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Challenges and Possibilities for Preparing Urban Leaders: The IUPUI Urban Principal Program

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Abstract
This article profiles the design of the Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) urban principal program as well as discusses the challenges and promises the first student cohort presented us. The design of the program incorporated five major outcomes of educational leadership research and preparation as outlined by Furman (2002): social justice leadership, learning for all students, democratic communities, school improvement, and the development of ethical schools. As we paired a research faculty member with a scholar-practitioner we found that we tapped into the strength of both in designing and developing a curricular experience for students that is rigorous and theoretical yet not so highly abstract and distant from the day-to-day experiences of the students in the principal preparation program. We discovered that course work that forced students to examine their beliefs (such as the critical literacy activities, policy issues, social and class issues, diversity issues) and to take a critical stance toward their own assumptions were the most meaningful and relevant to students. We also discuss confronting an ongoing series of challenges; these include demands on student time, recruitment, cohering learning experiences in the field with experiences in the classroom, student frustrations with critical perspectives, establishing meaningful mentoring relationships, and collecting evidence of student learning and effective leadership behavior.

Introduction
The Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Urban Principal Program was initiated by educational leadership faculty in fall 2004. The result of intense ongoing deliberation, the innovative program design incorporates research on leadership and urban education as well as perspectives of effective practicing educational leaders.
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The purpose of the Urban Principal Program is to prepare urban school leaders capable of understanding and confronting complex school and community change issues as well as leading student learning through democratic community building. In designing the program, the faculty recognized the immense challenges that many urban school leaders face. These include urgent accountability policy demands, socioeconomic and cultural diversity issues, and a myriad of micropolitical conflicts. In the context of urban schooling, there is seemingly untenable pressure placed on principals and other school leaders to reform complex organizations quickly. The faculty members examined urban school leadership in that context, noting that aspiring urban leaders would face tremendous obstacles in their charge to raise student achievement scores while also designing more equitable and effective learning environments. In response, the program’s conceptual framework seeks to guide the development of critical yet hopeful individuals who become moral stewards, community builders, and public citizens with a deep personal commitment to the greater good (Foster, 1986; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Starratt, 2003). The design of the program incorporated five major outcomes of educational leadership research and preparation as outlined by Furman (2002): social justice leadership, learning for all students, democratic communities, school improvement, and the development of ethical schools.

Trajectory of Leadership Preparation Programs

Traditionally, preparation of educational leaders reflected a concern with efficiency and an emphasis on rationalizing educational organizations. Beginning in the 1980s the effective schools movement highly influenced the development and application of standards-based frameworks for educational leadership programs. These standards were developed as a result of large-scale studies of student outcome data and effective school reform. Concurrent to the centering of effective leadership notions and standards-based curriculum in leadership preparation programs, the dynamic and intellectually expansive notion of the learning organization emerged as an important concept in the field and also influenced leadership preparation programs (Hanson, 2003; Senge, 1990). Subsequently, a focus on leading learning shifted the conversation to specific ways educational leaders exercise a powerful influence on student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Murphy, 2002). As a result, students came to learn about transformational and instructional leadership, which were contrasted with transactional leadership models (Firestone, Monfils, Hayes, Polovsky, Martinez, & Hicks, 2004).

Nevertheless, many scholars began to critique the dominant, non-normative, and hierarchical conceptions of school leadership uncritically embedded in some transformational and effective leadership orientations (Dantley, 2003; Donnoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995; Foster, 1986; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Murphy, 2002).
These scholars also threw light upon the limitations of generalized educational leadership models that downplayed important local knowledges of educational practice that emerge in urban school and community contexts (Grogan, 2002). Critical perspectives argued that traditional hierarchical leadership was inherently biased toward maintaining stability as educational disparities became more visible to the general public through accountability system indicators and other measures of school performance (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). The disparities included significant and ongoing differences in students’ opportunity to learn, unequal leadership capacity between urban and suburban schools, wide-ranging teacher expectations, varied curriculum rigor, uneven organizational ability to conceptualize and enact vision, and increasing school and societal segregation and inequality (Anyon, 2005; Lipman, 2004). Consequently, a few university-based programs, including the IUPUI urban principal program, began to use the lessons of effective leadership and schooling research in combination with a focus on preparing students for cultural competence, equity pedagogy, and social justice leadership (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005, Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Marshall & Ward, 2004).

The IUPUI Urban Principal Program: Partnering with Schools
The IUPUI Urban Principal Program, at its inception, centered on the application of knowledge and critical thinking directly into urban school contexts. In order for the university to operationalize such an approach, the involvement of local school districts and their leaders was critical. Therefore, an advisory group was formed consisting of principals that were consistently identified by peers as effective urban leaders. This group identified major issues and provided counsel to the university faculty regarding curriculum. The advisory group recommended partnering first with Indianapolis area school districts through the formation of a superintendent group composed of representatives and/or superintendents from the major urban districts in central Indiana: Indianapolis Public Schools, M.S.D. of Decatur Township, M.S.D. of Wayne Township, and M.S.D. of Lawrence Township. The superintendents met on a regular basis and agreed to support the program by providing a school site location for each semester, supporting candidates by considering them for open administrative positions, and providing release time for candidates for fieldwork.

The IUPUI Urban Principal Program: The Curriculum Design

Interdisciplinary Focus
The Urban Principal Program includes a commitment to interdisciplinary learning, with courses linked in instructional blocks and often team-taught. Issues and research on democratic community building, politics, ethical leadership for social justice, and
inclusive and effective learning strategies are woven throughout the student’s course work. For example, in the initial instructional block, the introductory school leadership course (A500) is linked with a school curriculum course (J500). This intentional effort is designed to emphasize the school principal’s role in leading organizational learning. The second instructional block links two professors teaching Learning Cognition with Instructional Issues in Language Learning in order to create experiences that encourage students to make connections between language learning and cognition theories that impact language learning. The third instructional block links a politics and policy issues course with a school and community course, reflecting an intentional effort to emphasize to students the impact of policy at the national level with understanding of the leaders’ role in enacting and contesting policies across schools and communities. The final block connects two courses, Elementary and Secondary Administration with Teacher Supervision, a course linkage that enables instructors to tie school climate and culture with issues of professional learning communities and teacher supervision. The following further describes the instructional blocks of the Urban Principal Program:

**Block 1: Moral Leadership for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

This instructional block is designed to introduce the candidates to the concept of moral leadership for culturally relevant pedagogy. The block includes an introduction to moral and ethical leadership, visionary leadership, the cultural dimensions of school organizations, and systems theory. Candidates begin to explore urban issues related to student achievement and begin an awareness of the centrality of multicultural, gender, and race issues in closing the achievement gap. Within the curriculum arena, candidates receive instruction on curriculum content, programming, and evaluation that informs instructional leadership. During this block, the students register for the following 3-hour credit courses:

- A500 Introduction to Educational Leadership
- J500 Instruction in the Context of Curriculum
- P507 Assessment in the Classroom

**Block 2: Learning Theory and Content Knowledge**

This instructional block expands candidate knowledge in learning and cognition and the content areas of literacy and numeracy. This block includes knowledge of learning theory, critical literacy application, and application of assessment knowledge in the classroom and for the school. Although students register for the practicum this semester, the students’ robust practicum experience is shaped through learning tasks that align with all instructional blocks and are carried out over a nearly two-year period of the program. During this block, the students register for the following 3-hour credit courses:
Block 3: Law, Finance, and Equity Issues
The instructional block of law, finance, and equity issues encompasses technical knowledge required of building administrators, including how to mobilize resources for equity. The course work incorporates cases and problems related specifically to urban issues of social equity and justice for all represented students. During this block, the students register for the following 3-hour credit courses:

- A608 Legal Perspectives on Education
- A635 School Budgeting and Accounting

Block 4: Power, Politics, and School-Community Relationships
This instructional block links candidate knowledge regarding the political and social issues surrounding urban schools to work in the field. A major component in this block addresses developing school-community relationships through meaningful engagement and collaboration with parents and the public. This block centers leadership and schools within larger sociopolitical and community contexts and helps students understand urban school leadership as community and political leadership. Candidates explore the democratic underpinnings of public education and are pushed to challenge deficit ideologies about kids and communities as well as understand a broader array of inequality-producing policies in order to address achievement deficits in urban schools. Creating cultures for schools and communities that honor diversity and provide opportunities for authentic relationships outside of the traditional notions of the school building comprise an important orientation of this block. During this block, the students register for the following 3-hour credit courses:

- A510 School and Community Relations
- A560 Political Perspectives of Education

Block 5: Distributive Leadership/Teacher Development
The instructional block of Distributive Leadership/Teacher Development focuses on skills of communication, team building, and supervision to enhance leadership in the urban school setting. Instruction for supervision of personnel through a learning-community approach is a component of this block as well as distributive leadership, systems thinking, and school improvement. During this final block, the students register for the following 3-hour credit courses as well as complete their practicum (A695):

- A624 Elementary and Secondary Administration
- A515 Supervision of Instruction
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The instructional block sequence is designed to emphasize the priority of instruction and learning for the urban leader. By scheduling the curriculum course in the first block and the literacy class in the second block, we believed that the candidates would receive content knowledge regarding instruction and curriculum within the first year, which informs their awareness of leadership skills for instruction. However, student writings seem to reflect previous experience and expertise in curriculum and instruction much more than substantive knowledge gained through the program. Also, by incorporating P507 and P540 within the first two blocks, candidates develop inquiry skills necessary to engage in student assessment, action research, case studies, and reflective activities. These skills were enhanced, but the level of skill required to rigorously conduct such activities was difficult to support through our limited contact. So with our successes are some ongoing challenges in this area that will not be easily resolved in a 36-hour master’s program.

The IUPUI Urban Principal Program: The Instructional Framework
The instructional framework for the IUPUI Urban Principal Program is centered on field-based work with reflective inquiry that includes self-assessment, reflection on assumptions and activity, and interdisciplinary action research projects. It is delivered through a cohort model, with members of the cohort selected collaboratively by university-based faculty and practicing urban administrators.

Field-based Work
The program incorporates field-based experiences throughout the program course work. In many conventional educational leadership preparation programs, field-based experiences are compartmentalized in a capstone course taken as the individual completes the program course work. In the IUPUI Urban Principal Program, we attempted to provide candidates with field experiences throughout each course as the instructor for each course identified the required field-based work related to content of the instructional block. Although students are required to complete field-based experiences for each course, experiences are coordinated for nearly two years, as students receive guidance and support from one instructor (who also is the program director) for the field-based experiences. This instructor ensures students have documented their experiences through a log and have commentary and reflections for each field experience.

Assessment
Students in the IUPUI Urban Principal Program are required to constantly reflect on their personal leadership style, their growth and development on the ISLLC standards, and their own emotional growth. Students are administered a leadership survey constructed by NASSP and revised by the program coordinator upon entrance into the
program. In the final semester of the program, students are assessed again with the same instrument. Throughout the course work, students do self-assessments to determine their level of skill and expertise. For example, one self-assessment students do regularly is regarding their level of involvement, interaction, and engagement in each course. In addition, students assess themselves with Gardner’s (1993) eight intelligences instrument and Goleman’s (1995) emotional intelligence instrument.

**Personal Reflection**

In addition to constantly reflecting on their personal leadership style and their growth and development on the ISLLC standards, students are challenged to reflect on their roles in promoting or challenging the types of deficit orientations to students and communities that often permeate urban school environments (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2003; Valencia, 1997). Students are consistently required to complete personal reflection assignments. Often, students were to reflect on their roles in school environments and broader urban policy contexts that contribute to the production of inequality and difference marked by race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. One student summarized the importance of the critical approaches as he reflected on his field experiences:

I think that our greatest experiences with diversity in this block have been our field observations of different schools and the discussions that followed. One of the realities of the urban program is that diversity will be the rule at the schools that we lead, so it is important to be prepared for it. While we all have some experience with diversity in our own school settings, it was interesting to take an outsider’s view and investigate how these schools were responding to diversity. I know that we probably made more broad conclusions and judgments than were warranted by our slight evidence, but still I felt the experience gave me some helpful insights about diversity in education. In particular, I think that our schools we observed showed how it will be important to embrace our diversity and use it to our educational advantage, rather than avoiding it or allowing our staff to pretend it doesn’t exist.

The student reflected on the limitations of the experience but did speak to present and future relevance.

In the foundation and curriculum course block, students completed observations and critical reflections, while in the Elementary and Secondary Administration course, students completed critical incident reflections on problems in practice. In the politics and community relations block, students examined the purpose and impact of high-stakes accountability systems, their potentially differentiated impact on low income
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and/or communities of students of color, and the ethical quagmires that pressures to “game” performance present for leaders pursuing authentic learning in schools. Students are required to complete and constantly update their leadership platform, a curriculum platform and learning platform. In the final instructional block, students complete a Professional Development Plan, designed to assist them in planning for future personal development. In all course work, there is constant and consistent questioning and reflection on social justice, moral purpose, and conflict and power in urban leadership work.

**Inquiry through Action Research**

Within each course required in the program, students complete an action research project. For example, in A500, the foundation course for educational leadership, students conduct action research on the behaviors of effective leaders. Then they are led to question the limits of heroic trait-based notions of leadership and to figure out how leadership may be distributed across a building. In the teacher supervision course, students conduct action research on the supervision tasks as perceived by teachers and principals. In the Elementary and Secondary Administration course, students complete action research on school climate and professional learning communities, and in both the curriculum and politics courses, students complete action research on the localized impact of state and federal policies. In the Learning Cognition course, which is linked with the Instructional Issues in Language Learning course, students complete literacy audits of schools as part of their action research.

One particular interdisciplinary project for the integrated courses of Learning and Cognition and Instructional Issues in Language Learning includes field-based work that incorporates observations and interviews of leadership in literacy. As a result of that research, candidates created a description of effective leadership practices to promote literacy. Students started the project with a “big” question: “What does it mean to have a literacy-rich school? What would it look and feel like? How would it be different from a school that is not literacy-rich?” Thirteen members of the cohort visited schools and compiled observations of the literacy practices they observed. The following represents the main aspects that they observed and their comments as summarized in the reflection submitted by one Urban Principal Program student, Traci Prescott:

**Is your school literacy-rich?**

If you just finished reading the title of this article, then you are probably questioning what exactly it means to have a “literacy-rich” school. When we started this project, that was our biggest question also. What does it mean to have a literacy-rich school? What would it look and feel like? How would it be different from a school that is not literacy-
With our cohort of 13 members in an urban principal preparation program, each of us did observations in schools to find out what literacy-rich schools look like or did not look like. After coming together and discussing what each of us saw in our observations, the following are the five main traits that we consider to be necessary to building a school that is literacy-rich.

**Routines/Consistency**

In all of the schools that we observed, we found that the schools we considered to be literacy-rich all had strict routines in place and consistent teaching practices school-wide. In the classroom, these routines were as simple as students in a fourth-grade classroom coming in every day and going straight to journal writing without any instruction from the teacher. Or the school where picture frames hung on the walls all over the school, and at different times during the year, students from all grade levels would have artwork displayed with a writing piece attached that correlated with the artwork. In all literacy-rich schools, we found that the teachers used consistent language across grade levels, all classrooms, including the unified arts areas, had set routines in place for reading and writing, and there also seemed to be a school-wide focus on everything to do with reading and writing. From the moment that you walked into these schools, you felt and saw the routine emphasis on literacy throughout each classroom and grade level.

**Student Ownership**

Have you ever tried to write a piece about a topic that you know very little about? One key element we found in all literacy-rich schools was that the students took ownership of their reading and writing, and they were encouraged to use as much creativity as possible. Many schools try the cookie-cutter approach to save money and resource, such as all students reading the same book for a unit. In the literacy-rich schools, we saw the emphasis shift to students’ own interests, and they were repeatedly given choices about what they read and wrote about. In one school, a bulletin board had the topic of “Fall,” and then the board was covered with pieces of writing from different students who had all written about different aspects of fall. Some students wrote about raking leaves, some wrote about how the leaves change color, and some wrote about the sports they watch in the fall. In a literacy-rich school, you see very little cookie-cutter approaches, and the result is that the students are more intimately involved in their writing...
and reading because they are excited about their choice of topics instead of having their topics chosen for them.

**Relevancy**

One of the most unique characteristics we found of literacy-rich schools was that all of them have made great strides in offering students a curriculum that is relevant to their students. Part of this is achieved by the earlier topic of allowing students a lot of choice about what they read and write, but these schools also take it a step further by seeking to find opportunities to make the curriculum meaningful and realistic to all students. If many of their students are immigrants, they find books about the journeys and hardships of immigrants. If they have a large African American population, they go out of their way to find books that have African American characters or deal with topics important to their culture. Having a relevant curriculum where literacy is concerned allows all students to access and utilize their own emotions and to really delve into books and writing as a means of understanding their own lives, where they came from, and where they want to go in the future.

**Collaboration**

Due to the pressures put on schools recently with high-stakes testing, many schools have had to give up the time they formerly set aside for teachers just to get together and collaborate. These meetings now are spent implementing and revising school improvement plans and discussing ways to help students achieve. But what we found in these literacy-rich schools is that they still make it a priority to find time for teachers to collaborate, whether it is by common planning times or monthly sharing sessions or other more creative methods such as folders in the teachers’ lounge where everyone submits student work for others to look over. These sharing methods allow all teachers to see what others are doing and to keep the focus strongly pointed on literacy. We found that you could walk into any classroom in these buildings and you would see common themes, grade levels collaborating with each other to build projects, or just feel a similar environment in every room that is only achieved through collaboration among all teachers.

**Powerful Leadership**

We all know how important good leadership is, but we never realized how much the leadership in a building can influence how literacy-rich a school is. In all the buildings that we deemed to be literacy-rich, we
noticed there was strong and supportive leadership that encouraged the teaching staff to take risks and do what was necessary to help the students achieve. Teachers remarked about how supportive the principal is when implementing new initiatives and how the leadership of the principal allows the teachers to feel confident and professional. The principal also often plays the role of cheerleader to the students and works to celebrate their successes in literacy whether that is by having celebration programs or merely by commenting on work in the halls to individual students. It is not just the teaching staff that strives to keep the focus on literacy, but the principal too, through thoughtful and supportive leadership, which helps to pull it all together.

While the students recognized that the observations were unstructured and quite informal, these five characteristics of transformational leadership work presented themselves continually in their discussion of the experience. The students also observed that not just one or two of these traits created a literacy-rich school, but that multiple traits needed to be present.

The IUPUI Urban Principal Program: In the Classroom
The Urban Principal Program focused heavily on creating learning tasks that required considerable student interaction with the field. The following examples represent various tasks assigned within the instructional blocks:

Learning Task: Action Research: Distributive Leadership (Partner Project)
Students will develop a knowledge base of distributive leadership, individually or in small groups. Students will share their information during a designated class session.

Following the class session, students will be asked to develop a process of inquiry that will answer the question, “How do we find out if leadership is distributed in this school?”

The following tasks must be completed:

1. With a partner, visit an urban school you have selected and develop an inquiry method to answer the above question.

2. Observe a principal’s meeting in the same district and analyze evidence of distributive leadership at the district level.

3. Prepare a presentation to the class describing your inquiry and results, and suggest actions that have been informed by your work.
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Learning Task: Curriculum Analysis (Individual Project)
The individual project will incorporate leadership and curriculum in a review of a school’s curriculum and defining the principal’s role in leading and changing the curriculum. Within this project, you will engage in the following tasks:

a. Describe the school’s curriculum, the alignment of the curriculum to the stated vision, and include an analysis of the current “in use” curriculum guide. For the analysis of the curriculum, utilize the framework described on pp. 78–79 of *The Curriculum Bridge* (Soloman, 2003). This framework provides a theory from the research on learning and an inference for curriculum. You should examine your own curriculum for inclusion of this research.

b. You will also examine the alignment of the curriculum to state statutes and standards. Utilizing the rubrics developed on pp. 98–99 of *The Curriculum Bridge* (Soloman, 2003), analyze one subject in your school. These rubrics are designed to evaluate a standards-based curriculum. You should analyze your school curriculum for consistency and connection to these rubrics.

c. Develop a rubric to examine the effectiveness of programs in your school, and evaluate one program based on your rubric.

d. Your personal curriculum platform should be included in this learning task.

Learning Task: Leadership Interviews
Each student will submit the results from two interviews, one with an urban principal and another with a community leader from that principal’s school. Students will be provided five guiding questions and must further develop the interview through additional clarification questions. Students will then present themes from the interviews to the class.

Directions: The following questions should serve as the basis for the interview, and clarification questions should occur following each of the guiding questions.

1. “Moral purpose” has been defined as acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers or clients, and society (Fullan, 2001). How do you believe we can determine if our leadership has moral purpose?

2. New relationships in schools, such as those found in professional learning communities, are becoming the non-negotiable culture in today’s schools. Could you explain how a professional learning community is encouraged in your school?
3. In your experience, what leadership strategies are most effective in getting people to change?

4. Could you discuss how the faculty and community in your school share and exchange new knowledge about teaching and learning?

5. How do you make sense of the complex nature of leadership and learn to constantly improve your skills as a leader?

Clarification questions can be designed for each of the guiding questions. For example, a clarification question for question number 5 might be: What activities in your school district encourage you to refine your skills as a leader?

The five guiding questions should also be asked of the community leader of the school.

Following the interviews, you should prepare a summary of your interviews, with particular attention to comparing and contrasting the principal and community leader viewpoints.

**Learning Task: Action Research on Supervision Tasks**

Ask FIVE supervisors and FIVE teachers to list what they consider the five most important tasks of instructional supervision for the school principal today. To phrase it differently — What is the principal doing and with whom to improve instruction? Prepare a report comparing supervisors’ perceptions and teachers’ perceptions with the five tasks of supervision discussed in class. Supervisors can be administrators in any of the following positions: assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, or superintendent. Glickman’s five tasks are the following:

- Direct Assistance
- Group Development
- Professional Development
- Curriculum Development
- Action Research

Learning tasks in each area are designed around the instructional strategies of field-based work through personal reflection, interdisciplinary projects, and reflective inquiry, including action research. These learning tasks help ensure constant and coherent connection of classes with practices “in the field.” For example, one student noted that consistent messages regarding social justice and equity impacted her field experience:

Our field observations were one of the greatest experiences that will have the most impact on me from this block….Just being able to experience many different types of diversity was a key component to this program. Diversity is everywhere in one form or another, so to understand its
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effects and how to be a positive leader in this area will make us strong leaders….I think through our last block, equity and social justice was engrained in our heads so much that as we were doing our walkthrough with these projects we automatically thought about them. As we all got back together and began to discuss what we found, the issue of inequity was relevant and somewhat disturbing. Going through both of those experiences made me come back to my own school and see what was happening. There were definite inequities present, and I really would have never thought of that before these field experiences.

We found that these were meaningful openings, reflecting student awareness. However, we continue to struggle with the notion of whether such altered perspectives will be translated into future actions, particularly as students are powerfully socialized by school cultures and community norms that often silence and mark these type of discussions as inappropriate and inharmonious. And not all students reflected similar dispositions toward examining their roles in the sustenance of inequity.

Other students commented on how the projects created that link of beliefs to practice component critical to student growth:

The project work in this block, while overwhelming at times, was the most valuable. The evaluation plans that we had to develop for teachers and administrators tied many aspects of all of our course work together. We needed to combine the beliefs from our leadership platform, our learning beliefs, and our curriculum beliefs when developing these evaluation plans. The readings during this block were wonderful and applicable to all aspects of leadership. The Senge book is something that I will always keep close at hand as I continue my career. Designing a School Improvement Plan was also very valuable experience and again, tied together much of what have learned in the earlier blocks. The building walk-through projects were a wonderful learning experience.

In subsequent reflections from graduates, we plan to ask for more specific critical feedback from students, noting that some of the feedback we gained from projects was tainted by student evaluation concerns. This will also help us flesh out responses to several ongoing challenges that we have initially identified.

The IUPUI Urban Principal Program: Ongoing Challenges

We have faced a myriad of challenges as we attempted to create a new approach to educational leadership preparation. Many of these challenges are complex, and some are likely to represent enduring struggles for the program. We begin with a discussion of
challenges of design and management of the program and continue with a reflection on enduring pedagogical challenges.

We began the program with an interdisciplinary approach to all courses and found that the university course structure did not always accommodate our original design. While having two professors present for the integrated course work was a benefit for students, economically and practically it was more difficult to achieve, as maintaining commitment to professor time for joint classes was consistently challenging. We revised our structure somewhat, particularly in the specialized administrative courses of law and finance, which were taught as purely stand-alone classes. In general, as the program progressed we did learn to integrate course work for students in each instructional block and manage our time so that both professors did not have to commit to double time (as in a pure co-teaching model) for each course. More commonly, we incorporated integrated course work within separate syllabi used in the instructional block and met jointly at specific times throughout the integrated block to discuss student progress, learning tasks, and coherence of pedagogical approaches. As professors, we felt that we “gained energy from the synergy” of working in teams to design and implement the Urban Principal Program. However, our greatest learning has been to witness the impact on course development where we have paired a research faculty member with a scholar-practitioner and have exploited the strength of both to design a curriculum for students that is rigorous yet not highly abstract and distant from the experiences of students in the principal preparation program. Our students reflected that they appreciated the integration of course content and co-teaching but also realized that it was not always seamless or as powerful as it could be. Earlier and more comprehensive planning of the entire course delivery structure seems warranted. This requires a level of commitment from core faculty that is not always rewarded institutionally.

As we designed and created our field-based requirements, we have found that students need specific understanding of field experiences and more frequent monitoring. Our field-based component will be improved through each professor taking ownership of the field-based requirement for that particular class. With our first cohort, we relied on students monitoring the field experiences individually. We found that the urban principal professors need to explicitly revisit, on a regular basis, the coherence of field-based components and learning tasks with readings and classroom-based discussions. We feel that, as we continue to work together, this area will be strengthened.

Another area of concern was the framework for Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. We discovered that the standards were not sufficiently attentive to recent research in the field of educational leadership and more particularly to leadership in urban environments. That became part of our work. For example, when we analyzed the research by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), we found that the
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leadership behaviors addressed in that research were not necessarily reflected in or aligned to the standards. When we reviewed the emerging work of the Wallace Foundation–funded Southern Regional Education Board critical success factors (Fry, B., Bottoms, G., & O’Neill, K., 2005, 2006), we also discovered gaps. And we found that although standard six focused on social and legal context of education, it did not sufficiently address the advocacy roles and complexities that are involved in leading for social justice in urban environments.

One significant challenge we faced was the commitment of time from our students. Students typically had a minimum of two courses each semester. We observed and our students confirmed that this time commitment was most difficult during the school year when they were teaching. Although our candidates were provided release days by their school districts, several were reluctant to be absent from their teaching responsibilities due to the current emphasis on instructional time and accountability. In practice, minimal release time occurred at the building level for the teachers that were part of our cohort. At times, principals allowed Urban Principal Program students to leave early to accomplish learning tasks, but this usually meant that the Urban Principal teachers’ students were simply distributed to other non-cohort teachers in their buildings. Understandably, this placed our students in a position where they did not want to burden their colleagues. As a result, occasionally we had to adjust our expectations for learning tasks and readings. We also adjusted our expectations for mentorship, partially as a result of a program structure that did not support a robust mentoring program in terms of time required and experiences provided. This will require renewed efforts from faculty. Our original program design called for students to select a mentor as they began the program. We have discovered that it has been difficult to develop and monitor an effective mentoring program.

In terms of pedagogical content, our focus on urgent accountability policy demands, socioeconomic and cultural diversity issues, and micropolitical conflicts was, we believe, our greatest success. This focus was integrated throughout all course work, with student exposure to critical and normative approaches to culturally competent and data-driven leadership as represented by the works of De Carvalho (2001); Furman (2002); Fullan (2001); Johnson (2002); Ladson-Billings (1994); Lipman (2004); Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005); McKenzie and Scheurich (2003); Sergiovanni (2005); and Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, and Nolly (2004). We discovered that course work that forced students to examine their beliefs (such as the critical literacy activities, policy issues, social and class issues, diversity issues) and to take a critical stance toward their own assumptions were the most meaningful and relevant to students. However, this “success” is not without its complications and limitations. On more than one occasion, students “talked back” to the professors, stating that the critical perspectives we exposed them
to allowed them to better understand social, political, and identity issues that schools are embedded within, but they did not give them tools to address the issues. More specifically, one student expressed her position as being overwhelmed and stuck. Another said that these new perspectives simply made him more unsatisfied with his current administrators and left him frustrated. Still another said she needed hope and resiliency, and the program does not address these elements sufficiently. This comment seemed to hit a chord and several students affirmed that sentiment and we finished a long class with a tired discussion of hope and leadership. Several students specifically stated that our pedagogical approaches were powerful in opening their eyes and in deconstructing power and inequality but rather anemic in providing hope.

**Conclusion: Possibilities for Future Preparation of Urban Leaders**

We have recognized the need for some structural adjustments for the delivery of our programs. We want other urban areas in Indiana to have access to the program. We also are cognizant of our candidates’ need to have fewer classes during the school year when they teach full time. Accordingly, we have revised our structure to occur primarily in the summer, with availability for additional course work during the year to complete a master’s degree. To expand our program to other urban areas in Indiana, the new structure incorporates the courses provided during the school year to be delivered via online courses and seminars. Additionally, we have continued the district commitment to candidates by requiring superintendents to endorse candidates and provide release days for fieldwork.

We will continue to work to strengthen our long-term practicum, as research by Pounder and Hefner (2006) and others suggest that robust internships with well-structured and meaningful activities set within school settings make a difference. The goal of our extended internships is to not only strengthen the individual student and allow for the vigorous pursuit of individual learning objectives but also to build meaningful partnerships by providing genuine support to schools and the surrounding communities our urban principal students are working in. This affords interns the opportunity to be engaged in compelling learning in “real-life” contexts while finding meaningful purposes in the urban principal preparation program.

This next summer, our new cohort will be required to participate in a state urban conference with their mentors, thereby establishing stronger ties to the school district and emphasizing a systems approach to leadership. This is part of the process by which we will incorporate institutes for valued public scholarship (Black & Murtadha, 2006) into the structure of the Urban Principal Program. These institutes, led by both university and school-based personnel, allow further opportunities to surface problems of practice and solution-focused learning. Our urban principal interns, starting the second year of
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their program, can share their case studies that explore the impact of full service, multi-agency collaborations on student-centered concerns. We are seeking funding to attract and support the attendance not only of students but also stakeholders from schools, community-based agencies, government, local and state school officers, other faculty, and business representatives.

During the institutes, educational leadership interns could have the opportunity to expand their practicum inquiries in forums where questions are generated, analyzed, and further developed, and their work is valued as a type of public scholarship. Additionally, results of ongoing research supported, presented, or generated from interactions at the institutes can be shared at local and national professional conferences (See Black & Murtadha, 2006). By connecting students through the institutes to their mentor, we also hope to strengthen the connection to the student’s mentor and support that relationship more fully.

In general, educational leadership programs have little evidence from which to respond to questions about program accountability (Orr & Pounder, 2006). We do not know if a particular program makes a difference in leadership behavior, organizational change, student achievement, or social justice/equity oriented leadership. While the current ISLLC standards help to guide us, we do not track what our students do when they leave our programs. We will be utilizing a survey developed by Terry Orr (2006) with each cohort group. The survey will be administered as the students complete the program in order to measure program effects on learning and then over regular periods of time in order to measure effects of the principal preparation program on leadership behavior and reform initiatives. In addition, we will engage qualitative observational and interview methods in order to capture our graduates’ work in schools. Thus, we are committed to our students and to evaluating the efficacy of the program over time. At this point, we cannot be overly confident of our results. We do not know the outcome of our work and the commitment of our graduates to the program goals over time. However, we will continue to take a hard look at whether our program makes a difference in leadership behavior, organizational change, student achievement, or social justice/equity oriented leadership in urban environments.

References


Preparing Urban Leaders


This program prepares school leaders in urban areas to confront and engage in complex social change. Because these communities have unique challenges, urban principals require a different kind of preparation at the certification level. This program trains you to be a leader who risks, hopes, and dares to create the social justice critical for all students to be successful. We give the highest priority to the issues that affect urban areas, including: Demonstrating moral and ethical leadership. Engaging the school and community. Recognizing power and politics. Organizing and creating change. In an effort to deepen the pool of qualified urban principal candidates, the Institute for the Mentorship of Urban School Leaders at Lehigh University was established to give proven school leaders the training and support needed to be effective administrators. Included: A description of a focused, hands-on training program. An intensive, hands-on heavy principal preparation program is putting trained administrators into Philadelphia schools in fewer than two years. Called the Philadelphia Principals Project, the program is a collaboration of the School District of Philadelphia, the National As The latest Tweets from IUPUI Urban Education Leadership & Policy (@IUPUI_UrbanEdL). IUPUI Urban Education Leadership & Policy Program in the School of Education. Indianapolis, IN. Save the Date! Indy area Educational Leaders on equity, engagement of all learners, advocacy, and mental health. @IUPUI_SchoolOfEd @IUPUI_EdLawProf @UCEA @smpscrib pic.twitter.com/zjqwrH1U1W. 0 replies 4 retweets 3 likes. a race based Minnesota Urban Principal Pipeline program. Emphasis was placed on how the program impacted the participants personal leadership journey racially and their preparedness to lead racially diverse schools upon completion of the program. The study examines, through data from racial affinity focus groups, the lived experiences of aspiring school principals in a principal pipeline leadership development program, grounded in race based pedagogy and content. The Minnesota Urban Principal Pipeline program was developed around four foundational theories; intentional recruitment, remov