

Raising Standards for Tomorrow's Principals: Negotiating State Requirements, Faculty Interests, District Needs, and Best Practices

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Many states are mandating reforms in university-sponsored principal preparation programs, but faculty and school system personnel often have concerns about the prescriptive nature of state mandates related to these reforms. Auburn University served as one of four pilot principal preparation program redesigns in Alabama, a process that took over two years. Redesign efforts involved negotiating state requirements, faculty needs and research interests, school district needs and interests, best practices, and common sense. The re-design was developed and is being implemented in partnership with seven school districts. In this article we interrogate the issues, challenges, and successes faced throughout one university's principal preparation program redesign process, offering reflections, insights, and lessons learned for others currently engaged or soon to be negotiating competing agendas for how they should prepare principals.

Many of today's principal preparation program reform initiatives stem from a National Council on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEE) white paper written in 1987 (Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988; Murphy, 1992; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987). The authors of the NCEE paper claimed that preparation programs were out of alignment with educational leadership research and practice and made several recommendations, which prompted numerous state-initiated change processes. In 1989, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration

(NPBEA) echoed the sentiments of NCEE and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) published a series of case studies that explored the content and process of changing traditional preparation programs into experimental training models (Milstein, 1992; Murphy, 1992). This led to a large number of thoughtful papers and recommendations about leadership preparation (e.g. Heller, Conway, & Jacobsen, 1988; Muse & Thomas, 1991; Peterson & Finn, 1985; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999; Protheroe, 1998; Young & Petersen, 2002).

Alabama, along with many other states and professional organizations, called for substantive changes in the way principals are prepared (Cox, 2007; Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2007) and moved to effect these changes through the credentialing process (Griffiths, et al., 1998; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2006, 2007). In Alabama, the work of redesigning principal preparation began in 2004, with the formation of Alabama's Congress on School Leadership. The Congress, convened by Governor Bob Riley and Alabama State Superintendent Joe Morton, included over 250 delegates from education and business (Cox, 2007). One hundred of these delegates were invited to participate in one of five task forces created to address issues related to school leadership in Alabama schools. These task forces looked at issues such as standards, certification, working conditions, professional development, and selection and preparation. Based on the recommendations from these task forces, in 2005 Alabama adopted legislation authorizing redesign initiatives for preparation programs. This authorization required redesigns to make districts partners with universities in the preparation of school leaders, placing stronger emphasis on developing competencies for improving schools and increasing student achievement, creating a licensing structure based on evidence that school leaders can improve schools and increase student achievement, providing an induction program focused on continued professional development,

providing a state leadership academy that enhances current leaders' capacity for working with faculty to improve schools, and providing school leaders with suitable working conditions that will promote strong instructional leadership (Cox, 2007). All thirteen college or university-based principal preparation programs in Alabama were informed of the new standards and requirements. The central objective of the redesign directive was that principals in our state must be prepared in ways that ensure "every child learns, is successful in school, and is prepared to lead a productive life beyond high school through collaborative work with school leaders" (SREB, 2006, 2007).

As a team of faculty, university administrators, and school system leaders, we agreed with these goals, but had concerns about what appeared at first to be an over-emphasis on a prescriptive, deficit-driven approach to leadership development (English, 2003, 2006). In the fall of 2005, the State's Department of Education issued a request for proposals (RFP) to all colleges with educational leadership programs at universities throughout the state. The stated intent of the RFP was to seek innovative, partnership-driven ideas for new ways to prepare tomorrow's instructional leaders.

As an educational leadership faculty and with the support of our school district partners and college administrators, we made a conscious choice to propose an innovative program design process that met the requirements of the mandated standards while also attending to the dispositions, skills, and content we

believe is essential for today's school leaders. We prepared an extensive response to the state's request for proposals, and subsequently Auburn University was selected as one of four pilot programs. At that point we closed admissions to the old program and readied to prepare the new one, a process that took two years. We were determined to design a program reflective of what we knew to be real needs of our district-based partners, research-based best practices, and adherence to socially just, democratic principles (Brown, 2004; Gale & Densmore, 2003; Kochan & Reed, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). We felt strongly about the positive benefits that could emerge from involving our district-based partners in all aspects of the redesign process.

Purpose

The authors of this article were integrally involved in Auburn University's principal redesign efforts. Dr. Reed helped write the grant proposal that secured Auburn's place as a pilot program, was program coordinator throughout the redesign process, and provided leadership and oversight throughout the committee work and program development process up to the accreditation phase when a new program coordinator joined the team. Llanes was department head throughout the second year of program planning and during the program accreditation process.

This article provides a brief overview of the processes used to redesign our principal preparation

program and situates information about our work within the political, contested realm of multiple needs and purposes influencing our program development process. Within our critical reflections we interrogate issues, challenges, and successes faced throughout our university's principal preparation program redesign process. Throughout the United States and elsewhere there are criticisms of traditional preparation practices and strong opinions about how future educational leaders should be prepared for their changing responsibilities (Heller, Conway, & Jacobsen, 1988; Levine, 2005; Murphy, 1992, 2002, 2006; SREB, 2006, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2008). Yet, rarely are leadership preparation program faculty willing to openly discuss the processes used to redesign their work or the challenges faced throughout the process. In this article we attempt to tell our redesign story while offering insights and lessons learned for others currently engaged or soon to be negotiating competing agendas for how they should prepare principals.

Underlying Assumptions

Standards for educational leadership have influenced policy and practice at the national, state, and local levels (Anderson, 2001; Cox, 2007; English, 2003). All over the United States university principal preparation programs are being called on to teach both the structure and knowledge base of the discipline and the applied field-based components of educational leadership (Pounder, Young, & Reitzug, 2002). Very often the knowledge base is

derived from research, while the field-based elements come from localized experience. Moreover, these aspects of preparation must be balanced with taking on the responsibility of linking traditional scholarly priorities, such as formal knowledge production, with improvement of professional practice (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Few faculty are both experience-based and research-based in their practice (Livingston, Davis, Green, & DeSpain, 2001); henceforth, increasingly complex demands are being placed on those who prepare educational leaders in traditional settings such as university programs (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Muth & Barnett, 2001; Young, Peterson, & Short, 2002). Additionally, external agencies studying school leadership issues often offer viewpoints that challenge our previous ways of doing business (SREB, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2008). As university programs respond to calls to redesign their principal preparation programs, we believe faculty and partners should interrogate these competing demands while remaining open to fresh points of view as they determine which ideas and approaches are contextually appropriate for their own programs (SREB, 2006, 2007). While responding to state-issued mandates, school and university partnerships may wish to negotiate knowledge of research-based best practices and experience-based effective practices, financial implications for their institutions, and other political and social agendas. As we engaged in the redesign of the principal preparation program at Auburn University, we

wrestled with these issues and dilemmas and determined that our context called for the design of a program capable of producing action-oriented (SREB, 2007), learner-focused (Young, 2006; Young et al., 2002), socially just (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Theoharis, 2007) democratic leaders (Gale & Densmore, 2003; Kochan & Reed, 2005).

As we engaged in our redesign work we operated using five assumptions developed after careful consideration of our core values and our contextual needs. First, we viewed the mandated standards as a minimum baseline. While we were required to address the items in these standards, we felt strongly that our program must also encompass other forward-thinking skills and approaches. Second, we had strong pre-existing partnerships with numerous school systems due to our college's history of outreach scholarship and extensive field-based work in schools that integrated theory into practice. Members of the redesign team believed that these partnerships were essential to the successful development and implementation of a successful program. Our school-based and community partners worked hand-in-hand with us every step of the way throughout the process and continue to work closely with us as we implement and refine our program. Third, we believed then as we do now that we have a moral and ethical obligation to improve current practice in schools while preparing the next generation of school leaders. Our belief went beyond the obvious changes in practice that new principals would hypothetically bring to

schools and extended to changes brought about during the process of educating these new principals. Fourth, we believed it is essential to not just “profess” knowledge and practice, but that as professors we must also model what we teach in our own daily work. For example, if we teach our students that it is important to operate as a learning community, then we must strive to operate as a learning community ourselves. Finally, we believed our program is and will continue to be a work in progress and that we must operate from and model a continuous-improvement approach to program implementation. To operationalize this belief, data collection and analysis and subsequent formative adjustments must be integrated into the program review processes.

A Brief Description of Our Redesigned Principal Preparation Program

Auburn University’s College of Education has been preparing educational leaders since 1915, and our graduates are serving in P-12 school districts throughout the world. The educational leadership faculty and district partners responded to the state’s call for proposals to redesign principal preparation programs so we could continue our efforts to provide an informative and experiential curriculum for future educational leaders while perhaps influencing the implementation of new policies and standards pertaining to these programs throughout the state. Our Educational Leadership Preparation Redesign Plan focused on four areas: 1) establishing an

advisory council, 2) redesigning the admissions process, 3) redesigning the curriculum and system of delivering the curriculum, and 4) designing and implementing an ongoing evaluation process to measure both program effectiveness and graduate preparedness. The key players in our redesign work included educational leadership faculty, other faculty from our department, our department head, our dean, superintendents from our seven partner school districts and select members of their leadership teams (some of whom were recent or current students in our doctoral program), a representative from our State Department of Education, and a business partner. Our redesign team was diverse in gender, age, experience, and background.

We employed an external consultant to facilitate the beginning work of the redesign effort. He began his role by listening to concerns of university faculty and administration and discussing needs with k-12 administrators. Next, he, along with others, pulled together resources about innovative programs to share with the group as a point of initial discussion. His role was primarily to help us assess our needs, organize and facilitate our initial meetings, assist with establishing group norms and ways of interacting, and to review progress and identify next steps for the group. He attended several of our initial group meetings and frequently sent us information about research or innovative programs he thought might be useful. Near the end of our pre-accreditation work, he

rejoined our group and reviewed our plans with us as a critical friend.

Advisory Council

Once selected as one of four pilot redesign programs in our state, we created an advisory council comprised of leaders in our seven partner school districts, a business leader, university faculty and administrators, and a representative from the state department of education. The advisory council met regularly to: (a) review best practices and data collected pertaining to district and student needs, (b) collaboratively develop policies, practices and curriculum, and (c) assess progress and redirect efforts. We spent time early in the redesign process developing our group's norms for working together and identifying common beliefs and purposes. For example, the group wanted to ensure that everyone's voice was heard and valued, so we tried to ensure our practice was aligned with our proclaimed values.

Four working committees were established that were comprised of Advisory Council members including a partnership committee, an admissions committee, a curriculum committee, and an evaluation/assessment committee. [Note: each of these committees is described in more detail in the next section of this article.] As the committees developed ideas and materials, the collective advisory council was reconvened to provide feedback and ultimately agree on policies, procedures, and approaches. After receiving feedback, committees regrouped and continued their work. It

was a recursive process that took approximately two years to produce our final redesign plan that was then subjected to the state's review process for accreditation.

One of our first efforts as an advisory council was reaching agreement on our common beliefs and purposes. Collectively, the advisory council members crafted our principal preparation program on the following mission and vision:

- Mission: to prepare engaged, collaborative, and effective leaders of learning through the integration of theory, reflection, and applied leadership opportunities while recognizing that school leadership is an intellectual, moral, and craft practice.
- Vision: to develop leaders who are able to improve the quality of education and consequently the quality of life for all citizens.

The advisory council also crafted an overarching, multiple objective goal: to provide a well-organized curriculum, integrated with significant field experiences and opportunities for collaboration in order to prepare leaders to create successful schools for all p-12 students by

- forming and sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships with districts, enriching both leadership preparation and practice to make ethical, informed, and socially aware decisions;

- promoting reflective practice on experiences, both personal and professional, to better understand self, situations, and our moral imperative as educational leaders;
- helping current and aspiring school leaders think critically about their practice and its implications for student learning;
- continuously assessing and improving leadership quality by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research in order;
- preparing well-informed student advocates who understand their role in shaping the purposes of schooling in our changing world;
- preparing leaders who are technologically savvy, and
- actively promoting a deep appreciation for diversity and an understanding of how this perspective cannot be detached from the broader social, political, and cultural context involving questions of power, social justice, and democracy.

Committee Work

Four working committees were formed as part of the advisory council's work and each included university faculty and p-12 administrators. These included partnership, admissions, curriculum, and evaluation committees. The partnership committee also included university administrators in addition to faculty and p-12 leaders

while the evaluation committee included a representative from the State Department of Education and the college's assessment coordinator. A brief description of the work of these four committees follows.

Partnership Committee. The partnership committee defined practices for collaboration and developed a memorandum of understanding that was signed by district superintendents and university administrators. This group created a memorandum of understanding signed by students accepted into our program, district superintendents, and university administrators. Each of these documents clearly defined expectations and responsibilities for all involved illustrating our effort to create a foundation-based program (Murphy, 2006).

Admissions Committee. The admissions committee developed an innovative approach to selecting qualified students for the program, including development of a portfolio, an onsite writing sample, an interview with the selection committee, and participation in a group problem-solving situation with other prospective students. The group work was intended to illustrate leadership skills and reveal the candidates' ability to collaborate well with others. The mini case studies we used asked candidates to consider a variety of options and identify potential solutions to complex issues facing today's school leaders. The results of this mini case study/problem solving scenario were then presented to the selection committee members and scored using a rubric that assessed the

depth of knowledge, ability to apply that knowledge, communication skills, leadership skills, and ability to collaborate with other team members. In our program, all decisions regarding final selection of candidates were (and still are) made jointly by university faculty, school-based leaders, and other members of our advisory council.

Curriculum Committee. The curriculum committee began their work by comparing our former principal preparation curriculum to the state standards, district needs, and current research on innovative preparation approaches (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2008). A decision was made to scrap the former curriculum because it was viewed as outdated in comparison to our new goals. Instead, we were determined to use a zero-based curriculum development approach (Murphy, 2006) and design fresh, collaboratively developed courses that met new requirements and the current and future needs of our district partners and the state. Focus groups were held with school district leaders, and data were collected identifying what they felt were the needed skills, content knowledge, and dispositions for success as a school-based leader. Using a qualitative software package, we analyzed these district data and compared them to multiple standards and research-based best practices to develop our curriculum strands (see Reames' article in this special issue for further information). These curriculum strands were further researched by the curriculum committee members and developed to identify

content areas for coursework. University faculty and advisory council members collaboratively wrote and reviewed syllabi to ensure viability and usefulness. These syllabi then underwent a lengthy approval process as they made their way through both our college and university curriculum review committees.

The curriculum committee was also responsible for identifying best practices for program delivery. Our program chose a cohort format taught by field-based leaders and university faculty. We selected a cohort format for three reasons: development of a peer-support network, opportunities for integrating all coursework and field experiences in a cohesive and organized manner, and ease in administration of the program (Twale, Reed, & Kochan, 2001; Kochan, Reed, Twale, & Jones, 1998). In this model, a new cohort begins each summer. A summer institute is held as the first official programmatic experience for students, but the institute also provides professional development for our school-based partners and educational leaders in other school districts. Each summer's institute is based on a theme of importance to the partnership and that has been determined by program faculty and district administrators.

Our program was designed to be completed in four semesters. Extensive field-based experiences were integrated into each semester's work, including internship opportunities aligned with that semester's coursework and think tank activities (collaborative research and problem solving work sessions) addressing authentic needs in our

partner districts. For example, action research is a key component of our program. Action research presentations address student learning, and serve as the capstone event for our program. The end result of the curriculum committee's work was the development of curriculum and experiences to ensure creation of a learning community focused on practice, problem solving, and collaboration.

Courses were organized so that students engaged in a developmentally appropriate and comprehensive preparation program offering opportunities to integrate theory and practice in all classes while emphasizing collaboration and shared decision-making focused on improving student learning and achievement. For example, in our first year of the program, the first classes offered provided an overview of the principalship and taught the group action research skills which were needed throughout their program. Based on our own observations and feedback from our students, the first semester courses have now been changed so that action research is taught in the fall semester, allowing a full fifteen weeks of study instead of condensing the course as was done to accommodate a summer schedule. During the second year, summer courses included an overview of the principalship and a course focused on creating professional learning communities.

Evaluation Committee. The evaluation committee included university faculty, school system leaders, and the state's director of teacher and administrator performance

evaluation. The group began their work by examining current processes, requirements, and best practices for assessing students, faculty and teaching, program components and effectiveness, and outcomes. They collaborated with the college's assessment coordinator and considered ways to integrate candidate and program assessment needs with college, state, National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Southern Accreditation of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and university assessment requirements. Strategies were developed for diagnostic evaluation of student work so that specific feedback could be provided to each student throughout the program. The end result of this committee's work was the development of a comprehensive, inclusive, and on-going process focused on continuous improvement. (See Ross' article on evaluation in this special issue for more information about our program's assessment and evaluation approaches.)

Key Attributes

Throughout all of our redesign work there were five key attributes guiding our work. Each of these is described below. First, we were purposeful about designing a program allowing application of knowledge to authentic field-based problems while including opportunities to learn, apply, and lead (SREB, 2006). Second, all aspects of our program were focused on connecting leadership to improving student learning. Third, we were clear about the importance of having high expectations for students, faculty, field-based coaches, and our p-12 partners. Fourth,

we created and are maintaining a strong focus on professional learning communities and shared leadership within the program. Finally, there was a strong emphasis on continuous assessment and improvement and the need to integrate evaluative strategies into our regular work practices. Developing the redesign prototype involved a lot of hard work, but implementation proved to be even more challenging as we struggled to ensure that these key attributes were enacted rather than only espoused.

Institutional, Programmatic, Partnership, Personnel, and Personal Challenges

We faced numerous issues and challenges throughout the redesign and program implementation process, some of which were similar to what has been documented in other research (Young, & Petersen, 2002). As we reflected on our work and complications we faced, we identified four types of recurring challenges. These included institution-level concerns such as finances and public perceptions (LaMagdeleine, Maxcy, Pounder, & Reed, 2009), personnel issues such as staffing and differing world views, programmatic issues and partnership-related issues. Programmatic issues included integration of our new admission processes and criteria into a multi-program department utilizing other types of admissions processes and criteria, program development, program implementation, and aligning evaluation strategies for our program with other evaluation requirements

within the college and university. One of the strengths of our redesign work was the pre-existence of strong university-school system partnerships.

Institutional Issues and Challenges

Institutions of higher education are typically bound by written and unwritten expectations (LaMagdeleine et al, 2009). For years, educational leadership programs have been viewed as "cash cows" by many universities (Levine, 2005) and it became clear that the field-based nature of the program would prevent the enrollment of the usual 25-30 students per classroom and thus the cost per student would rise, lowering the profitability of our program. Public relations, both formal and informal, can help determine the reputation of university programs and arguably, of the university itself (LaMagdeleine et al., 2009). When major programmatic changes occurred, such as the halt in admissions during our redesign effort, we found that there were potential consequences for the program, the college, and the university, depending on how the admissions hiatus was viewed by the public and upper level administration in the university. For example, as faculty, we received inquiries from prospective students asking if our program had been closed. We explained that we were serving as a pilot program for the state and there was generally a positive change in the attitude of these inquirers rather than the presumption that our college had been reprimanded for some reason. We were fortunate that our dean was able to persuade our provost's office that the temporary halt in

admissions would be worthwhile in terms of overall program and admissions effectiveness. Still, this was a gamble on her part. The timing of our redesign work allowed this admissions hiatus to be viable. Considering our current financial hardships in the state, we might not have been able to afford this halt in admissions if we were redesigning the program at this point in time.

Financial issues. The redesign work exacted a financial cost to our institution as enrollment was halted while the redesign work took place. Our department continued to support the salary of its faculty while the number of students completing our former program was reduced and no new students came in for two years. In Alabama, the state mandated that all redesign universities place a moratorium on new students admitted into the program until all aspects of the new program were approved. Simultaneously, some competing institutions across Alabama were able to increase their enrollment because they had not begun their redesign planning, and students wishing to complete their certification before the new standards were in place at Auburn flocked to these institutions.

The period of re-design was originally conceived as lasting 12 months, but in reality it extended into 24 months and a new cohort of students was not admitted until spring 2008. Prior to halting admission in our program there were typically 10-15 new students enrolled in our master's program each year. While new admissions were halted for two years,

tuition was lost on between 20-30 students during this time, yet faculty still had to be paid. Students enrolled prior to the hiatus needed to complete their programs of study, so we continued to offer the old courses while creating the new ones. Some of the cost of the re-design, such as expenses incurred by partners and our own faculty and staff, were partially covered by a \$50,000 grant from the Alabama's State Department of Education.

Our new program is more expensive to deliver due to the added cost of field-based coaches, district-based instructors who co-teach some classes with university faculty, and travel costs associated with working in the schools. Without intervention, it seemed our program would shift from generating revenues to depleting revenues. Recognizing this issue, the Alabama State Department of Education promised that the leadership grant of \$50,000 would extend for three years, but instead this support ended after the first year due to budgetary difficulties within the state. This financial situation has left the program vulnerable to budget cutting efforts and, henceforth, it now occasionally requires support from the dean and the provost, which it currently enjoys, to maintain itself. To maintain program sustainability, we have to continue monitoring financial expenditures and seek external funding to supplement programming costs, and may possibly have to increase the enrollment in our program.

Public relations. For many years our educational leadership program has benefitted from a good reputation within our state's school systems.

Shortly after his appointment as Department Head, one co-author, Llanes, attended two statewide superintendent and administrator's conferences where he explored the reputation of the department he had just joined. Invariably, superintendents expressed confidence in Auburn's program graduates and said that all things being equal they would prefer hiring an Auburn graduate than one from other institutions. We regularly receive feedback from area superintendents reinforcing the view that our program graduates tend to be the preferred hires when school districts have leadership openings. When we imposed the hiatus on new admissions as part of the redesign requirement, we were concerned about perceptions that we were not addressing the hiring needs of the school districts in our state, especially since our state is facing an impending leadership shortage when current leaders retire (Reed, Zhu, & Spencer, 2008). Only the four pilot redesign programs were initially required to halt admissions during their program development and approval phases. As other universities around the state continued to admit and graduate students in educational leadership, we received numerous inquiries about why we were not admitting students. It was important for us to be transparent about our selection as a pilot redesign program and to explain that we halted admissions in order to create a new model program. We also assured prospective students that all programs in the state would eventually be terminating admissions and ending the add-on certification option within the

next few years. (Note: The add-on certification option allowed students to take five required classes and complete a six semester hour internship beyond their master's degree as an option for becoming certified as a school administrator.) The new state standards no longer allow this option and require all university-prepared principals to complete a master's degree in instructional leadership (Cox, 2007).

Staffing. Our program faced a unique situation. While the program was in admissions moratorium, three members of the educational leadership team left the university. One leadership faculty member retired. One left for other opportunities, and one passed away. Therefore, we did not face one of the major issues often facing reformers, the natural resistance to change on the part of tenured faculty (SREB, 2007). Instead, as we hired and reinforced the faculty with new members, we found that they brought new ideas with them which needed to be harmonized with the newly designed program as we implemented our plans. We tried to view this situation as an opportunity to further develop our faculty learning community, especially as we shifted away from "a technical, managerial focus to that of an intellectual, moral leader—a leadership based on deep convictions and clarity of purpose" (Cambron-McCabe, 2003, p. 296).

The usual practice of maintaining a program focused on campus-based instruction with limited field practice and professor-based control ended, and we instituted a collaborative approach where the staff of the seven partner districts helped teach as well as mentor

and supervise students in an extended field experience involving at least 30 full days of practice over a period of 15 months. This extensive field experience required additional supervision on the part of university faculty and led, in our case, to the creation of a non-tenure track clinical faculty position to coordinate these efforts. This was our department's first (and only) clinical faculty position, so efforts were made to explain to colleagues why this position was necessary and that the person employed in this position was well-qualified for the requirements of the position. We worked to ensure there was no perception about this position being considered part of a two-tiered system as is often the case with non-tenured or part-time faculty (Author, 2002).

Ensuring current students completed the old program while simultaneously designing a new program, integrating new courses and new processes of delivering coursework, operating a program in partnership with seven school districts, and hiring and then assimilating a new faculty to the department and the institution as well as the values of the program was a complex management task. These challenges required special understanding of the changing dynamics and responsibilities while embracing new inclusive leadership practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Programmatic Issues

As we implemented our program, we were faced with a variety of programmatic issues related to

admissions, program implementation, and program evaluation. Each of these issues is described in the following sections.

Admissions-Related Issues. Our new admissions model called for extensive participation on the part of our partner districts in the identification and evaluation of new candidates. News that the program received approval from the Alabama State Department of Education was at first disseminated only to those districts who had been our partners and they took on a leadership role in identifying potential candidates. Only when we were certain that we could serve all the partner's needs did we begin active recruitment of candidates from other districts. Selection of students from outside the partnership meant that their district must either join our partnership or agree to program requirements for candidates. This process required individual meetings and additional coordination between the program coordinator, the clinical faculty member, and the district liaison to our program.

We wanted to ensure that candidates who were not being recommended by the partners also had an opportunity to apply to our program if they wished, so we allowed "personal nominations" and not just "institutional nominations." These additional admissions tasks regarding our new admissions policy, and the fact that we still had students pursuing the old programs, taxed our faculty who were assisting students completing the old program. In order to serve the students in the former program extra courses had to be taught to make sure these students

finished before the state-issued closure date for all of the former principal preparation programs.

Program implementation. As we near completion of the second cohort of principal candidates, we are pleased by how smoothly the program is moving along overall. As the program has progressed, there has been some evidence that we underestimated the amount of time and effort required of our students. Our students are generally full-time educators, and demands on their time due to the changed nature of the curriculum exceeded our original estimates. Our new program is much more demanding and rigorous than our previous program and has been intentionally designed to be this way. Although student needs cannot be ignored entirely, we are in agreement that we will not lower our expectations about quality and instead continue to seek ways to address student needs through more purposeful alignment of course content and field-based experiences and a resequencing of our course offerings to balance workloads and the types of course assignments.

When we began implementation of the new program, nearly all of our faculty were new to Auburn University and were unaccustomed to working with each other or with school-based partners. We had to negotiate norms of communication while working to create an efficient yet collaborative working environment. In addition to being new to each other, the faculty members each brought different world views, experiences, and needs, which caused us to continue to deliberate further on programmatic issues. A positive side of

this time consuming process was that it required us to reflect on our original intentions, partnership-driven decisions, and statements made during our accreditation process, while also recognizing that program implementation required some degree of compromise (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

Program Evaluation

We have used a variety of approaches to evaluate our program, our curriculum, and our students (see Ross's article on evaluation in this special issue). To us, success has been defined in several ways. For example, our first evaluation of the redesign process supported our belief that the school-based partners felt they were fully participating members of the team and that their ideas were included in the final product. At the end of the first 12 months of programming, all of our students took the state licensing examination and all but one passed it ahead of schedule. Similarly, anecdotal data collected by the clinical professor revealed that all but two of the graduates of the first cohort were targeted for leadership positions, indicating that these students would likely be very competitive hires. As we continued the evaluation process, we found that some activities, such as a launching event called the Summer Institute, challenged the students at higher levels of practice than they or we had anticipated. Through the institute the students found themselves engaged with a group of accomplished educational leaders who offered them invaluable insights about the field.

An important goal of this program was to improve the quality of pk-12 education in our partner school districts while preparing future instructional leaders. One strategy that we use is having individual courses and professors evaluated by the students. So far, these evaluations meet or exceed the average scores when compared with other departmental courses and professors. Therefore, we look forward to seeing what impacts the program has on the schools our students are currently serving.

Partnership Challenges

Our state, like many others in the United States, is facing a budget shortfall that is impacting public education. School district budget reductions are necessitating cutbacks, so there are fewer people in central offices and a reduction in administrative depth in the schools. Auburn University's educational leadership faculty is fortunate in that our partners are committed to our program and are generous with their time. Our college's history of outreach scholarship and active engagement with p-12 schools helped us to establish mutually beneficial relationships and practices with our partners. Although we are in uncharted waters regarding how much to involve the district partners in the activities of the program, their staff continues to serve in critical roles such as co-presenting content, serving as field-based coaches and as evaluators of the students and the program.

Adding New Partners. After the first year of programming, we expanded the partnership into new districts both

for financial reasons and because other school districts requested to become official partners with our program. We now are partnered with eleven school districts. This inclusion of new partner districts required the leadership representing our original p-12 partners to be willing to accommodate our new partners' needs and expectations. Although we remained committed to our original p-12 partners by also honoring the experience and needs of the new partners, it provided a forum for continually refining views we held about our students, our curriculum, and the admissions and evaluation processes we used in our program.

Personal Challenges

As faculty members, we have lives outside of the academy. Our families, friends, and other obligations and activities are important. Unfortunately, the redesign work was very labor intensive, often forcing us to cut back on other responsibilities in our lives. The extensive nature of the redesign work also impacted the amount of time available for other research and publication projects. Juggling these multiple responsibilities throughout the two-year redesign process often produced stress and tension in our professional and personal lives.

This type of commitment to the university is expected from all faculty members, yet it often does not count much on performance reviews and tenure decisions (Adams, 2002). All faculty members must remain actively engaged in teaching, research, outreach, and service at our university. Due to the

amount of time, energy, and focus our redesign required, some of our faculty involved in the process were not as productive in traditionally recognized ways as they may have ordinarily been. Although our department and college leadership appreciated everyone's effort, and we are proud of our new program, the project took a toll professionally on those involved throughout the two-year redesign process.

Successes to Date

We have had many successes to date with our newly redesigned program. For example, our new admissions process, while labor intensive, provides an opportunity for our partnership members to collaborate in meaningful ways while identifying each cohort of students. As we engage in this process, we discuss what it means to be an effective pre-service leader, what qualities and dispositions are important, and how to ensure both high quality and equity in our selection process. We are proud of our first cohort of students and our second cohort is nearly finished with their coursework. As all members of our cohorts participated in an extensive screening and admissions process, we believe they are bright, diverse, and full of passion to improve the quality of life and learning for all students. We have students representing suburban, rural, and small city districts; districts that are primarily comprised of under-represented populations, and districts facing extreme poverty and geographic isolation. Opportunities to learn

together about the unique characteristics of all of these districts strengthen the overall learning experience for our students and for our faculty.

Our Summer Institute was another programmatic success. The Summer Institute was designed to accomplish multiple objectives: provide high quality and high profile learning opportunities for our new students, provide high quality professional development for our district partners and our own faculty, increase visibility and interest in our program, and provide a forum for all involved to learn together in powerful ways. Throughout our redesign work we were purposeful about modeling best practices rather than simply espousing them. For the past two summers, we were able to bring in nationally known researchers and leading practitioners, state-level policy makers and leaders, and school-based leaders from around the area to conduct and participate in professional development offerings and reflective discussions alongside our students. At each institute there were frequent opportunities to not only listen to presenters but to discuss and interrogate the information presented with other institute participants.

The growth of our partnership continues to be a source of pride for all of us involved in the program. Although we had strong partnerships with numerous school districts prior to our redesign work, the intentionality and authenticity of our work together has allowed our partnership to flourish in new ways as students engage in meaningful research about school district issues and as the advisory

council continues its work. The more we work together, the more we learn about each other. The more we learn about each other, the better able we are to work together. Our program brings a synergy and organic approach to the work with our partners.

Insights and Lessons Learned

We learned many lessons throughout our redesign work. Although some of these lessons may seem obvious at first glance, they were important insights for our group. These lessons are as follows:

- Deadlines are important. On-going discussions were important, but deadlines were essential. It would have been easy for the group to have stalled in committee work without moving forward. At times it seemed we spent too much time on certain items like the mission and vision, yet perhaps not enough time on other items such as program evaluation. We continue to be reminded throughout our work that it is important to consider the relative importance of the task at hand and monitor time usage accordingly. Finding a balance between inquiry, advocacy, and task completion is an on-going tension (Cambron-McCabe, 2003).
- Be prepared to expend lots of time and to exercise patience. The redesign work is important and consciously modeling what you preach often takes additional time. When diverse groups come together to negotiate priorities and some committee members do not come prepared for the tasks at hand, it is easy to become frustrated. We learned the importance of understanding that this is an on-going, time consuming process that requires almost constant negotiation and renegotiation. But when done properly, we believe it is worth the extra effort.
- Be open to new ideas and ways of preparing school leaders. Pay close attention to the ways school-based and community or business partners frame and reframe issues and feedback when developing curriculum and delivery models. Our process required frequent adjustments to accommodate the needs of our stake holders while remaining true to the vision for the program (Cambron-McCabe, 2003). Further, the needs of our local pk-12 partners varied. Similar to English's (2003) decry of "cookie cutter programs," we found that there was not a one size fits all model for our partners or for our students.
- Establish a committee coordinator. Working in committees was an effective approach to program redesign; however, we found that one person was needed to provide oversight and to connect the work of each committee by

keeping abreast of what was done, what was not done, and by reminding everyone about deadlines. We believe the redesign process needed one person without other major responsibilities to manage the day-to-day process, schedule meetings, and coordinate the schedules of university faculty, school-based leaders, and community representatives in order to have productive time to work on specific assignments.

- Prioritize meeting times. Finding common times to work together was a challenge as we all tended to have different scheduling needs. By planning far in advance whenever possible we were able to schedule meeting times that met most of the group's needs. Each committee had a specific and time intensive task, but these meetings were easier to schedule because there were fewer schedules to coordinate. To ensure coordination and consistency within the entire redesign product, it was important to us to have regular progress reports made to the entire advisory council. Without doing so, there was a constant danger of disconnect among the various program components.
- Be aware of subjectivity. It was difficult at times to allow the data to drive decision making without introducing our own preferences, especially when challenged with changes to long-

standing practices and content (Blackmore, 2008). Not all programmatic decisions were solely data based. We have strengthened our emphases on certain areas of curriculum and deemphasized other areas based on the needs of our district partners, legal directives, and standards or other requirements.

- Build strong relationships. As part of the evaluation plan, we found it was essential to establish a cooperative relationship early on with our college's assessment office, thus minimizing duplicative efforts and ensuring our new program assessment requirements were aligned with college and university reporting systems. This inter-organizational planning provided greater coherence and helped to eliminate unnecessary reporting, and instead allowed us to focus our energies on collecting and using data that was important to our partnership and program, our college, and our university as well as the state and other accrediting agencies.
- Funding is a necessary consideration. We had to continually negotiate between what we considered to be an exemplary practice and what we could afford to deliver. Still, we did not always eliminate options that were important due to financial concerns and instead, sought ways to trim costs or find additional resources. This is

especially a consideration now that the economy is in dire shape. It is important to remember that we are not isolated from global economic trends (Friedman, 2008) and that responsiveness to budgetary issue is only one of many trends such as technology and generational learning preferences that can influence our programs.

- Utilize an outside peer adviser. We utilized an external consultant during the beginning stages of our redesign work and again at the end of our planning efforts. His presence helped to establish more equal relationships among our advisory council members so that university personnel did not drive all decisions and processes. Further, he helped to set the stage for establishing group norms and ways of interacting, shared some best practices research, and motivated the group to begin its work. Although his contributions were valuable, it is difficult for an outside consultant to provide on-going leadership in a re-design process that is supposed to be collaboratively developed. While outside consultants have important insights, they usually do not have a deep understanding of the local context and requirements. To be successful as an external consultant or as the group's

leader, one must be keenly aware of the local environment, political undercurrents, and history and intent of the redesign effort.

- Maintain an on-going, open dialogue among the school-based leaders, community representatives, and university faculty and administrators. School-based leaders and community members helped university faculty understand the challenges they were experiencing in meeting the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the constraints they faced addressing Highly Qualified Teacher demands, especially when considering release time for teachers to participate in field-based experiences and internship opportunities. By working together, we have gained deeper knowledge of and respect for each others' working conditions and limitations.

Concluding Thoughts

Auburn University's principal preparation redesign work challenges were similar to the issues facing many universities in states where programmatic change is mandated (LaMagdeleine et al., 2009). We had the opportunity to hire nearly all our faculty for our new program, and this provided us with the freedom to recruit people with the appropriate experiences, dispositions, and 21st century skills we wanted to model for our students.

However, hiring faculty who were not part of the redesign planning process created challenges regarding buy-in and alignment with the collaboratively developed vision for the program.

Rather than becoming defensive about state mandated changes in leadership preparation, we were determined to accept the challenge, but to approach the change process in a way that extended and enhanced the state's requirements and directives. By using this approach, we engaged in reflective thinking about what we value and know as a group and reviewed best practices research and conducted our own research about student, district, and university needs and perceptions. Although realizing that we had to be open to changing our ways of doing business by making our work transparent and embracing the active scrutiny and involvement of others, at times this work felt very risky and we had to resist the temptation to fall back on traditional approaches to designing and implementing programming or to privileging university faculty perspectives and needs. We still struggle at times with these issues, but as a collaborative team that includes university faculty and school district personnel, we work hard to remain true to our purpose and promise. For university faculty and p-12 partners to truly engage in the collaborative work necessary to create a model program such as ours, it is essential for leaders in the institutions involved to carefully consider the benefits of such work and ensure that their reward systems place

value on this type of mutually beneficial endeavor.

We approached our redesign work using collaborative, inclusive, and transformative processes (Brown, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Jackson & Kelley, 2002), reaching beyond minimal standards that might have limited learning experiences (English, 2006). It was important to us to develop a program capable of translating emerging theories into practice and encouraging school leaders to be active advocates for all learners (Kezar & Carducci, 2007). There is no doubt that our redesign work was time consuming and labor intensive, often taking a professional and personal toll on those involved. Yet, at the end, the product and processes were energizing, carefully crafted, and we are proud of our work. Our on-going dialogues and negotiations about how to address various standards and mandates while incorporating resources and activities that met local needs strengthened our work. One of our underlying assumptions for our program redesign was that as faculty we have a moral and ethical responsibility to improve current practices in schools while preparing the next generation of educational leaders. By engaging with our partners in research about best practices for instructional leadership, reflective dialogues about learning and doing, and collaborative program development and implementation processes, we believe we have begun to make a positive difference toward meeting that goal.

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redesigned program negotiated NCATE and Alabama State Department of Education approval and began to operate.