

Morgridge College of Education's Principal Preparation Programs Engaged in Program Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

In recent years, many educational leadership preparation programs have redesigned their content and delivery to be more influential in graduates' leadership and career development. Until now, however, there has been little research to demonstrate the effectiveness of program design features or even agreement on outcome measures to use to assess effectiveness. In 2003, the Taskforce on Evaluating Educational Leadership Preparation was created to promote research on the effectiveness of leadership preparation programs. Susan Korach has been an active contributor to this taskforce for the past three years.

One of the most significant projects resulting from this taskforce is a longitudinal, comparative study of public and private leadership preparation programs and their impact on graduate student learning, leadership skills, and associated effects on the schools that they lead and their students' learning. This national study has also facilitated on-going knowledge development on leadership preparation nationally and internationally and engaged the leadership field more broadly in the individual and comparative study of effectiveness and impact.

The primary data source for this study is a survey instrument, **UCEA/LTEL Survey of Leadership Preparation and Practice**, that covers several conceptual areas and which is based largely on scales and measures drawn from and validated in previous, related studies. Survey items and scales are drawn from the federal School and Staffing Survey of teachers and principals, and research studies on leadership effectiveness in school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2003). The survey is also based on an instrument developed by Dr. Terry Orr (Bank Street College) in conjunction with the Wallace Foundation-funded Study of Innovative Principal Preparation and Professional Development Programs, co-directed by Linda Darling Hammond and Debra Meyerson (Stanford University School of Education).

Currently, 13 institutions across the nation have received IRB approval and are using this survey to evaluate 17 principal preparation programs (Orr, 2007). In the spring of 2007, sixty-four graduates from the principal preparation programs at the Morgridge College of Education (Ritchie Program for School Leaders, Weekend School Executive Preparation Program, and Aurora Public Schools Leadership Academy) completed this national survey.

Overall, MCE principal preparation programs were consistently ranked more favorably by program graduates than those in the national sample. MCE graduates ranked the following characteristics of quality principal preparation significantly higher than the average of the national sample: Instructional Leadership, Leadership for School Improvement, Comprehensive Coursework, and Coherent Learning Experience, Action Research and Inquiry Projects, and Use of Data to Monitor School Progress. The following table summarizes the results by providing the % of graduates who ranked the characteristic of high quality programs as present "to a great extent" in their program.

High Quality Program Characteristics	National Sample (% of graduates who ranked the high quality program characteristic as present “to a great extent”)	MCE Principal Preparation (% of graduates who ranked the high quality program characteristic as present “to a great extent”)
Emphasis on Instructional Leadership	57%	82%
Emphasis on Leadership for School Improvement	51%	75%
Coursework was comprehensive and provided a coherent learning experience	38%	69%
Presence of action research or inquiry projects	25%	47%
Use data to monitor school progress, identify problems, and propose solutions	33%	66%

Graduates of the MCE principal preparation programs also responded positively to the question, “If you had the opportunity to do it over again, would you choose the same program?” with 86% stating “definitely yes” as compared to 61% of the respondents in the national sample.

Susan Korach disaggregated the survey results by MCE program and prepared a paper, *Morgridge College of Education Principal Preparation Study: A Comparison of Three Program Delivery Models within a Single Institution*, that was presented by Kent Seidel at the 21st annual convention of the University Council for Educational Administration on November 17, 2007. Currently, the leadership programs’ faculty are using the data to clarify differences between and impact of programs, and to refine and improve the principal preparation programs at the Morgridge College of Education.