

The Ritchie Program for School Leaders— A Partnership between the University of Denver’s Morgridge College of Education and Denver Public Schools

Philosophy & Purpose

The Ritchie Program for School Leaders responds to the changing expectations of the role of the school principal and to the learning needs of the candidates aspiring to that role. In light of the increasing pressure for instructional improvement and to increase student achievement, the Ritchie Program provides a framework for immersing students in reflective, experiential, project-based learning that will prepare them to meet the challenges within complex systems and provide opportunities for full time internships and strong principal mentors.

Program Overview

The University of Denver/Denver Public Schools Partnership has been established to design an alternative for principal certification for selected students. This cohort-based program marks a departure from the current certification program that requires a given number of semester credit hours of traditional coursework. Students selected for this program will receive University credit and the academic credentials for a Colorado Principal License; however, the curriculum will consist of the following new components:

- A multi-day working institute in the summer to launch the cohort
- Ritchie Fellows must work for Denver Public Schools
- Internship projects giving students the opportunity to participate in reform work within a school and immediately apply their learning to real leadership situations
- Teaching methods based on learning theory
- Mentoring by a practicing principal, who has been trained in effective mentoring practices
- Rigorous research-based readings related to effective leadership of urban schools
- Full time internships for selected students
- Tuition scholarships available to all students

Vision

The vision of the Ritchie Program for School Leaders is to develop relentless, courageous, and effective instructional leaders who are knowledgeable, highly skilled and committed to building learning communities designed to accelerate the achievement and success of each and every student. Ritchie Fellows will be prepared to work in urban communities serving students with diverse backgrounds and needs. Leading, implementing and supporting the most effective school-wide literacy and numeracy strategies for improved student achievement will represent their core work.

Core Values

The Ritchie Program for School Leaders will focus not only on developing the skills and abilities necessary for success as a school leader, but also on developing a strong commitment to core values essential for ethical and responsible leadership in urban settings. The following value statements form a framework for the program and shape the curriculum and internship experiences of students.

- **Action Orientation**

The framework for our course of study is built upon experiences that require participants to be action

oriented leaders and researchers grounded in strategic instructional leadership.

- **High Expectations for Self and Others**

School leaders should hold high expectations for their own performance, as well as for the performance of all others in the school community. School leaders should embrace accountability as a tool for continuous improvement.

- **Equity**

All members of the school community are capable of learning and being successful in school. School leaders have a responsibility to establish learning conditions that meet the learning needs of all students.

- **Diversity**

There is a value in having diversity in schools. School leaders need to understand how cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, gender, etc. differences affect learning and leadership styles. Leaders have become culturally proficient leaders and understand how to lead a system that supports diversity.

- **Community**

Organizations, neighbors, and family members are key players in the education of children. School leaders should know how to mobilize resources in the family and in the community to support student learning.

- **Inspired Leadership**

School leaders should be committed to a vision of leadership that is collaborative, distributed, data-driven, effective, research-based, ethical, entrepreneurial, reflective, developmental and courageous.

- **Civic Engagement**

School leaders should create environments within their schools that help students develop the skills to be engaged citizens in our democratic society. School leaders should be aware of the cultural, political, social and historical context of education in the United States.

- **Explicit and Honest Communication**

School leaders should ensure that communication within the school community is explicit and honest.

- **Head, Hand and Heart**

Engaged and committed school leaders must be willing to fully dedicate their knowledge, skills, and passion towards the important work of creating effective schools for all learners.

Learning Theory

The methods of this program reflect these basic principles of learning theory:

- Adults need increasing opportunities to direct their own learning
- Adults' orientation to learning tends to be problem-centered rather than subject-centered
- Adults need to process experiences with others through interactions, collegial work, and coaching
- Adults' readiness to learn depends on the demands of their professional roles, expectations and issues

These assumptions are actualized through action, research-based projects and seminars connected to the real work in a school.

Selection Process and Program Details

ELIGIBILITY: Applicants must be employed by Denver Public Schools and given release time to complete school-based action research projects and attend class from 1:00-7:00 p.m. on a weekday.

A unique feature of the Ritchie Program for School Leaders is the internship component. The experiential project-based design of the curriculum is possible because, as full time DPS employees, all Ritchie Fellows will work with a mentor principal in a DPS school. School-based, non-classroom teaching positions provide Ritchie Fellows with the optimal learning experience, but central administration and teachers are eligible as long as they have the support from supervisors to attend class and complete the school-based leadership projects the program requires. Beginning in 2009, five full-time internships will be available to cohort members. In 2010, ten full-time internships will be available. In 2011-2013, fifteen full-time internships will be available to cohort members.

Individuals are encouraged to apply simultaneously for an open non-classroom teaching position and entrance to the Ritchie Program. To apply for a non-classroom teaching position candidates would follow the regular process established by the DPS Human Resources department. Additional questions related to employment status during participation in this program should be directed to Maureen Sanders, Executive Director, Leadership Development, 720-423-3764.

While the Ritchie Fellows program establishes certain expectations for the scope and components of these projects, the Ritchie Fellow and the principal of the school collaborate to design the projects to meet the needs of the school as well. These projects become the basis of assessing the students' readiness for principal licensure. Thus the relationship between the Ritchie Fellow and the school's principal is a key determinant of the program's success. Principals who host Ritchie Fellows will be recognized and supported in the work they do to prepare future DPS principal candidates. Host principals (mentors) will receive training as a principal mentor beginning in 2009 and will also receive a stipend for their support of a Ritchie Fellow.

The program will start with a multi-day institute before the academic school year begins. During the institute, Fellows will have the opportunity to participate in an intensive set of learning experiences that will build a community of learners, ground them in the program's theoretical framework, and develop their instructional leadership skills with a focus on building organizational capacity for increasing student achievement for all students. Detailed information about the institute will be given to candidates at the time of their selection into the program. Fellows will complete all program requirements by the end of May 2010.

NOMINATIONS: To be selected for the Ritchie Program, potential candidates must be nominated by three (3) school district administrators. At least one nomination must be from an administrator in DPS who is the applicant's direct supervisor and can attest to the applicant's potential for school leadership. Candidates can self-initiate the selection process by completing application materials and then requesting nominations from individuals meeting the above criteria. Applications will be screened by a team comprised of representatives from both the University of Denver and Denver Public Schools, and finalists will be invited for follow-up interviews. Applicants will be notified of admissions decisions in February, 2009.

Scholarships

Beginning in 2009, **ALL** candidates accepted to the Ritchie Program for School Leaders are eligible

for scholarships from the Urban Principal Leadership Program to defray almost all of the tuition costs. Upon formal acceptance into the program and the University of Denver, candidates will need to submit a separate scholarship application to DPS.

Financial Aid

Ritchie Program applicants who are interested in Federal Student Loans to cover any costs beyond the scholarship amount should complete the free application for financial aid form at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> . Make sure to complete the form for both the 08-09 (for summer quarter) and 09-10 (fall, winter and spring quarters) academic years.

Program Continuation to MA or PhD

The University of Denver's Ritchie Program requires completion of 32 quarter credit hours. 30 of these credits may be applied to either the MA or PhD in Educational Administration. This continuation requires that an additional application be submitted during spring quarter of 2010. Both MA and PhD courses are offered at 50% of the cost of DU's current tuition rate. Compare the total cost of this program, including fees, with other educational opportunities. For an example of the current year tuition and fee schedule, click [here](#) .

Ritchie Program Conceptual Map of Projects

