. What do school-level leaders need to know and be able to do to increase the success of children of color and poverty in a re-designed educational system that emphasizes college readiness?
2. What types of systems (preparation, support, and evaluation) need to be in place to ensure that school leaders are successful in meeting the needs of children of color and poverty?

Step 3: Literature search

The two key and six related research questions guided a search for literature in several journal databases (e.g., Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, ERIC, Proquest, Academic Onefile, Educators Reference Complete), sites funded by the U.S. Department of Education (e.g., ERIC, What Works Clearinghouse, Doing What Works, National Laboratory Network, and those of national comprehensive centers and national education research centers), and other sources, including Google Scholar and Educational Policy Analysis Archives. In addition, the Table of Contents of certain journals (e.g., *Educational Administration Quarterly, Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, Educational Leadership*) were systematically reviewed because of their apparent relevance to the search topic. Sources were searched by the following keywords:

- Accountability
- At-risk
- Color-conscious leadership
- Culture
- District
- Effective
- High-needs
- Instructional leadership
- Leadership
- Leadership practices
- Leadership preparation
- Leadership support

Figure 2: Percentage of U.S. adults with associates degree or higher, 2006



Source: American Council on Education, 2008

- Leadership mentoring
- Low-income
- Low performance
- Minority
- Needs
- Poverty
- Principal evaluation
- Urban leadership

The research team also examined reference lists of articles identified in the first scan to find other applicable studies for all the components of the Learning System. They initially identified 354 articles related to leadership. During the writing and quality assurance phase of this project, a secondary search yielded 19 additional articles of important authors in this field, for a total of 373. All identified articles were retrieved and reviewed with attention to research methods, outcomes, and recommendations for future study. Ultimately, the team summarized 85 articles related to leadership, which are in a separate annotated bibliography.

Step 4: Identification and cataloging of findings

The research team cataloged findings from the summarized articles using the following identifications:

- Counterproductive *orthodoxies* (conventional ways of providing education which may be impeding student success)
- *Unmet needs* (areas where students are not yet well served by the current system of education)
- *Next practices* (a program or practice that needs to be developed, adapted, invented, and tested in response to an unmet need)
- *Promising practices* (practices based on research but not supported by rigorous efficacy data)
- Current *best practices* (practices demonstrated by research to be effective in improving outcomes for students)

Step 5: Generation of recommendations

In the final phase, research team members collectively reviewed key findings from the literature review in light of the following questions:

- What are the critical unmet needs related to this component of the Learning System?
- What is missing in current practices within this component of the Learning System?
- What is working and why?
- What is not working and why?
- What are the biggest misalignments between research and current practice?
- What things should educators do differently in light of the research findings?

- Where is the knowledge base too inconclusive to guide education innovation?
- Where is more research needed to advance practice?

Responses to these questions were synthesized into recommendations, presented here as options for further action. These options include best or promising practices that should be adopted and scaled up or adapted to new settings or areas where there are gaps in practices that require new innovations to be invented.

Overview of the literature base examined

McREL researchers first considered the definition of leadership within the school setting. Richard Elmore (2000) relied on the following definition of leadership: the guidance and direction of instructional improvement. For the purpose of this report, the researchers added "of student learning," for effective leadership must have a component that relates to the impact on student learning.

The research literature about effective school leadership is vast. A significant portion of the literature reviewed was subjected to the standard peer-review process. These studies were both qualitative and quantitative in nature and offered significant information about the responsibilities and practices of school leaders who improved student achievement. For example, the meta-analysis conducted by Marzano and colleagues (2005) provides a significant foundation for the findings that follow.

Major foundations, such as the Wallace Foundation, have funded high-quality research to address issues related to school leadership. This review reflects a considerable amount of this work and draws heavily on the recommendations made by Wallace Foundation-supported researchers. In addition to foundation-supported studies, centers such as the Southern Regional Education Board and the Consortium on Chicago School Research have engaged in, and documented, findings from their school leadership work. While these reports are not always peer-reviewed, the authors are acknowledged and well-respected in the area of school leadership.

This report highlights the work of the following scholars:

- Linda Darling-Hammond, the Charles E. Ducommon Professor of Education at Stanford University, has authored more than a dozen books and over 300 articles on education policy and practice. Her work provided guidance on the need for school restructuring and improved leadership preparation programs.
- Keith Leithwood is Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at OISE/University of Toronto. His research and writing focuses on school leadership, educational policy, and organizational change. Leithwood has published more than 70 refereed journal articles and has authored or edited more than 30 books.
- Tim Waters has served as CEO for Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) since 1995. His work on school and district leadership provided valuable insights on leadership responsibilities and their impact on the potential for increased student achievement.

In summary, the literature reviewed, and the findings that follow, are derived from a variety of sources representing an array of research methodologies. As noted, a considerable amount of work exists regarding the role of school leaders and their influence on student academic success. The Design Collaborative will need to draw on these substantive studies, but also on professional wisdom when developing the leadership component of the learning system for Our Kids.

Findings

This section addresses the first research question, "What do school-level leaders need to know and be able to do to increase the success of children of color and poverty in a re-designed educational system that emphasizes college readiness?" Two major findings address this question: (1) actions that contribute to increased learning for students and (2) leading from a social justice perspective.

Actions that contribute to increased learning for students

Leadership makes a difference. As Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) proclaimed, "There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around in the absence of intervention by talented leaders" (p. 17). To determine the extent of a leaders influence, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis that enabled them to compute the correlation (0.25) between leadership behaviors and student achievement. Further, Marzano et al. identified 21 leadership responsibilities and associated leadership practices that have a positive influence on student achievement. Given the evidence highlighting the significance of effective leaders, it is important to focus their resources on the most impactful responsibilities and practices.

Maintain a focus on teaching and learning

Instructional leader and instructional leadership are nebulous terms harboring a wide range of characteristics. Hallinger et al. (1983) offered a description that included defining the school's mission, managing curriculum and instruction, and promoting a positive school culture. In addition, Smith and Andrews (1989) advanced criteria that acknowledged an instructional leader as one who provided resources for the schools, served as an pedagogical guide who attended to the daily activities in the classroom, participated in professional development alongside teachers, and highlighted the importance of sound instructional practice. Researchers Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (1995) advised that instructional leadership entailed assisting teachers in their day-to-day activities, developing a collaborative atmosphere, promoting effective professional development, and supporting curriculum development and action research efforts. Further, Blase and Blase (1999) characterized instructional leadership as promoting opportunities to study teaching and learning, facilitating collaboration among teachers, creating coaching relationships between teachers, and supporting teachers by respecting the tenets of adult learning. Finally, Leithwood (1994), who offered the concept of transformational leadership, collaborated with Janzi and Steinbach to expand the concept of instructional leadership (Leithwood, Janzi & Steinbach, 1999). They added developing skillful application of instructional knowledge and increasing the collective sense of purpose for all members of the community.

Caveats regarding the research base about instructional leadership

Much of the research used to define and validate the concept of instructional leadership has occurred in elementary schools. While the criteria can easily apply to secondary school settings, minimal research has taken place to date to make strong assertions about the impact of similar criteria in these settings.

Indeed, the characteristics offered by these researchers have commonalities. All suggest that instructional leaders focus on the core

Key finding

Effective school leaders focus on the core practices of schools, namely teaching and learning.

practices of schools, namely teaching and learning. Most also suggest the need to cultivate effective, collaborative relationships and provide the resources necessary to address the unique conditions that exist in individual schools. That said, perhaps Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model of instructional leadership that prompted the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), provides the strongest illustration of instructional leadership researched over time (Leithwood et al., 2004). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) characterized instructional leadership as dimensions that include defining the school's mission, managing curriculum and instruction, and promoting a positive school culture. This combination of characteristics or dimensions will serve as the key components of instructional leadership for this report.

Defining the school mission. Effective school leaders know how to focus the work of the school on the essentials. They have a clear mission or purpose for the school and identify goals that align with that mission. They communicate the purpose and the goals in a meaningful way such that all stakeholders understand what they need to do. As such, all who are associated with the school know the mission and understand what the principal expects them to do to fulfill the mission.

Managing curriculum and instruction. A central role of the school is to deliver effective instruction focused on curriculum that prepares students for a variety of life choices. The school leader monitors the instructional practices that take place in classrooms and provides teachers with feedback related to the practices they observe, all with the intention to manage instruction for increased student achievement. In addition, the curriculum that teachers are responsible for delivering represents the essential content that students need to be successful both on achievement tests and in life. Managing curriculum and instruction implies that school leaders are aware of student progress, including how to analyze assessment data and how to assist teachers in making the instructional shifts that support ongoing achievement.

Promoting a positive school culture. A positive school culture is the bedrock upon which a strong school is built, and the school leader is pivotal in achieving this environment. Toward this end, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) highlight the importance of demanding quality professional development, expecting productive use of time for instruction, and being an obvious presence in the school, to name a few.

In a study of Chicago school reform, researchers Sebring and Bryk (2000) discovered that principals who maintain a long-term focus on the instructional core lead effective schools. Although Sebring and Bryk do not make a direct connection between the focus on the instructional core and increased student achievement, the characteristics they identify correlate with higher levels of student achievement. Specifically, they highlight hiring strong

and effective teachers, providing the professional development that teachers need to master their instruction, and maximizing instructional time as components of an instructional core. These characteristics, and others, represent best practices for schools determined to increase student achievement.

Hire and retain effective faculty

"Keeping good teachers should be one of the most important agenda items for any school leader" (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 7). This statement from noted teacher preparation researcher Linda Darling-Hammond could not be more prophetic. Much has been written about the role that classroom teachers play in the academic achievement of students. Sanders and Horn's (1994) analysis of the impact of effective and ineffective teachers on student achievement gains in Tennessee suggested that effective teachers cause students to achieve beyond expected levels while students with ineffective teachers gain much less than expected (Marzano, 2003). Schools with large concentrations of ineffective teachers deprive students—particularly those students who depend on public schools for their academic preparation—of the positive effect productive teachers achieve. Yet, cultivating an atmosphere of high expectations and strategic use of instructional strategies falls largely within the purview of school leaders.

Keeping effective faculty members is no less important than hiring the right staff members. Teachers say much about the profession that dissuades them from making teaching a life-long career. Chief among their complaints are the long hours, the low pay, (Darling-Hammond, 2003) and the lack of recognition for exemplary performance (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Still, many teachers, especially those who are intrinsically motivated, endure these conditions because of their commitment to making a difference in students' lives. One area where school leaders can provide the most guidance to veteran teachers is through the teacher evaluation process.

Provide substantive and timely feedback. In their seminal report *The Widget Effect* (2009), Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling noted that "nearly 3 of 4 teachers went through the evaluation process but received no specific feedback about how to improve their practice" (p. 14). Feedback improves instruction. Although the feedback need not come directly from principals, they often are perceived to be the ideal agents to provide it, especially those who are trained to be instructional leaders. As important, principals are instrumental in cultivating an environment that enables teachers to receive the ongoing support needed to continuously improve their instructional decisions, and many times this occurs through established mentoring programs (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

In spite of the limited research supporting principal instructional feedback to teachers, some research on this practice is promising. For example, Togneri and Anderson (2003) conducted a study in five high-poverty school districts that experienced strong gains in student achievement and found that re-defining leadership roles to focus on instruction, including timely feedback about the instruction, supported academic improvement. In this study, instructional expertise was a high priority, and principals were expected to act as the primary instructional leaders. To support principals in this role, district personnel taught principals to conduct classroom observations, provide instructional feedback, and explore myriad teaching strategies. The principals also learned how to use data to guide decisions about instruction and build structures that encouraged teacher collaboration. In effect, these principals created structures and enacted practices that helped them monitor and evaluate classroom instruction and student learning.

Build leadership capacity within the school and district

In 1995, David Tyack and Larry Cuban wrote *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, in which they illustrate how slowly change occurs in education despite Americans' belief that education is a "panacea." One of the central principles of Tyack and Cuban's "tinkering" notion is the recognition that schools often follow cultural norms for education and schooling. In some instances, the attachment to tradition impedes reform, miring schools and school personnel in ineffective practices despite evidence to the contrary. In others, a lack of evidence keeps practitioners married to existing strategies, ones that benefit the few at the expense of many.

An enduring practice in school leadership is that of the solitary school leader. To be sure, considerable research acknowledges that principals cannot go it alone. In fact, for them to be the most effective, they must build the type of internal capacity that creates multiple opportunities for leadership to flourish, establishing a strong and capable staff able to withstand the inevitable shifts in leadership. As Lambert (1998) explains, "Leadership lies within the school, not just in the chair of the principal; the school must build its own leadership capacity if it is to stay afloat, assume internal responsibility for reform, and maintain a momentum for self-renewal" (p. 3).

Key finding

Shared leadership creates a safety net for students by maintaining a focus on achievement for all students.

Establish and cultivate learning communities. Lambert's assertion presumes an active role for teachers. Professional learning communities promulgated by DuFour and Eaker (1998) and later by Eaker, DeFour, and DeFour (2002) are grounded in this proactive stance. Characterized by a shared mission, vision, values, and goals; a focus on results; a commitment to continuous improvement; and collaborative teams that work interdependently; learning communities create opportunities for members of the school community to assume leadership responsibilities. By "sharing" leadership in this way, students experience a safety net. That is, rather than individual teachers assuming responsibility for a small portion of the student body (e.g., one teacher and her 30 students), the learning community stays focused on raising the achievement bar for all students. The school principal facilitates or hinders the creation of such communities. Indeed, as principals build and maintain strong communities, these characteristics flourish as does the depth and breadth of leadership capacity. Still, building leadership capacity in a school requires a collective effort, for as Lambert (1998) acknowledges, "Teachers must take the major responsibility for building leadership capacity in schools and ultimately for the work of school improvement" (p. 24).

Develop a strong sense of collective efficacy. Roger Goddard's (2001; 2002a; 2002b) extensive research about collective efficacy in schools highlights the pivotal role it plays in student achievement. Goddard (2001) defines collective efficacy as "the perception of teachers in a school

that the faculty as a whole can execute the courses of action necessary to have positive effects on students" (p. 467). Using a validated instrument, Goddard and his colleagues have demonstrated that a school's level of collective efficacy can mitigate the effects of poverty and race on student achievement (2003). This construct is inherent in the concept of learning communities but explicit in McREL's (2005) Balanced Leadership Framework® component of "purposeful community." The Balanced Leadership Framework is an organizing structure for the 21 leadership responsibilities identified in McREL's leadership meta-analysis. The framework has four components: (a) leadership, (b) focus of change, (c) magnitude of change, and (d) purposeful community. Purposeful community represents McREL's approach to building a supportive and adaptive context for sustaining improvement, managing change, and emphasizing leadership responsibilities positively associated with student achievement.

Bandura (1986, 1997) identified four strategies to develop collective efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective states. Mastery experience is being successful with difficult endeavors. Vicarious experience relates to teachers and other school personnel experiencing or observing success in settings that are similar to their own. Social persuasion is similar to peer pressure and is a method that works well in a cohesive school. Teachers see their colleagues working hard and being successful, which results in the desire to follow suit. Finally, affective states refers to the emotional temperature of an organization. The healthier the emotional state, the more likely that collective efficacy will be high.

Redefine leadership roles. Returning to Togneri and Anderson's (2003) study of five high-poverty school districts that improved learning for students, two observations are worth noting in relationship to building leadership capacity. First, the districts redefined leadership roles. Second, myriad stakeholder groups (e.g., school board members, classroom teachers, school principals, superintendents, central office staff) participated in the improvement efforts. In addition, teacher leaders contributed significantly to the effort. They served as instructional leaders by working with other teachers, modeling the use of effective instructional strategies, and acquiring materials to support their colleagues. In doing so, the teacher leaders not only exemplified leadership capacity within the schools, but their increased presence freed principals from some of the day-to-day duties related to classrooms. For example, teacher leaders observed classroom instruction, provided relevant feedback, and organized professional development accordingly.

Pounder and Crow (2005) also noted in their review, *Sustaining the Pipeline of School Administrators,* expanding the assistant principal's instructional leadership responsibilities could help develop and support a pipeline of quality school leaders. Sharing instructional leadership responsibilities with assistant principals could prove particularly beneficial in urban districts, where there is a tendency to focus on issues other than student learning (e.g., discipline, transportation, scheduling). Expanding assistant principals' exposure to and increasing their responsibility for maintaining effective learning environments enables them to contribute to their schools in significant ways while gaining the on-the-job training they need to be successful instructional leaders. In fact, Louisiana created the *Assistant Principal for Instruction* position to help distinguish the assistant principal's role in schools and to emphasize the importance of instructional leadership over the traditional responsibility assigned to assistant principals—discipline.

Perhaps Richard Elmore (2006) best summarizes the complexity of school-level leadership, including its dramatic evolution over a short period of time:

> Leadership demands in American public schools have changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Whether or how the practice of leadership will change to meet those demands is an open question. The change in demands is largely a consequence of the introduction of performance-based accountability policies that evaluate, reward, and sanction schools on the basis of measured student performance. While the merits of these policies are debatable, the fact that they have changed—probably fundamentally—the demands placed on school leaders is not. (p.134)

Lead from a social justice perspective

Education Trust's 2006 report, *Yes We Can: Telling Truths and Dispelling Myths About Race and Education in America*, highlights the depressing conditions under which far too many children of color and children of poverty attend school. Inexperienced teachers and underwhelming course expectations and assignments are but two of the problems plaguing these schools. Yet, the report also illustrates the promise evident when this population of students experiences what middle- and upper-class students take for granted: a well-qualified teaching staff with unwavering high expectations for students, adequate funding, and rigorous coursework that challenges. Indeed, theirs is one of many voices pointing out the unevenness of education in American schools. What discourages many is the existence of these "islands of excellence" at a time when so much is known about what will break the cycle of underachievement (Payne, 2008).

Key finding

School leaders who proactively address issues of race and poverty create environments that support high expectations and are conducive to high levels of student achievement.

A philosophy gaining increased prominence in the leadership research literature is leadership for social justice. Although derivatives of this leadership perspective (e.g., multicultural leadership, transformative leadership, color-conscious leadership) have existed for years, education leadership scholars studying leadership for social justice highlight basic themes, including: recognition of the impact of society's "isms" on the lives of school children—racism, classism, sexism and a moral agreement to respect diversity and actively combat these isms (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Larson & Murtadha, 2002). Loosely defined here as leadership that creates climates reflecting high expectations, greater cultural awareness, and a commitment to challenge social ills, leadership for social justice fosters equitable opportunities for all students, particularly student of color and poverty—Our Kids. Leading from a social justice perspective requires leaders to responsibly address issues of race and poverty.

Leading from a social justice perspective does not imply that only leaders who share the personal experiences of the students in their schools (e.g., leaders from ethnic minority groups, teachers who were raised in poverty) will be effective. Few disagree that a leadership and teaching faculty reflecting the diversity of students within a school enriches the environment for all

working and learning there (Solomon, 2002). These studies indicate that principals who proactively address issues of racism and poverty, regardless of their race, create environments that support high expectations and are conducive to high levels of student achievement.

Address issues of race and poverty candidly

This review of research suggests that leaders who see and acknowledge race and culture are more effective than those who do not. For example, Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) conducted a study of the role of urban school principals as multicultural leaders. In their study, one of the principals commented, "I don't see color. I teach children" (p. 578). In response, Gardiner and Enomoto reflected, "In not seeing diversity, [these principals] are denying their students the beauty and richness of the backgrounds, heritage, and cultural treasures that the students bring to the classroom" (p. 578). On a more basic level, not addressing issues of race candidly denies the very real effect that they have on the lives of Our Kids.

Similarly, the effect of poverty or the influence of social class on the lives of students is undeniable, yet it is an often neglected subject. As hooks (2003) prophetically shared, "Class is rarely talked about in the United States; nowhere is there more intense silence about the reality of class differences than in educational settings" (cited in Beachum et al., 2008, p. 193). As with race, addressing social class does not mean that school leaders single out students or groups of students, risking the potential to stigmatize them. It does, however, suggest that acknowledging the different backgrounds that students bring to schools and classrooms naturally expresses the diversity that exists in these settings. In fact, Shields (2004) argues that by avoiding discussions about social class, educators elevate more privileged classes over less privileged ones, succumbing to the belief that schools are neutral to the impact of class. She does not suggest that educators glorify or glamorize poverty. Rather, by acknowledging the different realities of children's lives, educators honor their life experiences and in turn, create a trusting environment where learning can take place.

Addressing issues of race and poverty requires greater candor. This type of dialogue is not the norm in many schools, and the decision to engage in thought-provoking and potentially provocative dialogue often comes from leadership, particularly the school principal. Solomon (2002) suggests that one reason principals shy away from such discussions is because they prefer a perceived calm to the potential for conflict and disharmony. Yet, influences of race and class are unavoidable, and there are several strategies that principals can use to facilitate straightforward talk about both. These include promoting antiracism, confronting issues of poverty, and encouraging the use of culturally responses practices. Enid Lee (1995, cited in Lawrence & Tatum, 1997) posits that everyone, especially teachers, should consider antiracist pedagogy as their personal responsibility. Lee further asserts that inequity in schools will only be eradicated when all educators consider it imperative that they be accountable for an antiracist environment.

Explicitly promote antiracism. Promoting antiracism in schools occurs at two levels: the individual level and the institutional level (Solomon, 2002). Individual level work requires everyone to systematically reflect on the attitudes and actions that have the potential to be perceived negatively by people of color. Institutional level efforts require attending to and changing the structures and policies that preserve racist tendencies. Examples of structures enacted at the school level that often perpetuate racists undertones include tracking (e.g., Oakes & Guiton, 1995); decisions about curriculum, including what to emphasize (Education Trust, 2006; Payne, 2008); and instructional strategies (Education Trust, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

While little empirical evidence documents the efficacy of the two approaches we describe next, anecdotal evidence suggests that each is promising in its attempt to promote antiracism. First is the work of Singleton and Linton (2006), who assert that school leaders can actively promote antiracism at both levels by investigating their own racial identities. Next, is the work of Beverly Daniel Tatum and her colleagues at Mount Holyoke College, who developed and taught a semester-long course to help Boston-area educators prepare for changing school demographics resulting from a voluntary desegregation program.

Emphase dialogue. In their book, *Courageous Conversations About Race* (2006), Singleton and Linton define antiracism as "conscious and deliberate efforts to challenge the impact and perpetuation of institutional White racial power, presence, and privilege" (p. 45). From the start, this definition may cause discomfort, as it bluntly regards racism as a result of embedded power afforded White, middle-class culture. But the authors caution that addressing institutional White racial power is not meant to antagonize. Rather, it is a candid effort to broadly distribute the access and advantages that White people enjoy (McIntosh, 1988).

Singleton and Linton (2006) go on to identify three critical factors that schools and districts must address to close the achievement gap: passion, practice, and persistence. They contend that passion, or the degree to which educators are willing to challenge prevailing thoughts, beliefs, and structures that cause stagnation, enables educators to see racism from a different perspective. The second factor—practice—refers to educators' bank or repertoire of strategies for teaching students of color. Finally, persistence addresses the stick-to-it-ness that educators must maintain, often in the face of standard barriers, including pressure for immediate results, the search for the cure-all solution, and the "we've done this before" syndrome. To encourage thoughtful and productive discussions about these factors and about the impact of race on students, they developed a strategy known as Courageous Conversations.

In their book, Singleton and Linton (2006) present a case study about a San Diego, California, school district engaged in Courageous Conversations work for five years, a time when student achievement reflected a slow and steady increase, as measured by the California Standards Test and other measures. As important as the increase in student achievement was the shift in thinking and acting evident at multiple levels within the district. To begin the work, the superintendent had developed a vision statement specifically highlighting race and had set clear expectations that all educators in the district would actively contemplate the role that race played in their inability to close the achievement gap. This expectation also extended to individual schools. Principals attended Equity Leadership Institutes, where they examined their beliefs about race. In turn, these principals engaged their staffs in ongoing

discussions about race, achievement data, and culturally responsive teaching strategies. Based on several accounts, this approach caused teachers to seek solutions rather than blame students. Finally, individual schools and the district focused on increasing parent and community member involvement in the schools.

Singleton and Linton's (2006) guiding hypothesis is that the racial achievement gap will not cease to exist unless educators discuss race and the role it plays in schools: "To address race, the language of race must become concrete so that school leaders can effectively guide the conversations that will assist them in eliminating the racial achievement gap" (p. 9). Thus, Glenn Singleton and his colleagues have facilitated conversations related to race in countless school districts across the United States, and in doing so attend to the two levels mentioned by Solomon (2002).

Prepare teachers to recognize and respond to racism. The course developed at Mount Holyoke—Anti-Racist and Effective Classroom Practice for All Students—was attended by K–12 teachers, school administrators, and counselors. As noted, "the course was specifically designed to help educators recognize the personal, cultural, and institutional manifestations of racism and to become more proactive in response to racism within their school settings" (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997, p. 165). During the semester, participants engaged in a variety of activities focused on issues such as racism, White privilege, and racial identity development. As the authors maintain, the course was a "catalyst" for the primarily White participants to examine their own racial identity and its role in society. Like Singleton and Linton's (2006) Courageous Conversations, this course was not designed to badger White educators or White people as a social class. Rather, it created an opportunity to acknowledge candidly and without guilt the influence that race has on all aspects of life, particularly those pertaining to school.

Although their work was not as systemic as Singleton and Linton (2006), Lawrence and Tatum (1997) cited similar results. By focusing on antiracist actions (e.g., challenging the low expectations that many hold for children of color), teachers and administrators shifted their thinking and behavior over the course of the semester. For example, one school administrator organized a community forum to discuss racism in an honest and frank manner, hoping to "confront racism in [herself] and in the community as well as continue to learn and grow" (p. 170). Both of these approaches highlight the potential of school leaders investigating their own understanding of race and the role it plays in their schools and in their lives. It is through such heightened awareness that culturally responsive strategies can take hold.

Responsibly evaluate and manage the impact of poverty. Ruby Payne (1998/2005), author of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, often is considered the preeminent expert on the impact of poverty on the lives of school children (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008). Despite the prevalence of her book and related professional development in school districts across the country, Payne's work is not without controversy (Bomer et al., 2008, 2009; Gorski, 2006; Ng & Rury, 2006; Osei-Kofi, 2005). Chief among the criticisms are that Payne's (1998/2005) work lacks an empirical basis from which she draws numerous conclusions and that she writes and conducts her professional development sessions from a deficit perspective, which perpetuates problematic stereotypes.

Payne (2009) discounts these criticisms, stating that when schools implement the strategies and other suggestions she makes, students perform better. Among her recommendations is that schools employ the following strategies:

- Build relationships of respect
- Make beginning learning relational
- Teach students to speak in formal register
- Assess each student's resources
- Teach the hidden rules of school
- Monitor progress and plan interventions

- Translate the concrete into the abstract
- Teach students how to ask questions
- Forge relationships with parents

It is difficult to argue with any of these strategies. In fact, many scholars recommend similar approaches (Delpit, 2006; Tough, 2008). Yet, many also challenge the assumptions that underlie Payne's work, namely that poor families subscribe to a culture of poverty characterized by a sense of entitlement, the absence of a work ethic, and a view of life mired in the present rather than the future (Gorski, 2006; Ng & Rury, 2006). Ng and Rury, along with other scholars, contend that while these characteristics may describe some poverty-stricken families, they also describe many middle class and wealthy families. By using such broad strokes to characterize a group of people, Payne (1998/2005) reinforces unhealthy stereotypes rather than promotes diverse points of view that would help educators address the individual needs of children. Given the prevalence of Payne's books and programs, prudent school leaders serve their students well when they thoughtfully review her work in light of the criticism it has received.

Bomer et al. (2008) allow for Payne's strategies, but they suggest that educators use them within a context that allows for an open analysis of the role of class in society. For example, by examining social class and its manifestations in society through curricular material, students and teachers can confront commonly held but potentially harmful stereotypes about all levels of society. As with the antiracist stance advocated by Singleton and Linton (2006) that requires a more "active" approach to dealing with the impact of race in society, Bomer et al. (2008) suggest that by directly addressing poverty and other issues related to class, school leaders can alter the deficit thinking that prevails in many schools. This implies that many in schools, teachers and principals alike, will have to confront the brutal facts (Collins, 2001) and examine their own beliefs and ideas about poverty, including many of the societal structures that perpetuate wide disparities between classes (Gorski, 2006). By dealing with poverty responsibly, which includes challenging deficit thinking, educators are better positioned to enact the strategies that Payne (2008) recommends and produce the intended outcome—increased student achievement.

Encourage the use of culturally relevant practices. Gloria Ladson-Billings is widely regarded for developing a culturally relevant teaching framework. Three principles comprise this framework, which is based on several years of collaboration with teachers who were effective at meeting the instructional needs of African American students: (1) academic success for students, (2) respect for students' culture, and (3) responsibility to social consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings is quick to acknowledge that these tenets simply represent "good teaching." Yet, despite this proclamation by the author and many who review her work,

wide-spread examples of this good teaching in schools serving African American students and others underserved by the public education system do not exist.

Culturally relevant teaching is not the first attempt to draw tighter connections between the culture that students encounter at home and at school. Ladson-Billings(1995) notes the work of Katherine Au, Courtney Cazden, and Cathie Jordan, who also endeavored to bring together the seemingly disparate cultures of home and school. It is Ladson-Billings, however, who explicitly adds the commitment to "active citizenship" to the third part of her framework, stating that "students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162).

Examples of culturally responsive teaching are limitless, and they are grounded in the principles listed above. For example, Lawrence and Tatum (1997) describe teachers who used multicultural literature to supplement school curriculum and honor students' diverse cultures while maintaining high expectations for performance. At the same time, the teachers engaged in critical discussions about the absence of multicultural items in the curricular materials designated by the district and sought ways to use it strategically in their instruction. Ladson-Billings (1994) shares an example of a White teacher using multicultural literature to not only teach essential components of literary interpretation, but also to create opportunities for the African American boys in her classroom to realize and exhibit their leadership potential. This inquiry and use of multicultural materials is a far cry from the focus on basic skills evident in so many schools serving Our Kids (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

School principals are uniquely situated to encourage and exhibit the use of culturally relevant practices in their schools. Addressing the principal's role in creating safe spaces for diverse students, Riehl (2000) concedes that culturally relevant pedagogy focuses on what teachers do and how students respond. But encouraging the use of culturally relevant pedagogy and then holding teachers accountable for its implementation through feedback and evaluation is an important responsibility that school leaders can assume (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006).

Racism and poverty are social ills that continue to plague society, and their impact does not stop at the schoolhouse door. School leaders who ignore them do a disservice to those students whose lives are affected by both. Not only do these children suffer, but those students who do not experience the direct impact of racism and poverty are affected, as well. Perhaps Ladson-Billings (1994) best expressed the urgency to address the impact and significance of race and poverty:

> It is impossible to believe that a classroom teacher does not notice the race and ethnicity of the children she is teaching. Further, by claiming not to notice, the teacher is saying that she is dismissing one of the most salient features of the child's identity and that she does not account for it in her curricular planning and instruction. (p. 33)

These words are equally prophetic for school leaders, for their leadership and ensuing expectations create powerful norms in schools and classrooms.

Effective recruitment and preparation programs

This section addresses the second research question, "What types of systems (preparation, support, and evaluation) need to be in place to ensure school-level leaders are successful in meeting the needs of children of color and poverty?" The major findings related to this question are in three areas: effective recruitment and preparation programs, mentoring programs for school leaders, and performance-based evaluation programs for school-level leaders.

Recruit proactively

Decisions about who becomes a school leader and the leadership skills they need to be effective are paramount if schools serving children of color and poverty are going to attract and retain quality teachers. In a Wallace Foundation (2008) report, *Becoming a Leader: Preparing School Principals for Today's Schools*, Carl Cerf, New York City's Deputy School Chancellor, offered this insight: "Pick the right school leader and great teachers will come and stay. Pick the wrong one and, over time, good teachers leave, mediocre ones stay, and the school gradually (or not so gradually) declines" (p. 3). Toward this end, recruiting the right candidates into the principalship and leadership preparation programs and providing them with relevant training are key.

Recruiting sufficient principal candidates to fill positions in supportive and financially affluent schools already poses a huge challenge for district leadership. But the pool of qualified principals to lead in underserved schools—typically those with high populations of children of color and poverty—are even shallower. To ensure an adequate supply of effective school-level leaders, successful recruitment occurs at two levels. The first is the pool of effective practicing principals both within a school district and in neighboring districts. At the same time, school districts must work to create a pipeline of prospective principals. Likely candidates include assistant principals and teacher leaders. There is also some potential in hiring nontraditional candidates.

Practicing principals. The New Teacher Project's (2006) report describes various methods that urban school districts can use to increase the ranks of qualified principals. One of their key recommendations is to "aggressively recruit external candidates" (p. 5). That is, the authors of the report suggest that school districts can no longer afford to rely on their internal applicant pool and must actively and aggressively recruit proven principal candidates from neighboring school districts.

Although poaching stellar principals from other districts is one strategy, it does not address the decline in individuals who are interested in pursuing a career in school leadership. In fact, a *Los Angeles Times* article published a decade ago painted a bleak picture illustrating how difficult it is to recruit quality candidates into the principalship (Richardson, 1999). The author noted school leaders' frustration with constant swings in reform efforts, greater parental demands, long hours, and the relentless emphasis on test scores as being but a few of the challenges they face. To be sure, these and other items on the list are legitimate concerns to be addressed by school leaders. But ensuring that open positions can be filled and a sufficient number of quality candidates will be prepared to assume those that become open remains an issue, necessitating the need to groom perspective principals.

Prospective principals. Meyer and Feistritzer (2003) suggest that school districts and administrator preparation programs can significantly increase

their pool of principal candidates by seeking and enrolling talented prospects rather than waiting for them to nominate themselves. In short, school districts and leadership programs must find qualified individuals. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) support this suggestion and document successful attempts to do so in their report, *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World*. Prospective principals often evolve from two sources: within education-related structures (e.g., practicing teachers, assistant principals, math coaches) and external to traditional education settings (e.g., business leaders, military personnel). The move to encourage candidates within education is addressed before reviewing nontraditional candidates.

Meyer and Feistritzer's (2003) suggestion to seek strong candidates is echoed in the research of Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), who reviewed eight preservice and in-service leadership programs located in various areas around the United States, such as New York City, San Diego, and Cleveland, Mississippi, in the Mississippi Delta area. The researchers found that candidates most often were experienced and effective classroom teachers who exhibited leadership capacity and served in high-needs locations. Selection occurred through a strong partnership with school districts who recommended candidates for the programs. In effect, the findings from the review disrupted the common perception that school principals, particularly at the secondary level, often evolve from the athletic coaching rank. Also of note is the fact that the candidates in the programs were diverse; in contrast to national averages, these programs enrolled more women and people from racial/ethnic minority groups.

Maintaining a sustained pipeline of potential school leader candidates is a constant challenge for school districts. Hartford Public School's Linking Leadership with Learning for ALL Learners, also reviewed by Darling-Hammond and her colleagues, intentionally focused on grooming potential school principals. Talented teachers were identified early in their careers and encouraged to seek positions to cultivate their leadership potential. For example, many served as instructional or turnaround coaches, which built their instructional competency and provided them with opportunities to lead adults through instructional reforms. According to Richardson (1999), the program exemplifies what is possible when a district adopts a "grow-your-own" leadership program and proactively recruits from within. As a result of this work, the district filled its principal and assistant principal positions with internal personnel during 2003 and 2004. More important, the district also increased student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

For some, the practice of proactively recruiting candidates to seek the principalship is a major shift in thinking. Yet, this reflects normal practice in many other professions (Hess, 2003; Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003). As highlighted by TNTP (2006), school districts must abandon many of their taken-for-granted ideals and beliefs about leadership advancement (e.g., promoting assistant principals based on years of service) and grow their own principals who clearly demonstrate the capacity to lead effectively. In many cases, this means recognizing the potential in new-service teachers, those with one to three years of classroom experience.

Nontraditional candidates. While the recruitment options just described hold promise, the need for effective leaders is urgent, and many school districts and leadership programs are recruiting nontraditional candidates. Some (e.g., Hess, 2003; Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003) argue that effective leadership requires a generic skill set, and many professionals from outside of education possess these skills in abundance. Furthermore, those inside education (e.g., classroom teachers) may lack the disposition for leadership because they are too child-centered or adverse to conflict, which is inevitable when leading adults, particularly those who are former colleagues

Key finding

School districts must abandon many of the taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs about leadership advancement.

(Hess, 2003). Hess explains that recruiting nontraditional candidates who are made to believe that they can glide into schools based on the merits of their previous work is a misguided approach. Rather, school districts should employ meaningful recruitment strategies and expand the search to include nontraditional candidates.

Researchers, policymakers, and other thought leaders who assert that the search for school leaders should extend beyond education often suggest that retired military officers make strong candidates (Hess, 2003). As Hess explains, military officers, much like school leaders, are charged to oversee the safety of those under their command. As such, former military officers and school leaders are similarly committed to service.

In spite of the leadership skills that nontraditional candidates bring to schools, researchers express concern about their lack of knowledge about instruction, making it difficult for them to serve as competent *instructional* leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Hess (2003) argues that instructional expertise is beside the point. Accordingly, Pounder and Merrill (2001) describe the school leader's job as one of managing competing priorities, and state that often instructional leadership must be left to others, particularly at the secondary level. In the end, Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2007) may have portrayed the dilemma between educator and nontraditional candidates best by acknowledging that the debate may be the symptom of a bigger problem—lack of consensus on the criteria for selecting school leader candidates. Regardless, the most important criterion is student learning as evidenced by increases in achievement. Without clear and proven evidence for one alternative, perhaps all should continue to be reviewed and evaluated. There are multiple avenues for recruitment that forward-thinking school districts should explore.

Expand exemplary preparation programs

Just like recruitment efforts, leadership preparation programs are at the center of considerable debate. Much has been written about the failure of university-based programs and district-sponsored preservice programs to adequately prepare school leaders. Yet, M. Christina DeVita, president of The Wallace Foundation, offered an alternative perspective on the state of leadership preparation in the opening letter of the foundation-commissioned report, *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World.* Recognizing the valiant efforts to improve principal preparation illustrated in the report, she notes, "Here, finally, is not just another indictment, but a fact-filled set of cases about exemplary leader preparation programs from San Diego to the Mississippi Delta to the Bronx that are making a difference in the performance of principals" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Indeed, the program transformations illustrated in this report hold great promise for

improving the quality of preparation of school-level leaders, but the distance between these exemplary programs is great.

Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2007) seminal report remains the most recent and comprehensive review in the field documenting exemplary program models, content, and strategy use. As such, their findings are briefly described next, and readers are encouraged to access the full report for a thorough representation of the findings. It's important to note that Darling-Hammond et al. do not include newer, less proven programs such as New Leaders for New Schools. However, because this program has generated a great deal of interest and offers an alternative perspective, we include it in our overview.

Preservice and in-service program models. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) limited their work to two types of programs: preservice primarily delivered through universities and in-service programs situated within school districts. In some instances, the in-service programs had a strong tie to the preservice university-based program. For example, Region 1 New York City in the Bronx is connected to The Bank Street College Principals Institute. The authors used an extensive process to select programs to review, but they also limited their scope. As such, the authors of the study did not review programs with minimal track records or those not linked in some way to a university.

In general, the preservice programs are characterized by traditional campus-based coursework augmented by a strong field-based experience. The field-based experience or internship lasts for an extended period of time (e.g., one year) and gives participants multiple opportunities to apply what they are learning in their university classes. Evidence suggests that prolonged field experiences are critical to principal development; but too often, candidates do not spend enough time in the field or they do so without adequate supervision (Orr, 2006). In addition to more quality internships, the curriculum in these preservice programs typically is grounded in the ISLLC Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008). For example, all of the programs heavily emphasize instructional leadership. In each case, graduates were prepared to assume leadership positions. The school districts where graduates were placed continued to offer the kinds of support that new leaders need to more easily transition into their positions.

The in-service programs reviewed by Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2007) have a well-established university connection but originated at the local level to fulfill needs within a district or across a state. These programs are often billed as professional development, but they are not the typical one- or two-day versions. Rather, they are an ongoing and structured way for practicing principals to marry theory and practice and provide participants with timely feedback about their practice while developing collegial networks that participants can access throughout their careers. There is limited research about effective in-service programs or their efficacy (Darling-Hammond et al.). Peterson and Kelley (2002) reviewed several in-service programs and found them varying in structure and quality. Still, effective programs analyzed by Peterson and Kelley were marked by the characteristics highlighted above.

Across the spectrum of preservice and in-service programs reviewed, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) identified the following features as belonging to successful programs: (a) curriculum aligned with professional standards, (b) emphasis on instructional leadership and school reform, (c) learner-centered pedagogy, (d) knowledgeable faculty and instructors, (e) use of a cohort supported through mentoring, (f) rigorous and selective recruitment, and (g) long-term internships. These are considered exemplary practice in the research literature (e.g., Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005;

Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Peterson & Kelley, 2002). In-service programs that include these practices enable school leaders to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to focus on instruction and student achievement.

One of the most frequently cited characteristics of exemplary principal preparation programs is the length and depth of field experiences they include. Regardless of how these experiences are labeled (e.g., residency, internship, apprenticeship), effective field-based practice takes place over an extended period of time, is grounded in theory and the practical, day-to-day work of school principals, and is supported by a capable and knowledgeable mentor or coach (Orr, 2006). Not only do field-based experiences organized around these design principles represent best practices for adult learners (Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002), but program participants often laud this feature of their preparation programs as the most impactful, providing powerful guidance for future leadership situations and dilemmas (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Alternative preparation program models. To meet the growing need for quality school leaders, alternative preparation programs are gaining in popularity. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education released a report titled, *Innovative Pathways to School Leadership*, highlighting six leadership programs—school- and district-level—considered to challenge conventional preparation ideology. The effective design elements identified by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) are evident in all six of the programs reviewed, including the rigorous recruitment efforts cited in this report. One of the elements more prominent in the Department of Education (2004) report is the role of ongoing program evaluation. Among the programs included in the report is the New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) program.

Key finding

Effective field-based practice takes place over an extended period of time, is grounded in theory, and supported by a capable mentor.

New Leaders for New Schools began in 2000 as a collaborative effort to provide leadership for several urban school districts and charter schools in New York City; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Memphis; and the San Francisco Bay Area. Program participants include practicing educators and noneducators. Through 2005, approximately 250 participants completed the program (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), and interest in the program continues to increase. NLNS includes a six-week leadership academy, a year-long field experience, and ongoing coaching. For the field experience, participants must develop and assume responsibility for a project that addresses both student achievement and teacher development. Over the course of the year, program participants also attend weekly seminars and visit with their coaches on a regular basis. NLNS creates networking opportunities by hosting several seminars where participants from all cooperating districts can meet and support one another.

Student test results for schools led by NLNS leaders showed limited improvement (Hart, Sporte, Ponisciak, Stevens, & Cambronne, 2008). Report

authors attributed this modest achievement gain to the limited amount of time program principals were in their schools. This finding further supported the notion that measured school improvement often takes several years to show evidence in student achievement scores.

Perhaps the most vexing issue related to principal preparation programs, regardless of the model, is the role of funding. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) do not mince words in this regard, for providing the training evident in the programs that she and her colleagues reviewed or the alternative program highlighted above does not come cheap. As they council, "At the most fundamental level, what programs are able to accomplish, whom they are able to recruit, and the choices that enter into program design depend profoundly on the sources, amounts, and stipulations of funding" (p. 153). Indeed, effective principal preparation programs are resource intensive, and this is a difficult reality given the financial status of many funding agencies.

Mentoring programs for school-level leaders

The programs we have described so far all include some level of support for individuals as they officially assume the principalship. With increased awareness of the critical and complex role that school leaders must perform and with the knowledge that over 40 percent of current leaders are nearing retirement (Blackman & Fenwick, 2000), structured mentoring programs to retain new principals are increasingly common.

Building school leadership muscle takes time, and research continues to show that the presence of a knowledgeable mentor can help novice principals navigate their new roles effectively and quickly. Leadership mentoring requirements have been adopted by over half of the states, and this support is now considered an integral part of most effective principal preparation programs, new principal support programs, or both (Wallace Foundation, 2007). The authors of the Wallace Foundation's report, *Getting Principal Mentoring Right*, found, however, most mentoring programs for school leaders fall short in their effectiveness and result in meaningless exercises that are not focused on improving instructional leadership.

Specifically, the report indicates that the majority of mentoring programs are plagued by (a) vague goals, (b) lack of focus on instructional leadership, (c) poor training for mentors, (d) too little time spent on the mentoring relationship to impact the development of instructional leadership capacity, (e) absence of a method for evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, and (f) lack of sufficient funds. In response, the authors proffered five criteria for developing effective programs: (1) high-quality training for all mentors; (2) efficacy data about the program; (3) extended mentoring periods, ideally one or two years; (4) financial support for extensive training, support, and evaluation; and (5) unrelenting focus on the development of instructional leaders. Through a comprehensive, carefully designed mentoring support program, urban school districts will be able to develop and retain quality instructional leaders in their schools.

Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky offers an example of a mentoring program consistent with some or all of the Wallace Foundation criteria. One of the most distinctive characteristic of this program is the extensive role it plays in determining whether a new principal is granted a permanent license. Mentor and mentee spend most of their time working on a professional growth plan, which is tied to state administrator standards. The new principal's ability to show growth is evaluated by the mentor, school district supervisor, and then finally passed on to the Professional Standards Board, which determines whether a permanent license should be granted. A high level of accountability is placed on the administrator at a very early stage, pushing growth, while providing quality support.

Another example of a high-quality mentoring program is evident in New York City's Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy utilizes mentors who are former city principals or principal supervisors and emphasizes that they are not mentoring for the status quo; instead, they are mentoring leaders who will change their schools and increase opportunities for city students. Although proven leaders are chosen as mentors, the Academy provides extensive training in the art of giving support focused on instructional leadership. Additionally, mentors are held accountable and their performance is evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they remain in touch with the most recent policies and instructional strategies being offered throughout the district. The mentoring program extends into the second and third year to allow new principals to target their work on areas in need of development. There is an understanding on the part of all parties that the principalship cannot be learned in one year.

Performance-based evaluation programs for school-level leaders

The complexities of school-level leadership have been scrutinized by many researchers and theorists. School leadership has been characterized as a set of skills (Thompson, 1993), a collection of values and beliefs (Fullan, 2003), a set of qualities or certain characteristics (Reinhart, Short, Short & Eckley, 1998), a collection of research-based responsibilities (Marzano et al., 2005), or the ability to lead and manage change (Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 2002). To varying degrees, many of the existing principal evaluation systems include these leadership expectations. Kimball, Heneman, and Milanowski (2007) reported that principal evaluation instruments were used for multiple purposes and focused on multiple competencies and outcomes; however, few were standards-based and were unsystematic in their use to improve performance.

The primary purpose of any personnel evaluation is for the improvement of personal and organizational performance (Castetter, 1992). States and local districts across the United States are charged with improving the conditions by which students experience school and more importantly, raise the level of achievement of all students. The literature and research clearly state that school-level leadership has an impact on student success (Cheng, 2002; Edmonds, 1979; Fullan, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005). The development of a quality evaluation instrument supported with effective tools for principal and supervisor use is a current challenge as school systems strive to meet the educational expectations of the 21st century.

Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) is a principal leadership assessment process supported by an extensive research base about effective leadership (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2007). It has undergone field testing and validation in diverse contexts (Wallace

Foundation, 2009). Firmly grounded in the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008), the assessment process measures six core components representing what effective leaders do and six key processes highlighting how leaders engage in their work (see Table 1).

VAL-ED measures critical learning-centered leadership behaviors for the purposes of diagnostic analyses, performance feedback, progress monitoring, and professional development planning. Data are collected from multiple sources, including self-observations, supervisor feedback, and input from teachers. Although there is some debate about the use of 360-degree assessments in education, feedback from these diverse stakeholders is believed to provide school leaders and their supervisors with a robust picture of performance.

Another example of a large-scale standards-based performance evaluation instrument for principals was developed and validated by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) and shows promise for future use. In conjunction with State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction, McREL developed the North Carolina School Executive Principal Evaluation process, which was approved for use in May 2008. This evaluation is a customized, standards-based instrument that uses a rubric with categories of performance.

In summary, research indicates there are few standards-based evaluation instruments for school leaders that focus on research-based leadership responsibilities associated with student learning. There are, however, some examples of effective evaluation instruments based on national standards of leadership and linked to student achievement. A research-based evaluation process can be a powerful tool in school and instructional improvement. By providing knowledge and feedback regarding leadership behaviors known to be associated with higher levels of student learning, a principal can change his or her leadership style.

Table 1. VAL-ED leadership components and processes

Core components of School Performance	Key Processes of Leadership
High standards for student learning	Planning
Rigorous curriculum (content)	Implementing
Quality instruction (pedagogy)	Supporting
Culture of learning and professional behavior	Advocating
Connections to external communities	Communicating
Performance accountability	Monitoring

Discussion & Recommendations

The options presented here are derived from the findings reported in the previous section. In addition, they were shaped by the research team's understanding of the current "state of play" in this leadership component of the system and in some cases, insights from other literature and knowledge within and outside the field. In addition to the questions described in Step 5 of the Overview of Methodology (see page 8), these questions were used:

- What current practices have a strong enough evidence base that they should be *adopted* and scaled up?
- What current practices show enough promise in certain contexts that they might be *adapted* for use in settings for children of color and poverty?
- Where are there sufficient unmet needs and lack of promising practices to warrant the *invention* of new practices?

These options for further action are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The Design Collaborative might ultimately choose a path that integrates several of them. Nonetheless, pursuit of any particular option presents opportunity costs. To help the Design Collaborative weigh these costs, benefits and drawbacks for each option are presented.

Option 1: Redefine the role of school principal

If building administrators were able to sharpen their focus on and develop their roles as *instructional leaders*, then they would more likely have a positive influence on the academic outcomes of Our Kids. A principal's primary focus must be on instructional leadership, concentrating efforts on practices, policies, and programs that influence student achievement.

No longer can the principal be expected to juggle managerial tasks at the expense of instructional quality. For many current practitioners, shifting from traditional leadership expectations to this greater focus on instruction may be easier said than done.

As evidenced in this report, school leadership makes a difference (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). In fact, school leadership is second only to classroom teaching in the effects on student achievement (Leithwood, et. al., 2004). While the managerial tasks common to the traditional principalship are an essential aspect of an efficiently run school, these tasks need not be under the sole direction of the principal. Much of this work could be achieved by hiring an additional manager for each school, whose role is to address non-instructional areas.

One example of a promising practice is the School Administration Manager (SAM) project, which provided administrators with additional time to focus on instructional leadership (Wallace Foundation, 2008). A pilot study of the SAM approach in Jefferson County, Kentucky, revealed that student achievement gains doubled in a one-year period. The program frees principals from distracting tasks while emphasizing they cannot, and should not, attempt to do it all. The SAM project has two main components: a business manager who attends to school operations, and accurate tracking of the principal's time to ensure that he or she focuses attention on instruction and learning. Jefferson County's use of SAMs is proving fruitful. Results suggest that principals increased the amount of time they devoted to instruction, in some cases as much as 50 percent. Equally promising are student test results, which are improving in targeted schools. In high-needs districts where so much time is spent on tasks other than instruction, the SAM project, or an

initiative similar in nature, could provide a means to redefine the role of school leaders, enabling them to gain a tighter focus on instruction and quality use of their time.

Potential benefits of this option

Strengths-based leadership. Redefining the role of the school leader with an emphasis on instruction enables principals to focus on those actions that research shows make a significant difference in student achievement. By expanding programs such as SAM, which has the potential to divide accountability based on the strengths of leaders, schools, and districts can make greater use of their human resources. As noted, the skills needed to guide the managerial aspects of the school may best be exercised by those with a managerial inclination, perhaps even making greater use of nontraditional expertise. In addition, by implementing accountability systems that actually monitor the amount of time school leaders attend to their various responsibilities, leaders and their supervisors can better apply the guidance and access the professional development that will continue to strengthen their leadership capabilities.

Depth of leadership. While schools may need an ultimate leader who assumes responsibility for all operations in the building, increasing the leadership bench enables schools to continue their mission, even when the formal leader leaves. By redefining the role of the school leader, opportunities for others to step into leadership roles expand.

Possible challenge and drawback of this option

Perception of the omniscient principal. Perceptions are notoriously difficult to change, and many maintain an idealized image of the school principal from former experiences as students or parents. Schools must change along with their communities, even though some community members may want them to reflect an idealized past. Redefining the role of the school leader to one of a true instructional leader will require extensive engagement with the public as well as a broad reconceptualization of leadership preparation programs as evidenced by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007).

Option 2: Develop a culturally responsive leadership preparation program

Strong principal preparation programs exist. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) illustrated comprehensively, leadership preparation programs that include research-based content, extended field-based experiences, and strong mentorships—to name a few traits—effectively prepare principals for the reality of school leadership in a variety of contexts. More important, many leadership programs embody a social justice philosophy. However, few programs intentionally focus on culturally responsive leadership by

integrating the principles of Singleton and Linton's (2006) Courageous Conversation or Lawrence and Tatum's (1997) Anti-Racist and Effective Classroom Practice for All Students. It is important to note, however, that these programs do not have a strong research base documenting their efficacy.

Leaders must be trained to recognize the impact of race and poverty on children and then be supported in their efforts to eliminate the institutional barriers and personal beliefs that have a long standing history of marginalizing the educational opportunities for Our Kids. In short, the potential for Our Kids' success is predicated upon school leaders understanding and appreciating the rich diversity of student, family, faculty, and community backgrounds. Equally important is the skill and leadership required to successfully respond to the unique learning and developmental needs of diverse students.

Potential benefits of this option

Expansion of leadership programs designed specifically for urban schools. While much is known about effective leadership, these practices may not transfer directly to meet the unique needs of urban schools. Using the principles or characteristics of effective leadership as a foundation, the Design Collaborative may contribute significantly by identifying the nuances of responsibilities and practices that are central to effective practice in urban settings.

Acknowledgement of diversity rather than avoidance. Racism and poverty have an impact on everyone associated with schools. By acknowledging and directly addressing the effect that both have on the lives of children, school leaders may better prepare themselves to meet the needs of all students.

Potential challenges and drawbacks of this option

Agreement about responsibilities and practices. Much like culturally relevant pedagogy, the responsibilities and practices of culturally relevant leadership may reflect simple adherence to those identified for general effective leadership. In other words, there may be little difference between or agreement on which responsibilities are specific to culturally relevant leadership.

Agreement about the importance of a culturally relevant leadership program. One of the criticisms about culturally relevant pedagogy is the lack of a strong research base supporting the efficacy on the program (Payne, 2008). Focusing attention on developing a culturally relevant leadership program may draw attention from a concerted effort to focus on the leadership responsibilities and practices that are already proven to influence student achievement.

Option 3: Expand effective leadership preparation and retention programs

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges plaguing strong leadership programs is the ability to expand their reach. The Design Collaborative should consider engaging in collaborative efforts with targeted universities and school districts to coordinate the expansion of effective programs. This coordination would include helping both entities access the necessary funding to implement programs with fidelity to the design principles referenced in the findings section of this report. This research base is promising, as is the work highlighting the impact of well-structured mentoring programs. Supporting further development of and access to these programs could have a major effect on student achievement.

Of course, expanding access to quality leadership preparation programs requires a deep understanding about the time it takes to become masterful. Malcolm Gladwell's (2008) book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, offers a sobering account of the time commitment (10,000 hours) needed to gain expertise. Gladwell's assessment is based on Anders Ericsson and colleagues' work (1993) documenting the amount of practice that accomplished musicians commit to in order to be

successful. In short, outstanding professionals become so through sheer hard work and experience, which is accumulated over time.

Potential benefits of this option

Focused development of leadership capacity. By expanding effective leadership programs, the number of school leaders available to serve in a variety of school settings increases. The benefits of an abundance of prepared school leaders are immeasurable, particularly given the alarming number of principals who will be retiring in the coming years.

Opportunity for experienced leaders to share their professional wisdom. Well-structured mentoring programs that include trained mentors represent a critical component of professional preparation programs. Engaging retiring principals in this effort enables current school leaders to capitalize on the knowledge and skills—the professional wisdom—gained through long and productive careers.

Potential challenges and drawbacks of this option

Temptation to use mentoring relationships as evaluation. What makes mentoring programs effective is the willingness of school leaders to make mistakes and draw upon the expertise of the mentor. If the mentor-mentee relationship is reduced to a supervisory one, the true benefit of reliance on a knowledgeable other is lost.

Reluctance to allow sufficient time for mastery. Building strong and competent school leaders takes time. Yet, there is a great need for effective leaders to serve in schools that Our Kids attend. Maintaining a heightened sense of urgency regarding this need and cultivating the public will to support the long-term development of school leaders is a significant challenge to meeting the needs of Our Kids.

Option 4: Refine effective principal evaluation programs and support systems

Many of the current principal evaluation systems focus on issues of management that are unrelated to ensuring high levels of student achievement. The Design Collaborative could refine the development of effective evaluation systems for urban school leaders. Evaluation systems must include clear expectations about the behaviors of effective school-level leaders and provide feedback for future growth and development.

Practicing principals also benefit from ongoing systems to support their leadership development. Darling-Hammond and her colleagues (2007) found protégés developed strong relationships with mentors and advisors that often continued long after the formal relationship ended. Browne-Ferrigno (2004) also concluded that mentoring programs for practicing school leaders increased role socialization and leadership capacity.

Potential benefit of this option

Meaningful feedback to guide improvement. Effective evaluation systems provide principals and their supervisors with the substantive feedback needed to improve performance, particularly performance that addresses those responsibilities and practices associated with student academic success. The data collected from quality evaluation instruments should guide district decisions regarding professional development and growth of leadership capacity at all levels of the organization.

Potential drawback or challenge of this option

Collapsing evaluation and constructive feedback. Evaluation and feedback are often intertwined. Yet school leaders need constructive feedback offered in a nonjudgmental manner to improve their practice. Building a world-class performance culture should give school leaders access to the feedback needed to improve practice outside of the evaluation process. Shifting the mindset that connects evaluation and feedback represents a major challenge.

Final Thoughts

Much is known about effective school leadership, including characteristics and principles that make a difference in schools serving Our Kids. Research suggests that the principal has a major influence on the quality of education in schools. Three of the most important aspects of a school-level leader's job are: (a) supporting teachers in instructional improvement, (b) managing the curriculum in ways that promote student learning, and (c) transforming schools into effective learning organizations (Hale & Rollins, 2006). It follows that by improving school-level leadership in our urban districts, we can improve the academic achievement of all children, including those students of color and poverty.

Research further confirms that educational leadership requires a deep understanding of the cultural differences (e.g., race, poverty) that have an impact on students and whether or not students experience success in school (Ryan & Katz, 2007). Indeed, the leadership research literature clarifies the characteristics of successful preparation programs, including the importance of ongoing mentoring support (e.g., Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007), and the efficacy of principal evaluation systems that provide substantive feedback (e.g., Wallace Foundation, 2009).

Broad implementation of these findings requires adequate funding, to be sure. Perhaps more important than funding, however, is public will. Asa Hilliard (1991), a well-known education scholar of color once noted, "We have one and only one problem: Do we truly will to see each and every child in this nation develop to the peak of his or her capacities?" (p. 36). As suggested by this report, the research about school leadership, including what successful leaders do and what it takes to develop successful leaders, is clear; the commitment to follow through on the recommendations is less so.

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Appendix

Literature review method

In June 2008, the Stupski Foundation created a conceptual framework for the reinvention of American education. The framework identified seven essential components and focused on delivering 21st century college readiness for all students, but especially for "Our Kids," children of color and poverty. The Foundation explained that "graduating all students from high school with the knowledge and skills that qualify them as 'college ready' is the most meaningful and measurable way to increase life choices and options for all children, but most especially children of color and poverty" (About the Foundation, para. 3).

The Learning System includes four core teaching and learning components: Curriculum, Assessments, Pedagogy, and Supports. Surrounding these components, are three organizational components necessary to support the core: Leadership/Human Capital, Systems Diagnostics, and a Dashboard of College Readiness Indicators (College Readiness Learning System, n.d.).

The Foundation envisions convening a Design Collaborative, a cross-sector group of researchers, practitioners, and designers from inside and outside education, to "define, develop and continually improve" (Design Collaborative, n.d.) all of the components. To orient Design Collaborative members to the accumulated and maturing knowledge base related to each of the components and to children of color and poverty, the Foundation contracted with Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). McREL conducted eight literature reviews—one on each of the components plus one on Our Kids—to identify and integrate theories and philosophical perspectives, issues, scientifically based research practices, unmet needs, and innovations relevant to designing one or more of the system components to accelerate learning for Our Kids.

This Appendix contains a description of the review method, including a general explanation of McREL's approach and descriptions of the particular procedures used for each phase of the review: identification of key hypotheses and research questions, literature search, identification and cataloguing of finds, and generating and communicating recommendations.

McREL's overall approach

Since the primary users of the reviews are the members of the Design Collaborative, the qualitative, iterative approach taken for the literature reviews sought to achieve the multiple goals of identifying emerging ideas, counterproductive orthodoxies, and promising practices relevant to the reinvention of the Learning System. Thus, eight research teams were assembled, each with one or more researchers familiar with the respective topic areas.

Qualitative approach. A *qualitative approach* shares several practices with those of *systematic reviews*, including comprehensive searches and transparency to reduce bias, but it differs with respect to inclusion/exclusion criteria. Systematic reviews emphasize explicit and a priori inclusion/exclusion criteria and criteria for evaluating the methodological quality of individual studies, carefully limiting the sources of evidence to support inferences about cause and effect relationships (Cooper, Hedges, & Valentine, 2009). The qualitative approach emphasizes diverse sources and types of evidence and knowledge to support a broader base of inferences (Pope, Mays, & Popay, 2007; Suri & Clarke, 2009).

The qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to the review's purpose and audience because the Design Collaborative needs both empirical studies and other literature to identify possible innovations for the current education system. An assumption underlying the Foundation's work to fundamentally reinvent American education is that the current system fails to deliver college readiness for all students, especially Our Kids. This assumption is supported by research indicating that students of color and in poverty have low high school and college graduation rates, and research from the last two years shows that college graduation rates for minority and poor students have further declined (American Council on Education, 2008). Therefore, a priority for the Foundation's work is to identify innovations that have not yet been studied, with the intent to evaluate their effectiveness. Literature specific to innovations is found outside the traditional scientific or academic journals.

Inclusive approach. McREL researchers adopted an inclusive approach, searching for and including phenomenological reports describing the experiences of Our Kids in and out of school and documenting the challenges and successes of their teachers and educational leaders. The researchers included literature on innovative, emerging models and untested ideas, as well as reports on mature, well-specified models with experimental evidence of effectiveness. Relevant quantitative research literature included correlational and experimental studies and meta-analytic reviews. Narrative reviews of research were included, as were policy briefs and position papers produced by opinion leaders and professional organizations. Literature sources included the World Wide Web, peer-reviewed journals, and practitioner magazines. Each document was identified by type of literature and evaluated in terms of the quality of the supporting evidence. Care was taken to draw only those inferences appropriate to the quality of the evidence.

McREL researchers judged the quality of the evidence in the context of the type of literature or study design and in relation to its relevance to answering particular questions. Guidance from Pope, Mays, and Popay (2007) on conducting reviews in the field of health research supports this approach:

> The inclusion of diverse sources of evidence in a review does not mean abandoning the rigor of a systematic review, but it does mean judging the quality of evidence in context and defining the relevance of evidence to answering specific questions, rather than defining some forms of evidence as intrinsically, and universally, of lower quality than others. (p. 1)

Each research team followed the five or six phases of any review process relevant to a quality knowledge synthesis (Cooper, Hedges & Valentine, 2009; Suri & Clarke, 2009). Table 1 (see p. 51) provides a side-by-side comparison of the phases of a systematic review of research (Cooper, Hedges & Valentine, 2009), a qualitative review (Suri & Clarke, 2009), and McREL's approach to this review.

Each team began by drawing from pertinent philosophical and theoretical literature and preliminary discussions with the Foundation to formulate hypotheses and research questions. Each team conducted extensive searches to find as much relevant literature as possible in order to include literature from the scientific and academic journals as well as literature from harder-to-find, cutting edge innovators. Additionally, teams revisited databases and alternative sources to purposefully search for additional literature written by authors identified by one or more stakeholders or to fill conceptual gaps that became apparent during the identification and cataloguing of findings and generating and communicating recommendations phases.

The phased process was iterative (Cooper, 2009) ref ecting new understanding and insights as the search, analysis, interpretation, and discussions between component teams and between the Foundation and McREL progressed toward conceptual clarity and the exhaustion of new search hits. The number of documents included in each team's review was extensive, and the types of literature varied representing the experiential knowledge of a diverse group of stakeholders, including researchers, teachers, administrators, program developers, and leaders and scholars at the local and national levels.

Team approach. Teams were composed of researchers and practitioners with different areas of expertise. Teams met weekly, and team leaders from across teams met biweekly. Meetings were used to update other individuals and teams and share resources, pose and address questions, challenge assumptions, provide guidance on interpretation of evidence, open up new areas of consideration, clarify boundaries and overlap between system components, consider alternative perspectives, and develop connected understanding.

Identification of key hypotheses and research questions

McREL teams began by clarifying terms, relationships, and the conceptual scope of each review. Teams read and discussed a document produced during the Foundation's strategy definition process, *Research Guide for CRLS: Outline of Research Questions for Each Component of the CRLS* (n.d.). Included in this Guide were preliminary questions for each literature review. Teams previewed relevant literature, confirmed that the questions could be answered by the extant knowledge base, and posed additional questions when important issues related to accelerating learning for students of color and poverty were identified in the literature but missing in the Guide. The revised set of questions for each system component and Our Kids was reviewed and refined during ongoing dialogue between the Foundation and McREL.

Table 1: Phases of a literature review

Phase	Cooper, Hedges & Valentine (2009, p. 8)	Suri & Clarke (2009, p. 414)	McREL's approach
1	Problem formulation	Drawing from pertinent philosophical and theoretical discussions	Identification of key hypotheses
2		Identifying an appropriate purpose	Identification of research questions
3	Data collection	Searching for relevant evidence	Literature search
4	Data evaluation	Evaluating, interpreting, and distilling evidence	Identification and cataloguing of findings
5	Analysis and interpretation	Constructing connected understanding	Generating and communicating recommendations
6	Public presentation	Communicating with an audience	

Literature search

Multiple searches were conducted in a phased approach to identify as much literature as possible related to each system component and Our Kids. Teams conducted searches using multiple bibliographic databases: Academic Onefile, Academic Search Premier, Educators Reference Complete, ERIC, JSTOR, Proquest, and PsychInfo. Teams also conducted manual searches of journal and book tables of contents and reference lists of articles. Additional searches were conducted specifically to identify recent experimental and other research and reviews on the efficacy of interventions for accelerating learning of students of color and poverty. These searches were conducted by visiting the U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse Web site (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/) and the Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews Web site (http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.php). Relevant documents were identified on state education agency (SEA) Web sites, and SEA officials were interviewed or named as seminal authors or sources of models that had been developed and implemented to monitor and accelerate learning of Our Kids.

Each team identified and used key terms and synonyms relevant to the topic for searching. Searches were conducted for literature published in the most recent 10 years (1998–2008); however, works by seminal authors and other recommended literature were included from outside these years. The search landscape varied for each team based on the topic and relevant sources; for example, while What Works Clearinghouse was a relevant source for the Pedagogy team, it was not a relevant source for the Leadership/Human Capital team. Internal review of search records and results led to additional leads on sources. Searching continued until all recommendations had been implemented and/or few new hits were identified.

Identification and cataloguing of findings

A coding protocol was developed and implemented to categorize the literature. Each team used the same protocol, adding categories and decision rules, as needed to organize the particular literature relevant to their topic. Each team leader and one or more members of each team were trained on the decision rules in the coding protocol and provided follow-up support to resolve uncertainties in its application. Team leaders periodically conducted quality assurance reviews of completed coding sheets and updated the protocol as needed during weekly team leader meetings or discussions with the Foundation. The coding protocol included identifying the following information:

The coding protocol included identifying the following information:

- Full APA reference citation
- Category of literature (i.e., primary and secondary relevance)
- Type of literature (e.g., quantitative study, policy brief, program description)
- Locale
- Outcome
- Grade level
- Program or innovation name and description
- Main findings or points
- A recommendation for or against summarizing and including the selection in an annotated bibliography

In addition, component teams added to the protocol by categorizing relevance to particular parts of their conceptual model or concept map.

Guidelines were developed and used by teams to identify counterproductive orthodoxies, unmet needs, next practices, promising practices, and best practices based on type of literature and quality of evidence. These were defined in the following ways:

- *Counterproductive orthodoxies*: Conventional ways of providing education which may be impeding success of Our Kids
- *Unmet needs:* Areas where Our Kids are not yet well served by the current system of education
- *Next practices:* A program or practice that needs to developed, adapted, invented, and tested in response to an unmet need related to accelerating learning for Our Kids
- *Promising practices:* Practices based on research but not supported by rigorous efficacy data from randomized controlled trials
- *Best practices:* Practices demonstrated by one or more randomized controlled trials to be effective in improving outcomes for Our Kids

The research team reviewing the college readiness component of the Learning System employed a slightly different process. Rather than using the categories above, this team reviewed literature on college readiness and categorized findings into four essential areas as defined by the Foundation and Conley (2007): cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills.

Component teams met weekly to discuss and categorize findings and to develop a conceptual map of the insights gained from the literature summaries and review. Teams used different conceptual mapping tools (e.g., SmartArt) to organize the insights (findings) and presented and discussed their respective maps at cross-team meetings. Features common across teams' concept maps were identified and a standard framework developed. Teams arranged findings onto the concept maps, identifying conceptual gaps and conf icting or discrepant findings, and returned to searching and reviewing to fill in the gaps and resolve or explain discrepant findings. The conceptual maps served as an organizing framework for report construction.

Generating and communicating recommendations

Working collaboratively, component teams drew conclusions from the insights (findings) derived from the review and identified potential options and recommendations for each component of the system. Teams used an iterative process of identification, reviewing for validity against the knowledge base, and further refinement until they determined they had identified the most promising options and that each was informed by the existing knowledge base.

Team leaders used the outcomes of team discussions and cross-team discussions, literature summaries, and the researcher's own review and integration of the literature to write a draft report of the findings. Draft reports were reviewed by knowledgeable internal experts and revisions in search strategies, interpretations of findings, and/or conclusions were made. Revised reports were reviewed by the Foundation and other outside reviewers prior to final revisions and production.

Although the wide-ranging literature searches produced reports on extensive baseline information related to Our Kids and each system component, the reports are living documents. As living documents, they bridge the creative and scientific enterprises of the past and present, and we envision the need to return to some of them for updating, extending, and drilling-down in the future.

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