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A CONTINUUM APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING SCHOOL LEADERS IN AN URBAN DISTRICT

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Leadership development is becoming an increasingly critical and strategic imperative for large urban school districts in the current education reform environment. Research indicates that a plethora of organizations have increasingly expressed the need to focus on leadership development and succession. In response to this need, some organizations are delivering programs to developing emerging leaders, commonly referred to as *growing their own*, within their organizations (Giber, Carter, & Goldsmith, 2000; Hix, Wall, & Frieler, 2003). In order for organizations to grow their own leaders these organizations must have a passion for growing the *right* leaders. Further, leadership development programs will better address future challenges when appropriate organizational structures and a solid strategic plan that support the organizational culture are in place (Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2000; Miller, Caldwell, & Lawson, 2001; Simmons, 2006). Studies on organizational leadership shortage have predicted a premature burnout that will further shrink the candidate pool of organizational leaders (Giganti, 2003; Charan, 2005; Normore, 2007; Risher & Stopper, 2001). Currently, a prevalent sense of urgency exists as many state and national level policy makers, urban school district, and educational leadership faculty question how best to prepare leaders given the existing shortages of highly qualified principals and superintendents and the complex demands of leading school reform efforts (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Murphy, 1992, 2006; Normore, 2007).

Due to the current climate of school leadership shortage in the United States school districts are urged to make a concerted effort to recruit and develop effective school leaders (Brody, Vissa, Weathers, & Mata, 2003; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Whatever the

reasons for developing leaders (i.e., preparation for turnover, a response to the changing leadership style driven by school reform, altered organizational structures, changing student demographics), it is imperative to have the right structure, systems, and programs in place that support comprehensive, systematic, and holistic learning opportunities for aspiring and practicing school leaders in order to build capacity and sustain leadership over time (Simmons, 2006). The essential infrastructure needed to support these initiatives means that leadership development for succession is embedded in the organizational culture (Tierney, 2006). Culture influences every aspect of a school's activities, including the levels of collegial and collaborative interaction, communication among participants, organizational commitment, and motivation (Deal & Peterson, 1999). It fosters or foils school effectiveness (Norton, 2005; Schein, 1992). According to Dean (2007), "A healthy, positive culture can be discerned immediately upon walking in the door" (p. 6).

Based on previous research the critical elements for systematic leadership succession include opportunities for understanding policies, organizational philosophies, values, structures, and decision making processes (Crawford, Carlton, & Stengel, 2003; Fink & Brayman, 2004, 2006; Fullan, 2005; Hart, 1993; Ibarra, 2005; Johnson, 2001). Other research indicates the need for school districts to plan for rigorous recruitment and selection strategies in order to attract, identify, select, and place future leaders (Rebore, 2001; Winter, Rinehart, & Munoz, 2002; Wong, Nicotera, & Gutherie, 2006.). Further research maintains the importance of providing implicit and explicit opportunities and experiences for professional and organizational socialization to unfold (Barnett, 2001; Daresh, 2004; Fauske, 2002). These researchers suggest that effective leadership development necessitates ongoing support, training, and involvement in order to gain new knowledge and a wide range of new skills for the evolving school leadership roles. Leaders develop their potential the most when they are allowed to grow and implement their ideas or learning without encumbrances from the organization itself (Hix,Wall, & Frieler, 2003; Miller, Caldwell, & Lawson, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

The purpose of this study was to broaden the inquiry on leadership development by examining a four-stage continuum approach to developing school leaders in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. Southeastern School District (SSD-pseudonym) was chosen for this study for three reasons: (1) the district implemented a multiple-staged leadership development program focused on “growing their own” leaders, (2) the professional interest the researcher has in leadership development programs, and (3) the convenient location of a large multi-ethnic urban district provided accessibility and opportunity for the researcher to conduct the study. The research focused on leadership development by looking across the different stages of a leadership continuum to capture perceptions of the various processes and strategies used for succession planning, recruitment, and socialization of aspiring and practicing school leaders.

While several studies in education and business have documented leadership succession (Fink & Braymen, 2004, 2006; Gordon, 2002; Ibarra, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Risher & Stopper, 2001), recruitment and selection (Castetter & Young, 2003; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Hopper, 2003; Newton, 2001; Normore, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Whitaker, 2003; Winter, Rinehart & Munoz, 2002; Wong, et al., 2006) and socialization (Barnett, 2001; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Normore, 2002; Wong, 2004), fewer studies have been documented on the experiences provided by a leadership continuum approach to developing school leaders with a focus on all three leadership development components: succession planning, recruitment and selection, and socialization. By capturing the perceptions of a sample of participants as they transitioned from one developmental stage to the next can be useful as a means of assessing the effectiveness of leadership development (see Kirkpatrick, 2004). People do not function in objectively defined contexts, but label and interpret situations based on their perceptions (see Edie, 1964), as do leaders who move into roles defined by leadership development programs. Learning experiences have a larger impact if they are linked to other experiences and when these experiences are part of a supportive, thoroughly designed system (Melum, 2002).

Review of Literature

Based on a review of organizational leadership literature that goes beyond the field of education (i.e., business, health care, human resources, evaluation), three conceptual dimensions of leadership development emerged and served as a guide for this study: (1) leadership succession planning, (2) recruitment, and (3) socialization. As operational definitions for this study *leadership succession planning* refers to policies, philosophy, structures, and decisions made by school districts to place school leaders over time. *Recruitment* refers to processes and strategies used in school districts to attract, identify, select, and place future leaders. *Socialization* refers to how aspiring and practicing leaders are implicitly and explicitly prepared and trained for evolving school leadership roles.

Leadership Succession Planning

Planning for leadership development and succession is vital to any organization. Leadership development is viewed as a focus on social capital and the development process with a balanced interest on everyone in the organization (Schmuck, 1971; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Fullan, 2005). Social capital is built through relationships based on trust, respect and integrity that are translated into the culture and the organizational structure. From a *systems theory perspective*, social systemic organizations would be ideal for leadership development since this would facilitate and support purposeful decision-making by leaders and embedding the leadership development within the larger organizational culture and accountability system (Ackoff & Gharajedaghi, 1996; Senge, 1990). In other words, a culture of accountability for leadership development is shared systemically so it is not perceived as simply another human resource management trend (Wong, Nicotera, & Gutherie, 2006; Normore, 2004d). As Melum (2002) states:

> As with quality management, strategic planning, and many other initiatives, there is a tendency to treat leadership development like a program - a program that is someone else's job, and one that gets in the way of 'real

> work'. To go beyond this pitfall and to leverage its power, leadership development needs to be deeply embedded into the organization (p. 7).

Seminal research (e.g., Carlson, 1961) and more recent inquiry (e.g., Fink & Brayman, 2004, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Ibarra, 2005) maintain that succession is a process of interaction that forms relationships and patterns that shape a leader's impact on the organization. The organization and the new leader exert influence on each other. Effective succession planning can benefit school districts in critical ways. It can bring selection systems, partnerships, rewards systems and leadership development into alignment with the process of leadership renewal (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Townsend, 2003). Johnson (2001) and other researchers (e.g., Fullan, 2005; Kelley & Peterson, 2002) assert that effective leadership planning assures continuity of leadership and capitalizes on capacity and sustainability that succession brings to implement new programs in a culture of change. Further research maintains that planning for successful leadership succession helps work toward the improvement of schools by shaping and expanding the professional orientation, knowledge, and skills of those in leadership roles (Crawford, Carlton, & Stengel, 2003).

Another body of research emphasizes consequences of the role of power and bureaucracy in development programs if not planned in a systematic and holistic manner. The misuse of power and bureaucratic dysfunctions are recognized in the literature to inhabit large organizations (Chomsky, 2006; Giber, Carter, & Goldsmith, 2000) including large school districts (Lee & Keiffer, 2003; Simmons, 2006). Inherent tensions (i.e., conflicting expectations, communication, departments operating in isolation) are often found in large systems (Argyris, 1994; Lee & Keiffer, 2003) and cause operations to be ineffective, chaotic, and dysfunctional (Charan, 2005; Deal & Peterson, 1994). Such tension often disrupts lines of authority and communication (Argyris, 1994; Hart, 1993) and disturbs bureaucratic structures, power, decision-making systems, and generally upsets the

organization's normal activities (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Risher & Stopper, 2001; Senge, 1990). According to Cambron-McCabe (2006), this may be the most intractable impediment for developing school leaders to transform existing institutions. Cambron-McCabe further capitalizes on Morgan's 'machine metaphor' (Morgan, 1997) which "is most frequently used to characterize schools, involves highly mechanistic structures focused on hierarchy, control, predictability, accountability, rationality, and uniform outcomes" (Cambron-McCabe, 2006, p. 2). Moreover, mechanistic structures "can lead to stifling innovation and only lead to recreating the schools we now have causing some improvement in the status quo but not the desired transformation" (p. 2).

If schools and school districts are to evolve and leaders are to do more than tinker with organizations, they must go deeper to understand the structures that constrain actions in order to create responsible learning communities where everybody contributes. A succession plan linked to the recruitment strategy for ensuring a flow of competent leaders involves identifying those individuals with the potential for success as leaders and tailoring the development audience to the potential successors (Business Week, 2005; Charan, 2005; Fullan, 2005; Senge, 1990).

Recruitment and Selection

Effective recruitment and selection of school leaders continues to be one of the more challenging human resource tasks in educational organizations (Newton, 2001). A body of research indicates that extensive and aggressive recruitment practices attract and retain effective and satisfied school leaders (Hopper, 2003; Normore, 2004a, 2004b, 2002; Rebore, 2001; Young & Castetter, 2003). Some school districts only recruit exclusively internally. Other districts recruit externally, while others endorse both strategies (Lee & Keiffer, 2003; Winter, Rinehart, & Munoz, 2002). The literature indicates that recruitment and selection strategies range in scope. Among the factors that determine recruitment strategies are the complexity and desirability of the position, as well as the size of the

school district (Cascadden, 1998; Winter, et al., 2002). A study conducted in Canada by Hargreaves and Fink (2004) determined that the practice of systemic regularity of rotating leaders every three to five years was a factor in recruitment. These researchers discovered that school districts moved practicing principals every three to five years internally in order to remove principals from their comfort zones. Other factors that determine the success of recruitment and selection processes include fringe benefits, changing student populations, and issues of remuneration as it relates to responsibilities and the expectations of the job (Young & Castetter, 2003). When school districts [and other organizations] choose leaders from within, the central tendency of his/her performance might be to stabilize what exists, whereas for leaders who are chosen outside the containing system, the central tendency of his or her performance might be to alter what already exists (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Tierney, 2006).

Internal recruitment strategies may have their benefits such as familiarity with a specific organizational culture (Johnson, 2001). However, exclusive internal recruitment can also be problematic (Lee & Keiffer, 2003; Melum, 2002). Research indicates that exclusive internal recruitment may lead toward an organizational culture that is best described as “self-sealing” (see Argyris, 1994; Senge, 1990, 2000). Organizational cultural norms and “group think” may be in serious tension with critical examination, reflective practice, and feedback loops used to examine system health and operating assumptions. The espoused purpose of a leadership development program, and what an effective leader looks like might conflict with the way the structure and processes are conceptualized and discussed by those on the ground. Such conflicts question whether or not veterans who are deeply socialized into a particular system and its traditional ways can assist with the development of others in new ways for a new order to be constructed.

Extensive research provides typical critical leadership competencies for effective leadership preparation and development. Hallinger (2006) asserts that “issues concerning the nature and role of leadership must form the foundation of any discussion of leadership

preparation" (p. 2). Several descriptors for effective leaders are well-documented in the literature. Effective leaders are: trustworthy and avid learners, comfortable with change, champions of innovation, inspirational and skillful, moral and practical, process-driven and results-oriented, effective at building relationships, action-oriented, emotionally intelligent, able to foster development in others, and oriented to achieving outcomes (Fauske, 2002; Gordon, 2002; Hallinger, 2006; Jazzar & Algozzine, 2007; Murphy, 2006; Wong, Nicotera, & Gutherie, 2006; Quick & Normore, 2004). In order to ensure best selection decisions and properly channeled investment of resources, the process for identifying and selecting potential leaders must be objective and thorough (Diamond & Handi, 2002; Hopper, 2003; Whitaker, 2003).

Well-constructed recruitment and selection processes require careful planning and a solid research base. Research indicates that these processes must be aligned with structured learning experiences (Daresh, 2004; Fullan, 2005; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Normore, 2002; Senge, 1990, 2000) and opportunities to socialize into the role (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Johnson, 2001; Hopper, 2003; Normore, 2004c; Tierney, 2006). Successful school districts provide well-structured leadership development opportunities and experiences by capitalizing in long-term investment of time, energy, attention, and resources to professional development programs. These programs focus on content in a form consistent with meaningful opportunities for role socialization (Assor & Oplatka, 2003; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Jackson & Kelley, 2002) and not just "sit and get" exercises that stunt opportunities for powerful learning (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe, & Meyerson, 2005). When individuals learn about the organization, they socialize into a culture that has been created and changed over time.

Socialization

Socializing aspiring and practicing school leaders into new roles involves implicit and explicit pre- and post- appointment opportunities to learn about leading. These leaders learn

about culture and change, leadership and management skills, knowledge, and dispositions required to perform their changing social role in the organizational culture. According to Tierney (2006):

> Cultural change is important insofar as a static organization suggests an inflexible stance with regard to the environment; at the same time, if a culture simply adapts to the environment, then the strength of the culture will appear absent…that a key challenge for any organization and its leaders is to be able to hold the culture together while at the same time adapt to external challenges, threats, and opportunities (p. 2).

Merton (1963) further asserts that attention is drawn simultaneously to the leader and the context simultaneously through learned behaviors gained through professional and organizational socialization.

Professional socialization. Socializing into any profession involves the process of acquiring leadership knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to develop and internalize the values and norms needed to form one's identity as a member of a profession (Merton, 1963). For educational leaders, this begins in the initial stage of a school leader's education career, and continues into early post-appointment growth and continued development (Daresh, 2004; Fauske, 2002; Normore, 2004c). Implicit and explicit collaborative efforts are highlighted at this stage and include courses for certification; on-the-job experiences; modeling and social learning by observing both good and bad leadership; and deliberate mentoring by some existing school leaders who serve as ongoing guides and coaches in preparing future leaders. Continued growth and development at this stage is pivotal as leaders embrace learning opportunities toward further understanding of the organization (Barnett, 2003; Wong, 2004).

Organizational socialization. As new leaders engage in role transition, so does the emergence of new mediating influences on socialization. These influences take the form of

the work setting, culture, trusting relationships with peers and superiors, understanding district policies and procedures, and structured opportunities for leadership development programs (Daresh, 2000; Fauske, 2002; Hart, 1993). The need to fit into the immediate work environment and organizational norms tend to replace those learned during professional socialization. Organizational socialization has been addressed in the leadership literature as an integral component of leadership development by which a leader learns the skills, knowledge, policies, social processes, culture, and priorities required to perform effectively in the role of being a member of the organization (Ackoff & Gharajedaghi, 1996; Hart, 1993; Merton, 1963; Miller, et al., 2001; Normore, 2004c; Senge, 1990; Wong et al., 2007). Further research indicates that leadership is a cultural activity. It is a learned behavior such that individuals are socialized to what the organization expects (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004; Tierney, 2006). This suggests that the education profession adopts a longer-term view of the development of school leaders that extends not only into the post appointment period but provides planned socialization experiences each time a new leadership assignment is made.

District Context

Recognized as fully accredited, Southeastern School District is one of the fastest growing school districts in the southeastern United States. It currently has more than 275,000 students enrolled in Kindergarten -12 grades with approximately 50 high schools, 40 middle schools, and 140 elementary schools. The schools are situated in both urban and suburban settings within the district. The district is divided into four geographic regions because of its size and to better meet the needs of the large student population. The district is governed by a leadership hierarchy made up of the school board members and a superintendent with four area superintendents who report to the superintendent. The district principals are assigned to school sites and are held accountable for the performance of the students, staff, and facilities. At the high school level, a typical school has an

average enrollment of 3000 students, which determines the number of staff and administrative members assigned to the site. Such a school could have one principal and 4 to 6 assistant principals depending on the enrollment. A middle school averages 1300 students and three assistant principals assigned to the principal. At the elementary level, student enrollment currently averages 1000 students with the assignment of one principal and one assistant principal.

Demographically, SSD has a culturally and linguistically diverse population with students representing 156 countries and 50 languages. According to the reports and documents from the district's Office of Research, Evaluation, Assessment and Boundaries, the following data represent the district's student population demographics at the time of this study: Males = 52%; Females = 48%; White = 37%; Black = 36% Hispanics = 22%; Asian = 3%; Native American = 0.5%; Multi-racial = 1.5 %.

Historical Context of Leadership Development in SSD

The leadership development program was approved unanimously by the school board of SSD in 1996, which directed schools to develop a comprehensive, systemic process for professional development based on their school improvement needs. Revisions to the leadership development programs in 2001 addressed the professional development of school-based administrators known as the leadership development continuum. The continuum is a four-stage leadership development process intended to develop and prepare leaders for school administration over time. The leadership development continuum addendum to the leadership development program provides a well-defined method of identifying educators who possess the necessary personal and professional attributes to become outstanding administrators (district document).

Collaborative Efforts in Support of Leadership Development

In an effort to meet the challenge of attracting, developing, and retaining qualified competent leaders for it schools, the district engaged in a collaborative initiative with a local

university and a community college. The goal of the initiative was to improve the quality of school-based leadership in schools by integrating assessment, professional development, selection, and evaluation in response to increased responsibilities of school-based administrators. The initiative intended to provide current and prospective school leaders with experiences aligned to the district's standards within the leadership continuum for professional development. These experiences included benchmark assessments to determine candidates' level of readiness, professional development activities for candidates at different levels, and an electronic portfolio to document the application of highly effective educational practices (district document).

To further support the district's initiatives an education consortium was established between surrounding universities and the school district. The intent of the consortium is to provide opportunities work collaboratively to address specific needs of the urban district. Among the needs identified are: urban teacher shortage, urban teacher training and development, Urban Principal's Academy, leadership development, (key personnel interview), issues of research and evaluation, student and school improvement, alternative certification, and the integration of innovative technology in the classroom (district document).

Research Design

Qualitative research procedures were used in this study due to the iterative nature of the approach. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), qualitative research recognizes that an individual enters a context with a personal perspective that informs their actions that are shaped by perceptions. Within this research paradigm, a case study approach was selected to collect data (i.e., interviews, field-notes, observations, anecdotal data, and document analysis) about various stages of development in a leadership development continuum. The merit of the case study in descriptive research is a means to gain insights and explore educational phenomena such as perceived values, and to be able to interpret and discover

their intrinsic worth in the development of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1990; Kavle, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). According to Merriam (1998), and Lincoln and Guba (1985), qualitative research is useful in order to get a better understanding and to appreciate the holistic and intense information gained in a descriptive investigation. This qualitative case study focused on descriptions communicated to the researcher as candidates shared their experiences, perceptions, and perspectives about lived encounters (Kvale, 1996) during their leadership development. While the researcher was not an external evaluator of the leadership development continuum, capturing these perceptions was a way of examining the effectiveness of the leadership development.

Leadership Development Continuum: Programs

The leadership development program was a board approved policy used as the foundation for the School Board of Southeastern School District. All of the leadership programs within the continuum were based on the district's commitment to continuous professional growth and development for all school-based individuals in leadership roles. The district's Leadership Development Continuum was structured around the Sterling Criteria for Organizational Excellence, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, and the district Standards for School Leaders. The program was funded by the school district.

The Leadership Development Continuum is overseen by Human Resource Management Development (HRMD). Activities were delivered, coordinated, and facilitated by the leadership development personnel, retired administrators, area Superintendents, and practicing new and veteran site-based leaders who served as mentors and coaches. Four key formal leadership development programs were supported within the leadership development continuum: the *LEAD Program;* the *Interim Assistant Principal Program (IAP);* the *Intern Principal Program (IPP);* and the *First-Year Principal Support/Interim Principal Program.* Throughout the four stages of leadership development, the continuum focused on

professional development opportunities and experiences for leadership development (district's HMRD Plan, 2003). Once accepted into the programs, the participants were expected to engage in change initiatives, seek ways to further understand school and district culture, ensure teacher growth and development, and engage in collaboration and community involvement. Figure 1 illustrates the stage and sequence of the continuum.

Figure 1

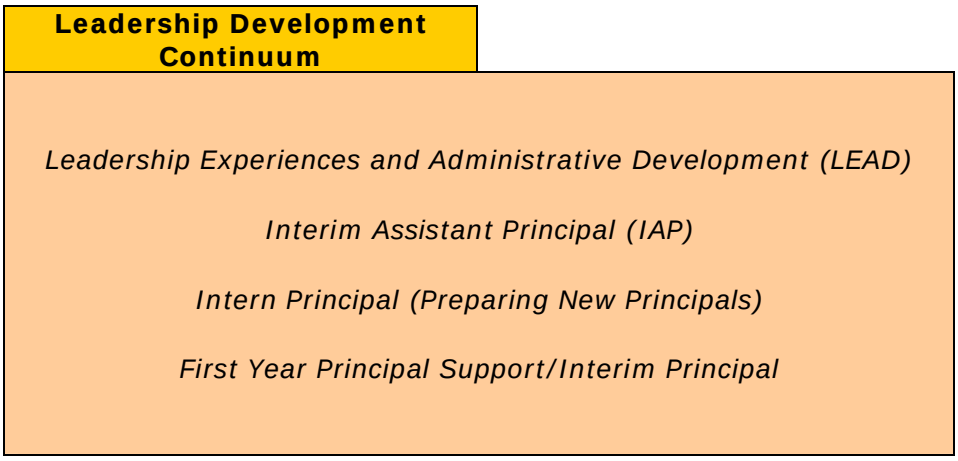

Figure 1.* Adapted from Human Resource Development Plan, SSD.

The following brief program descriptions were extrapolated from the district's HMD plan, recruitment meetings, and further corroborated by interview data. The district personnel considered pre-service and in-service development to serve as separate entities. Pre-service applies to all lead components and/or any internship positions. In-service applies to interim positions such as assistant principal or principal since the participant is already certified and holding the position of title. In-service is training on the job to enhance performance.

LEAD Program. The LEAD (Leadership Experiences and Administrative Development) program was designed to provide professional development experiences for emerging/aspiring school leaders (i.e., teacher leaders) in developing competency-based

instructional leadership skills, community leadership skills, and systems management skills. The program is part of the pre-service development and lasts for two years.

Interim Assistant Principal Program (IAP). With the support of professional development experiences, IAP was designed to assist newly appointed assistant principals in enhancing their administrative/leadership competencies. As part of in-service development, the program intended to provide support and guidance through a mentoring system of peer assistant principals, high performing principals, district administrators, and Professional Development Team (PDT-see figure 4 for membership) throughout the program. The program lasts up to three years

Intern Principal Program (IPP). The Intern Principal's Program (IPP) was designed as pre-service for individuals who have a three year period of successful practice as an assistant principal and seek the opportunity to participate in a formal preparation process to become a principal. Only assistant principals or other administrators may apply for internship. Teachers may not participate since teachers in LEAD are not considered on task assignment. Instead they are working to acquire specific skill sets.

The Intern remains at the assigned school as an assistant principal. The IPP intended to provide Intern Principals with opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the Standards for District Leaders and ISLLC Standards, through job-embedded leadership experiences and research-based professional development activities. The program can last up to two years. However, an intern could be appointed to first year principal before completing the program if the need arose and deemed appropriate by the area superintendent.

First Year Principal Support / Interim Principal Program. This program was designed to provide support and professional development to individuals in their first year as principals, either as a First Year Principal Support (appointed but not yet completed the IPP), or as an Interim Principal (completed the IPP and appointed). The program is part of in-service development and lasts for one year. At this stage, the Administrative Mentorship Program (AM) was introduced to all interim and first year principals. These principals were

expected to engage in problem-solving strategies related to their roles with support from mentors, professional development teams, and learning communities. The primary objective of this program was to assist new principals with ongoing mentoring while maintaining a professional development leadership portfolio that demonstrates highly effective performance.

Site and Participants

This study occurred in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. The target population consisted of heterogeneous groups representing elementary, middle and high schools, human resource management development personnel (i.e., leadership development personnel), gender, stages of leadership development program (i.e., LEAD candidates, interim assistant principals, intern principals, and first year support/interim principals) and, the varied social and racial ethnic backgrounds of the district's larger population (i.e., White, Hispanic, Black). Once the above-mentioned criteria were fulfilled, the researcher was given access to a generated list of all four cohorts (20 participants in each cohort) who were enrolled in each program. The researcher narrowed down the list to ensure an equal representation of gender and ethnicity. Figure 2 explains the demographics off the participants.

Figure 2

School District	Human Resource Development (Individual Interviews)	Candidates (Focus Group Interview)	Intern/First year Principals (Focus Group Interview)	Interim assistant-Principals (Focus Group Interview)
Gender	*3 females*	*2 males* *3 females*	*2 males* *3 female*	*3 males* *2 female*
Ethnicity	*2 white* *1 black*	*1 white* *3 black* *1 hispanic*	*2 white* *2 black* *1 hispanic*	*1 white* *2 hispanic* *2 black*
Panel	*HRMD*	*2 secondary* *2 middle* *1 elementary*	*2 secondary* *1 middle* *2 elementary*	*1 secondary* *2 middle* *2 elementary*
Total	3	5	5	5

Figure 2. * Demographics of Participants

Data Sources

The primary source of data collection included semi-structured interviews with 18 participants. The researcher conducted 60-90 minute interviews in a conference room at the office of Human Resource Management Development (HMRD). All participants agreed to the interview site since it was considered convenient for them. Three individual interviews were conducted with HRMD personnel who are responsible for coordinating and delivering the leadership programs and three semi-structured focus group interviews (5 per group) with participants across the leadership development continuum. Based on the criteria, five candidates were randomly selected from the LEAD program; five interim assistant principals were selected from the Interim Assistant Principal program, and five first year support/interim principals from combined cohorts in both the Intern Principal program and the First Year Principal Support program. These two groups were combined because originally, four interns and five first year principals agreed to participate, but two interns and two first year principals cancelled the day of their scheduled interviews due to unexpected meetings.

The interviews with the leadership development officers and LEAD participants were held in fall, 2004 and the remaining interviews were held in winter, 2005. All 18 participants were given the interview protocol in advance to assist them in preparation for the interview. During the interviews, the researcher presented the questions in an open-ended manner and participants were prompted to elaborate on their responses to clarify or to deepen their description of experiences. At times, the interview appeared to be more like a conversation with the researcher using questions as a guide to keep the focus intact and to further develop relevant areas of inquiry (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Other data sources included documents (i.e., demographic data, HMRD plan, leadership program manuals, district documents, training and meeting agendas, leadership development materials, meeting notices, and program descriptions on compact diskettes)

researcher reflections, and anecdotal data. The researcher also participated in observations (i.e., recruitment information sessions, leadership development training sessions), and compiled anecdotal data (i.e., informal conversations prior to and after interviews, telephone and e-mail contacts). The informal conversations provided an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the school district's culture and history. A journal of field notes was used to record impressions and observations during the research. The element of structure from the conceptual framework and the open-ended questions allowed for the mining of new data and openness to fresh observations and new concepts (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). All three leadership development officers reviewed their individual transcriptions to check for accuracy and any misrepresentation. One of the major and unique concepts in qualitative research is member checking which is an effective technique for establishing credibility (Merriam, 1998). Accordingly, member check was followed among various participants from each focus group. These participants reviewed the transcription for their individual focus group to assure accuracy in describing interpretation of findings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began during data collection to determine the need for further interview probes, rigorous field-notes, observations, and documents (Patton, 2002). Speculative or tentative analysis during data collection served to further sharpen certain foci of the study, helped reveal insights into the leadership development programs, and stimulated further pursuit of certain aspects of the literature (Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and shared with the participants to ensure there was no misrepresentation. In order to capture the experiences, feelings, and perceptions as they were described, a critical step in the qualitative analytical process was to look for and to identify patterns, coding the responses as they related to each question and construct under investigation. Data from all sources were coded by listing themes and concepts related to the participants' lived experiences and connected to the

literature. During the process of condensing and interpreting the data the researcher was constantly mindful and careful to retain the authenticity of the interviewee's understanding, structures and meaning (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Wolcott, 1994). The researcher relied on the review of literature to serve as a resource guide to help to maintain a high standard of qualitative research.

The combination of the data sources allows for triangulation (Creswell, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and offered a meaningful and reasonable way of documenting knowledge (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Matrices were developed in which response sets were placed for each set of research questions around a theme (i.e., leadership succession planning, recruitment, socialization) and for participants' perspective on each program (i.e., LEAD, IAP, etc). The number of responses in each category was counted in order to determine similarities and differences in participants' perception. By following the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994), counting helped to verify what was there and kept the researcher "analytically honest" (p. 53). As additional data were analyzed, categories were refined. Recognizing the human element in qualitative data analysis (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and how focus groups have their own inter-social dynamics that may have affected what participants shared, the methods used to collect the data support Lincoln and Guba's (1985) view of internal validity. This was achieved by methodologically triangulating interview data with field notes, observations, and document analysis.

Findings

Findings from this study were organized into categories identified by indicators and patterns extracted from interview data and connected to the three overarching dimensions of the theoretical framework. These data were corroborated by supporting data drawn from the leadership development program documents, observations at professional development sessions, as well as impressions recorded in field-notes. The findings are presented

systematically by first presenting a theoretical component of the framework followed by emerging themes and patterns found within each component.

Succession planning: Support structures and philosophy of leadership

The Leadership Development Unit of the Human Resource Development Department facilitated and supported participants at all levels of the leadership development continuum. To further support leadership development, the Administrative Mentorship Program (AM) was implemented for purposes of support to all new school leaders (district document, key personnel interviews, focus group interview with new principals). According to one senior administrator, “All first year and interim principals are expected to participate in the Administrative Mentorship program…it’s an expectation.”

Southeastern School District was involved in partnerships with surrounding universities, community college, and two neighboring counties. The intent of the collaborative relationships was to promote symbiotic relationships and a non-competitive environment to ensure quality educators were appropriately developed for urban school settings. Teams of district leaders and instructional development staff were established in each district. These teams engaged in dialogue focused on common leadership recruitment and preparation issues. According to one senior administrator, “We do not want to reinvent the wheel since our school districts deal with the same local universities…so universities are not driven crazy with separate districts and multiple ways of doing business.” Another senior administrator stated, “It’s a way to eliminate the so-called ‘turf wars’ between school districts and surrounding universities.” More recent discussions focused on the creation of an Urban Principal’s Academy in order to move away from what one senior administrator referred to as:

> A cookie-cutter kind of standard where we tend to run everybody through leadership programs with the same information…our school leaders need something different. Cultivating an urban school leader looks very different

> than a leader in a predominantly all-white school…we want them more involved with community-related leadership and to start this early in their careers.

Building leadership capacity was important in SSD. A senior administrator asserted that teachers were encouraged early in their careers to consider administrative roles:

> There is definitely a need to build capacity for leadership in the district because of the growing number of retirements in the school administrator and the master teacher (i.e., accomplished teachers). I'm not always sure we're doing the best job we can but we do encourage young teachers to think about leadership roles early. . .we have a "grow your own" type of program.

***District-grown leaders*.** The philosophy of "grow your own" leaders reflected the model most practiced and supported for creating leadership capacity. According to a senior administrator, "Our belief is to have well-trained and prepared school leaders to fit into the challenging roles and demands placed on them in today's education environment." While this philosophy was understood and supported by leaders in training, their perceptions about the leadership development process were less enthusiastic. One interim assistant principal stated the "leadership development continuum is well-grounded …but the process is tedious and mostly unnecessary…everything is addressed 'en masse' and everyone is forced to do everything instead of doing only what is needed." Similar refrains expressed by participants who were further along in the leadership continuum are highlighted:

> I feel it's a weeding out process and not necessarily a great one. If it's mandated that I go through LEAD then there needs to be a guarantee that I'll get a leadership job (first year principal).

> It's kind of a 'war on attrition'. Many people who started the cohort program dropped it due to all the hoops they had to go through. They felt it wasn't worth it (interim assistant principal).

Recruitment and Selection

Potential future school leaders were invited twice a year to attend a recruitment session organized by HRMD and facilitated by Administrative Procedures Personnel (APP). APP was responsible for recruitment and hiring for the school district. Information sessions were held biannually – once in the fall and again in spring. During these sessions, APP and HRMD personnel explained the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, state licensure, district and state leadership standards, outlined each stage of the continuum, provided a brief overview of content material of professional development activity, distributed materials, and provided a question-answer period.

Self -selection. Internal recruitment was most commonly practiced. However, at times, district administrators were sent out of the district and out of the state to search for potential teacher leaders at conferences or different universities or at conferences. One senior administrator explained, "The district policy requires that external candidates for leadership positions can only be hired as teachers first, and become oriented to the district. They can enroll in the leadership continuum after two years teaching in the district and must begin with LEAD."

While no formal process was in place to identify potential school leaders, practicing school administrators and area superintendents were expected to identify individuals at early stages in their careers and to informally assist them in their development. Others engaged in self-selection. One principal explained, "We are expected to 'tap' individuals on the shoulder and to encourage them to put their applications in for leadership training…however, many individuals express interest at their own accord." All interns and new principals agreed that most potential school leaders are recruited and mentored by an

existing principal or another leader within the district. One senior administrator stated, “Principals are really expected to find teachers who exhibit leadership behaviors and to suggest the leadership track. We’re better at that now but I’m still not sure that happens enough since so many self-select”. A new principal indicated:

> Ten years ago we were more dependent on self-directed people and probably missed a lot of good people because nobody bothered to say, ‘Hey, I think you would be a good administrator’. Even though the pools are plentiful many chose to enter the leadership program on their own initiative. However, they still need the support from their building principal.

While the need to identify a potential leader was clear, concerns about this process were raised by several participants. One intern principal indicated that the recommendation of a trusted colleague for the leadership track was often questioned. An interim assistant principal added, “I’m afraid to make recommendations and risk ‘accountability’ error where the numbers on a piece of paper matter perhaps too much”. A new principal stated, “If I throw my support behind somebody that I really believe in and the numbers at the end of the year don’t justify that support, then I may be seen as ineffective.”

Screening process. Applications were screened by a vacancy screening Committee who analyzed the guidelines and scheduled interviews. Those applicants who were selected were expected to obtain their supervising principal’s support and have the principal to complete the leadership profile indicating the applicant’s experiences in specific competencies (HMRD document). The applicants were then eligible to be interviewed when an appropriate position arose. Several participants identified a lack of support and feedback from personnel concerning ‘*rejections*’ and raised concerns about trust and self-disclosure. One interim assistant principal explained that “everyone has to create his/her own support system for selection” while an intern principal commented that “the ‘big meeting’ could be used for networking but instead you have to ‘be quiet’ and do the workshop…expectations

are all scattered." A new principal stated: "More honest feedback needs to be given to potential administrators," while another principal observed, "Many people interview time and time again without getting 'real' answers about why they were not chosen…how can people improve when nobody helps them identify their deficiencies?"

Several graduates in LEAD expressed concerns about the actual process of preparing resumes for the interview. Consistent concern for time and clear criteria for writing resumes was at odds with the actual review of the resume during the interview. As expressed by various participants, Administrative Procedures Personnel regularly changed the resume preparation protocols without informing the candidates or their building principals. These changes created confusion and frustration. According to one interim assistant principal,

> When I was in LEAD there was lots of confusion about how to prepare our resumes. It kept changing. My principal told me one thing, Administrative Procedures people told me something different, and leadership people said something even more different. My group didn't know who to listen to

Similarly, a first year principal stated,

> When I asked my principal to review how I prepared my resume he thought it was all wrong. Yet, I followed what the Administrative Procedures outlined in our training. When I changed it and went for my interview they told me the resume was done wrong…so what do you do?

Several participants felt disillusioned and frustrated with the interview process. One candidate explained, "I've seen people go for an interview when somebody else is literally setting up their office knowing that they already had the position. How can you trust a process like that or the people in charge of it?" An interim assistant principal expressed feelings of retribution if concerns were raised about the selection process:

> There are about 400 people in the leadership pool. Maybe 250 people will get a job and another 150 will languish in the pool forever because they expressed how they truly felt about the process.

Appointment process. There were several stages in the appointment process of school-based leaders. See Figure 3 below:

Figure 3

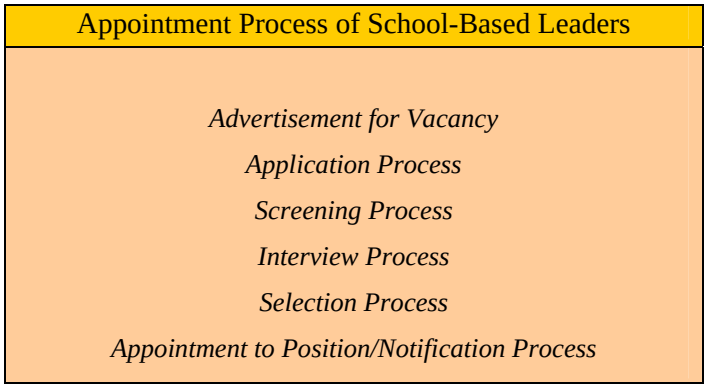

Figure 3.* Extracted from Human Resource Development Plan, SSD.

According to a senior administrator specific administrative vacancies are announced biannually through various mediums (i.e., district web site, school mail, local newspapers, television station for school district information, and *Education Week*). Criteria included a professional service contract of at least three years of classroom teaching experience; completion of the LEAD program; successful completion of the State leadership exam; application for a possession of certification in Educational Leadership, Leadership, or School Principal; a two page listing of specific experiences in/with site-based leadership positions, technology, curriculum knowledge to meet individual student needs, (i.e., ESOL, Special Education), stakeholders, and school-wide issues (district document). According to one LEAD candidate, “Only individuals who successfully complete all stages of the Leadership Development Continuum can qualify for openings.” This was corroborated by other candidates who nodded their heads in agreement (field notes). Participants from the other

focus groups indicated a similar understanding. On an informal basis, some elaboration was made by one senior administrator:

> Individuals occasionally move into a principal position without having completed the full two years of interim or first year principal under the condition that the same individual will complete the program once appointed. This is made possible if an area superintendent or a principal deems it necessary.

Leadership Socialization: *Professional Development*

Professional development activities and experiences were similar throughout the leadership development continuum. In order to move through the continuum, participants have to complete leadership development activities in the previous program beginning with LEAD. These activities are ongoing throughout the Continuum with some additional expectations on benchmark assessments and standards (i.e., ISLLC, State Standards) as participants approach the final exit criteria before being placed in the principal pool.

Mentoring. Mentoring, networking opportunities, and job shadowing were considered most beneficial by all participants. These experiences provide on-the-job opportunities for participants and help build relationships with other protégés. Several interim assistant principals, interns, and new principals indicated they were currently mentoring several lead teachers. LEAD candidates indicated they had good mentors and are learning about standards for school leaders in the district. Intern principals and new principals agreed they would definitely recommend their protégés for the Intern Principal program due to their own positive experiences. The Intern Principal program was considered most rewarding for developing leadership. A first year principal noted, “As an intern principal, I attended all meetings with my principal - wherever he went, I went along. He shared everything with me as if I were his co-principal.” An intern principal agreed and further asserted, “The shadowing experience for me is excellent because it allows me to

experience various principal duties and responsibilities …I like the school site projects. I can facilitate student learning and further understand the school improvement process." Another intern principal shared her experience:

> Part of what I love to do is to review the school improvement plan and the standards. I'm learning how to identify needs where action plans can be initiated and developed to help improve staff development, job performance, and student achievement.

According to senior administrators, all interim and first year principals were required to participate in the Administrative Mentorship Program – a program funded by the Federal Department of Education to support interim/first year principals. Yet, the interim/first year principals in this study were not aware of this requirement. According to these participants a formal mentor was not assigned after appointment was made to the principalship. Instead, first year principals assumed they were expected to maintain mentor-protégé relationships on their own. One interim principal stated: "Now that I'm an interim principal it's up to me to continue to facilitate my own support. I keep in touch with my former mentor," A new principal corroborated this statement, "Once you obtain the position of principal there is very little formal, credible staff development available. You're on your own."

Partnerships. While candidates were at the early stages of leadership development, three of them indicated a need for collaboration between the district and the university, so both systems could enhance and complement the leadership development activity, rather than offering redundant content. Interim assistant principals reiterated that the district needed to look at what course work was being done at surrounding universities and vice versa. One new principal commented that the "leadership certification process is repetitive, expensive, and time-consuming, and has little to do with the daily realities of my job." An interim assistant principal stated that:

> The 'disconnect' between what we're taught about leadership theories and what actually happens is very disconcerting. I find myself and my principal mostly involved in managerial tasks. When you obtain a leadership position and you're doing hall duty, bus duty, breaking up a few fights, and organizing the locker room, the connection is lost.

Curriculum disconnects. A further concern that was raised by all participants was the failure of the district's leadership development continuum to include issues of diversity and social justice in the curriculum content. The curricula of the program included issues of second language learning (English as Second Official Language-ESOL) and "at-risk" students (i.e., special education) but limited opportunities were available for discussions about issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual-orientation, and diverse populations. When asked about how university and district training programs addressed social justice issues, similar comments arose from all focus groups when discussing their individual experiences:

> If we went to a group of teachers or principals and we started to define school leadership for social justice, I'm sure we would get a lot of head nodding saying, 'Yeah that's important. Yeah we ought to do that…but no real engagement' (first year principal)

> Social justice is always considered 'a nice topic to discuss' but it wasn't part of our leadership program here or at the university (interim assistant principal)

The concern about the curriculum content was also expressed by senior administrators. One senior administrator indicated, "We have leadership training sessions on diversity like teaching ESOL students and special education students but I don't think we do enough on race and diversity issues." Another senior administrator indicated, "I think we do a lot on standards - ISLLC standards, Leadership and State standards…but, we probably need to do more on diverse populations."

Discussion

SSD invested time and commitment in providing extensive leadership development by planning for succession, establishing timeframes for recruitment, providing formal strategies for selection, and providing leadership development opportunities. The leadership opportunities were planned across a continuum of development activities. SSD had an abundant supply of aspiring school leaders either enrolled in the leadership development continuum, or waiting on appointment - an anomaly for large urban school districts.

Closed System of Succession Planning

Most school districts have two pools of candidates from which they recruit: internal and external. Unlike much of the organizational leadership research (e.g., Argyris & Schon, 1978; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Melum, 2002; Senge, 1990), participants widely believed that promoting internally is favored over external appointments because of the need for cultural understanding of the district (Johnson, 2001). Occasionally, qualified and experienced school leaders were hired from outside the district, but as teachers first, and accelerated to school leadership positions within two years after they entered LEAD. Promotional policies were in place primarily for internal candidates where the trend focused on 'grow your own' leaders. Occasionally, teachers were recruited externally, and after two years working in the district, these teachers were permitted to enter leadership development programs. Yet, the district had a supply of trained leaders in the pipeline who had undergone the district training programs. While external hiring practices might appear to be at odds with the district's philosophy of 'grow your own' leaders, the district may also be operating from an organizational cultural norm that leans towards creating a closed system of leadership succession.

Timeframes were in place for recruitment of potential leaders. Information sessions were provided biannually and made available through various media outlets. However, no formal process was in place to identify and recruit potential school leaders, Consistent with

previous research (e.g., Hopper, 2003; Whitaker, 2003), practicing school leaders were expected to identify potential school leaders and to informally mentor them within their schools (Diamond & Handi, 2002). Many principals engaged in “shoulder tapping” practices while other interested aspiring leaders engaged in self-selection. SSD provided a structured screening, selection, and appointment process for leadership appointments.

Recruitment and Selection: Need for Building Trust

A number of participants perceived a breakdown in communication that existed in the selection process. The communication breakdown occurred in the expectations for preparing resumes and interviews, inconsistencies about expectations from departments that operated in isolation, and lack of feedback for unsuccessful candidates. Organizational analysts (e.g., Argyris, 1994; Senge, 2000; Senge, et al., 2004) assert that ineffective communication can cause mistrust, which disturbs bureaucratic structures, power, and decision-making and generally affects normal activities. In support of previous research (e.g., Cambron-McCabe, 2006), SSD may well be operating within a culture focused on hierarchy, control, and power that prevented transformation from occurring within the district. Similar to findings in the research conducted by Fauske (2002), distrust in people and processes, and lack or absence of authentic feedback diminished many of these trainees’ sense of self-efficacy and confidence to move forward. Despite learning about facilitating and working through collaborative processes that help build trust in themselves and among others, several participants in this study felt discouraged, disillusioned, and frustrated with the selection’s interview process to the point where they felt uncomfortable to raise concerns for fear of retribution. Fauske (2002) maintains that mutual trust and respect for training processes serve as a force for continuing collaboration and positive change. Consistent perceptions about the selection process held by all three focus groups focused on what might be considered a misuse of power and bureaucratic structures (Senge, et al., 2004; Tierney, 2006).

Learning about Leadership

Leadership development and socialization literature suggests that structured opportunities for social interaction with colleagues promote growth of aspiring and practicing school leaders (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh, 2004; Miller, et al., 2001). SSD provided a range of formal opportunities for learning about leadership (i.e., training programs, mentoring, school improvement projects, shadowing experiences) and informal activities (i.e., opportunities for relationship building, networking, on-the-job experiences). Much of the curricula remained the same across all four stages of training with focus geared at preparing aspiring school leaders in numerous 'sit and get' training sessions. Considering the evidence in relation to the central notion of a continuum approach to developing school leaders, while participants perceived the continuum as a sound concept, some of them considered the content at various stages to be redundant with a substantial amount of seat time. The participants in the Intern Principal Program had positive experiences at this stage of the continuum, while the interim principals/first year principals reported a "on your own" experiences once they were officially appointed as principals. When leadership development programs require a great deal of "seat time," there was little opportunity for participants to engage in leadership for learning (Assor & Oplatka, 2003; Davis et al., 2005).

Although the programs were comprehensive in nature they were less coherent in delivery due to gaps and overlaps in the structure and content. This was especially evident in the LEAD and interim assistant principal programs. Still, intern principals and first year principals reported they had positive experiences in the Intern Principal Program and learned a great deal about leading. However, these same principals reported limited content geared at renewal, or support, once they were appointed. While critical leadership concepts were included in the curricula (i.e. ESOL, change process, leadership and management), other content material was missing, particularly issues related to leadership for social justice and diversity. Participants perceived the cohort structure as an effective means for

networking, support, and meaningful engagement, but in need of more job-embedded leadership development opportunities for creating powerful learning experiences that are critical to their daily routines. As reported in previous research (e.g., (Hix et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) leaders develop their potential the most when they are allowed to grow and implement their ideas or learning about leadership without encumbrances that lessen opportunities for critical learning.

The Intern Principal Program was considered the most meaningful and rewarding in its socialization experiences across the Leadership Development Continuum. This was due to on-the-job opportunities for learning about leading. Those who experienced, or were currently participating in this program indicated they would definitely recommend their protégés/mentees for this leadership development program, due to their own positive experiences with job-shadowing opportunities and the informal mentoring experiences made available during the intern principal program. These same principals also felt that informal mentoring, on-the-job leadership experiences and various informal activities (i.e., networking with peers) were most valuable in helping them move along the continuum.

Theory and Practice

Forging partnerships was identified as a critical component for effective school-based leadership succession (Fink & Brayman, 2006). SSD capitalized on partnerships with local educational institutions to assist with leadership development. Essentially, partnerships with SSD enhanced the capacity to deliver programs (Townsend, 2003) and simultaneously served to diminish the lines of what one participant called “turf wars” between school districts and colleges of education. To reiterate, interim principals and newly appointed principals felt that the educational culture in SSD suggested that a leadership position is consumed with managerial duties that left little time for leadership practices. For these leaders, their experiences in graduate school were geared towards theoretical descriptions of instructional and transformational leadership activities, with very little focus on

management trends. While SSD and its surrounding universities capitalized on forging partnerships for program delivery, more intensive focus on program structure and mapping curriculum to the daily needs of clients may be necessary (Hix et al. 2003; Kelley & Peterson, 2000; Lee & Keiffer, 2003).

Formal versus Informal Mentoring

While a formal mentoring program was in place to support all interim and first year principals (i.e., AM program), none of the first year principals or the interim principals in this study had participated in the AM program. Yet, according to senior administrators, they were required to participate. This suggests that the formal mentoring program may have been underutilized and less effective in practice, resulting in interim and newly appointed principals having missed opportunities for continued support, renewal, and effective learning experiences. In support of research conducted by Daresh (2004), structured mentoring programs can be instituted to help new school leaders better manage their time and priorities, to ensure time is devoted to instructional leadership activities, and to prevent the extreme sense of isolationism and stress they experience (Daresh, 2004).

Furthermore, as asserted by Barnett and Muth (2002) when novice school leaders are given opportunities for peak performance, a spirit of triumph will undoubtedly prevail, as tasks become more manageable and easy. Leadership development is enhanced when social networks within the organization facilitate individual and collective growth and ongoing development (Daresh, 2004; Wong, 2004). Personnel in charge of the mentoring programs in SSD may need to closely monitor and assess this initiative to ensure new leaders (and their mentor partners) are participating and benefiting. In support of previous research (Kirkpatrick, 2004), in the long term these mentoring programs could build confidence levels and prevent new school leaders from feeling alone and isolated.

In summary, the findings from this study indicate that succession planning, recruitment, and socialization play significant roles in leadership development – the central

notion of the continuum approach. Expectations, organizational culture, philosophy, guiding principles, and responsibility are variables that guide and influence decision-making through all stages of the leadership development continuum. Clear expectations that outline the structures, parameters, timelines, and events for leadership development are central and key elements of leadership development. Potential and practicing leaders, and senior administrators need to know what leadership knowledge, skills, attitudes, and roles are expected and supported in the district's system. This is especially important as the role of the school leader continues to change and expand.

It is widely accepted in the literature that organizational norms and consistency afford the organization and the individual a common set of expectations, reasoning, attitudes, systems values, and the understanding of purpose that guide their dispositions and behaviors. Aspiring and practicing school leaders can benefit from programs that are developed to meet the needs of individuals instead of what one senior administrator in this study referred to as a "cookie-cutter" approach to leadership development. These findings bring to the forefront a variety of experiences and perceptions of leadership development that can be applied to the real issues occurring in schools.

Conclusions and Implications

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study that can be useful to SSD while simultaneously contributing to the national and international debate about leadership development programs. SSD provided a unique and meaningful, step-by-step continuum approach to developing leadership capacity within the district. While the district has a good start on its approach to leadership development, some work lies ahead to ensure the ongoing and consistent support for all leaders in all stages of leadership development across the continuum. It is crucial to ensure that appropriate program objectives and district leadership requirements are jointly defined in the planning stage of succession. Planning must then target audiences at various stages of development and involve a supporting

infrastructure (recruitment and selection structures) that aligns with the development and implementation of the entire learning system. Consistency, coherence, continuity, and balancing expectations and support sustained over time are key to the future where there are strong school leaders for all students (see Jazaar & Algozine, 2007). Since strategic synergy is an implied objective of any leadership development plan (see Fullan, 2005; Senge, 1990), an important normative test for a school district's strategy is internal consistency. If functional strategies, such as human resource management and administrative procedures personnel, are not clearly integrated or congruent with the overall strategy of a school district, then leadership development programs may have an unclear strategic direction leading to suboptimal outcomes.

Large Scale Leadership

Focus needs to shift from leadership of the school leader alone, to a more inclusive, collective empowerment of all systems leaders. Moving to large scale requires school districts to consider how to go 'deep' to ensure individual and collective capacity while at the same time going 'wide' across the district to provide opportunities for all school leaders (See Fullan, 2005). Engaging layers of leaders in a strategic leadership development process that supports shared accountability will optimize networks of leaders collectively working together. Unleashing the power of collective leadership can lead to redesigning roles, responsibilities, relationships, trust, and processes within the larger system in order for sustainability to occur, and in which leadership is truly shared. For example, if changes in expectations occur during recruitment and selection, then these changes should filter throughout the system so all potential successors are aware of any modifications that could hinder or support leadership selection processes.

Culture that Supports an Open-System of Leadership Succession

As long as school districts restrict their hiring to almost only candidates and leaders already working within the district, they risk creating an organizational culture that supports

a closed system of leadership succession and development. As emphasised by organizational analysts (e.g., Argyris, 1994; Senge, 1990) this practice of “self-sealing” may well create serious tension where organizational cultural norms may detrimentally conflict with critical examination, reflective practice and feedback loops used to examine system health and operating assumptions. If the espoused leadership development program conflicts with the way the structure and processes are thought about and talked about by those who develop leaders, it questions whether or not trainers who are deeply socialized into a particular culture can assist with the development of trainees about new ways to think about leadership development.

Conceptualizing and Practicing Leadership Development

Program designers need to be aware of the needs of school leaders and the social factors that influence the perceptions of site-based leaders to ensure program alignment. These designers may need to more consciously work to improve the outcomes of a succession beyond the careful search for and appointment of the best leader for a school. The responses from the participants concerning the continuum approach to developing leaders indicate a possible need to re-conceptualize, deliver, and monitor leadership development and preparation programs. This includes training and ongoing support specifically designed to assist leaders who are taking charge in a new assignment. New leaders face challenges common to major transitions. Organizational learning literature can be tapped into in order to help reconstruct leadership development for school districts. Programs ought to acknowledge that a unique mix between the leader and the organization will give rise to the outcomes of the succession. Effective school leaders are not only impacted by their institutions but also hope to have impact on their institutions. For educational leadership, this can become an integral component of leadership development coursework and field-based learning activities at both the district level and the graduate

training level. A comprehensive and coherent leadership development program in these areas is crucial to connecting the worlds of theory and practice.

Finally, a much broader implication focuses on the potential for comparative studies of leadership preparation and development programs in countries outside the United States. While the findings of this study add to the body of literature in the area of leadership development and preparation programs the researcher recognizes and acknowledges the limitations of researching one specific leadership development continuum in one state in the United States. The knowledge base on leadership preparation and training in North America continues to grow but we know much less about leadership programs in other countries (see Barnett, 2006; Young, 2006) and the importance of transcending national and international boundaries. As further indicated in the literature, with the exception of some research done in Australia and United Kingdom (see Barnett, 2006; Lumby, 2007) more empirical studies need to be conducted about the preparation and growth of school leaders worldwide. This researcher recommends further studies that investigate the contexts, processes, leadership, and work experiences with particular reference to commonalities and distinctions across borders. Such studies may escalate our understanding of how leadership education can effectively contribute to educational reform. In light of the shortage of empirical research about leadership development, preparation and training programs nationally and internationally, such an undertaking may generate cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences.

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Figure 4

Socialization Opportunities for School Leaders

Program	Assessment Activities	Leadership Learning Plan	Professional Development Team	Professional Development Experiences	Leadership Portfolio	Personnel Folder and Exit Criteria
LEAD *2 years*	** behavioral, technology, instructional leadership, benchmark assessments*	** begin work on research-based school reform project with school improvement plan (with professional development team)* ** revise and refine LLP*	** meetings with coach to building portfolio,* ** additional administrative experiences are provided by mentor*	** workshops, seminars for diversity, ESOL training, sexual harassment training, curriculum, school improvement process, facilitative leadership, etc* **interviewing, resume writing* **standards for SDD Leaders and Sterling Quality criteria* **conferencing skills, effective communication*	** gathers evidence for leadership growth* **links portfolio to ISLLC standards, standards fro SDD leaders and Sterling criteria* ** meeting with coach for building, refining and reviewing portfolio* ** portfolio is used for interview process*	** sign off on all completed activities so participant can move to the next stage*
(continued) ***Interim Assistant Principal*** *1-3 years*	** essential principal tasks* ** research established assessment activities*	** LLP is revised and refined (with professional development team) based on essential principal tasks*	** PDT meets quarterly with IAP and provides administrative experiences as needed*	** monthly learning communities (i.e., school improvement and school-based student achievement projects with classroom observations)* ** job-embedded experiences with reflective journal writing* ** ongoing monitoring of activities*	** documents success in the standards* **PD team assesses and evaluates portfolio (i.e., leadership information, strategic planning, human resources, management of processes, and operational results)* ** gathers necessary documentation for district personnel folder and exit criteria*	** Exit letter is completed* ** Final assessment certificate*
					** direction and self-reflection based on*	

Intern Principal *Up to 2 years*	** Assessment activities including personality type indicator, technology , communication,* ** report on essential principal tasks and functions*	** leadership learning plan is enhanced based on diagnostic assessments addressing transformational leadership tasks and transactional tasks*	**mentoring opportunities with professional development team (i.e., intern principal, site-based principal, practicing principal, Area superintendent, retired principal)* ** job-shadowing, on the job experiences, school site project, individual field experiences*	** opportunities for development related to the performance appraisal/APPAS criteria* ** engage in small learning group discussions on effective teaching, learning, and leadership practices*	*portfolio contents in the area of standards and the performance appraisal system for school leaders* ** components include leadership, information and analysis, strategic planning, customer focus, human resources, management of processes, and operational results*	** semi-annual evaluations by site principal and reviewed by professional development team* ** intern principal must maintain effective or highly effective levels of job performance*
First Year/Interim Principal *1 year*	** Participates in a variety of formal and informal assessment activities* ** to understand strengths and developmental needs*	** continues to serve as a guide for professional development*	**professional development team reviews the developmental leadership portfolio* **quarterly professional development team meetings during the year*	******* *participates in monthly seminars and learning communities*	** ensure the components introduced in LEAD support and align with the ISLLC standards, standards for SDD leaders, and the performance appraisal system (APPAS)*	** successful completion of the program is based on mid-year and end of year evaluations*

Figure 4.* Adapted from SSD HRMD Plan, interviews, documents, and field-notes.