

New Directions for CEO Superintendent Preparation

The old, less visible role of the school superintendent has changed to that of a highly visible chief executive who needs vision, skills, and knowledge to lead in a new and complex world. This change occurred in the early 1980s, when widespread concern for the condition of education launched what has been arguably the most intense and sustained effort to reform public schools in American history. National commissions and task forces that convened to examine the condition of education released reports that were consistent in their criticism of public schools and their demands for improved teaching, testing, and learning as well as changes in how schools were organized, managed, and governed. After two decades, policy makers, professors, parents, and practitioners have gained not only an appreciation of the scale and complexity of reform but also a realization of the need to persist in their transformational efforts. Several national commission and task force reports released since the mid-1980s acknowledge that school and district administrators are key to the success of school reform and, as a consequence, call for improving the profession and reconfiguring how the next generation of superintendents will be identified, prepared, selected, and evaluated.

Three successive waves of educational reform reports examined the purpose, condition, and performance of public schools. The first wave of educational reform reports (1982–86), launched by the release of the landmark report *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), focused on increasing accountability. The first-wave reforms promulgated by state legislatures typically expanded regulatory controls over school districts and schools and reached into the classroom. They called for improving student performance on standardized tests, assessing school-level performance and progress, increasing graduation

2 • The Superintendent as CEO

requirements, lengthening the school day and year, and tightening teacher licensure requirements. The pressure for accountability shifted policy making from the district to the state level of government, constrained local district-level discretion, and reinforced centralized, bureaucratic control of schools (Björk, 1996b).

Although reports released during the second wave of educational reform (1986–89) reaffirmed the need to improve student performance and hold schools accountable, they broke new ground by calling attention to national increases in numbers of Hispanic and Asian students, students from lower-income families, and students with special needs; making a compelling argument for addressing the needs of all children; and recommending that teaching and learning processes be radically redesigned to address diversity in students' cultures and learning styles. In addition, they concurred that the stultifying effects of school bureaucracies contributed to low academic performance and high failure rates, and they called for launching decentralization initiatives, such as school-based management (SBM), that would increase teacher professionalism through participation in school governance and decision making (Björk, 1996b).

Third-wave (1989–2003) reports, however, censured previous reports for narrowly focusing on structural and professional issues rather than emphasizing the well-being and learning of all children. Two simple yet compelling characteristics of these reports emerged: Reforms must ensure children's well-being, and no child should be academically left behind. Thus, the architectural notion that form follows function helped draft a blueprint for future school reform. Defining how effective schools should be organized, governed, and led, describing how they should interact with a wide array of community-based service agencies, and reconfiguring the roles of school leaders (Björk, 1996b) were accomplished by working backward from research findings on the needs of children, optimum learning conditions, and appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Policy analysts note that three prominent federal reform initiatives—America 2000: An Education Strategy (U.S. Department of Education, 1991), Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), and more recently the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002)—reiterate themes included in commission reports released during the first and second waves of reform. Taken as a whole, they underscore the importance of redesigning teaching to enhance student learning, particularly for at-risk children. Although the purpose of NCLB generated an uncommon level of bipartisan support in Congress, conservatives and progressives were sharply divided over the issue of funding. The conservative argument that the NCLB initiative can be supported primarily through prudent reallocation of state appropriations and district resources—reminiscent of Reagan-era fiscal policies that reduced federal support for domestic social service and education programs by simultaneously cutting taxes, increasing military spending, and shifting education costs to states (Schlesinger, 1985)—is misleading. Preliminary projections indicate that implementing NCLB would require increasing state-level education expenditures by \$100 billion a year for the next 10 years. It is evident that the federal government is handing states the largest unfunded education mandate in American history at a time when states are faced with a moribund economy, increasing budget deficits, and state legislatures that

chant the mantra of “no new taxes.” Given these circumstances, it is highly unlikely that states will be able to fulfill provisions of NCLB by 2014. Thus, some analysts speculate that NCLB may be less about helping all children learn than about strengthening the case for public school vouchers (Björk, 1996b, 2001; Björk & Keedy, 2002).

Several national commission and task force reports released during the mid-1980s called attention to the substantive role principals played in school reform (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education [AACTE], 1988; Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986). According to these reports, reforms centered on student learning required changes in the nature of schooling that in turn required more inclusive discourse and more democratic decision-making processes in schools. Therefore, the reforms demanded a different set of management and leadership attributes than during previous decades, and educational administration programs would have to align the preparation of school leaders to these new demands. As Peterson and Finn (1985) observed, “At a time when the nation is deeply concerned about the performance of its schools, and near-to-obsessed with the credentials and careers of those who teach in them, scant attention has been paid to the preparation and qualifications of those who lead them” (p. 42). These conclusions set the stage for redefining principal and superintendent roles and reconsidering how the next generation of school leaders should be prepared.

FINDINGS ON SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

From the 1980s up to the present, research on school leadership roles and qualities and their impact on learning has served as a basis for reenvisioning the superintendency and its preparation programs. In 2000, Division A (Administration) of the American Education Research Association (AERA), in collaboration with the University Council on Educational Administration (UCEA) and the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) at Temple University, formed a Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership that was charged with the responsibility of promoting and encouraging high-quality research in educational leadership. The task force released a report, *What We Know About Successful School Leadership* (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), that analyzed research on leadership and identified promising lines of future inquiry; it also prepared a set of working papers on key areas of concern, including leadership for instructional improvement, preparation of future leaders, and methodological approaches for studying effective leaders, that summarized what was known about effective leadership and raised important questions for future research. The task force emphasized that policy makers, practitioners, and those in the preparation enterprise needed to recognize the limitations of anecdotally driven decision making and the value of using empirical evidence on how school and district leaders could directly and indirectly influence student achievement.

According to the task force’s report, the increasingly complex environment in which public schools are embedded is radically changing the work of school

4 • The Superintendent as CEO

administrators and how they lead. For example, changing characteristics of the student population, including differences in cultures, disabilities, and socioeconomic status as well as learning capacities, are increasing demands for interagency collaboration for the delivery of services to families and children. In addition, reform initiatives, including curriculum standards, achievement benchmarks, the application of technology to learning and teaching, and new program requirements, policies, and mandates, are changing the landscape of school and district leadership and influencing how leadership roles must be defined. The task force underscored the importance of creating conditions that enable those who work directly with children to enhance learning by working with and through others and by distributing leadership functions across a wide array of individuals throughout the school.

The task force summarized several research-based conclusions about successful leadership. First, “Leadership has significant effects on student learning, second only to the effects of quality of curriculum and teachers’ instruction” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2). Both empirical findings and case study observations of leaders in high-performing schools indicate that leaders influence student learning directly by coalescing and supporting teacher efforts to achieve high expectations for student learning.

Second, “A core set of leadership practices form the ‘basics’ of successful leadership and are valuable in almost all educational contexts” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 3). This set of practices includes *setting directions*, *developing people*, and *developing the organization*. *Setting directions* involves developing a collective vision of the future that focuses, inspires, and sustains goal achievement efforts over time. In this regard, school leaders identify, articulate, and endorse visions of exemplary instructional practices and model those beliefs in making decisions. School and district leaders should nurture shared meanings among staff, parents, and the community to help guide action and understanding of events. They should also *convey high expectations for performance*; *foster acceptance of group goals* and the possibility of achieving them through sustained effort; *monitor performance*; and effectively *communicate* with multiple and diverse stakeholders. The notion that the leader, school, and district are only as good as the staff underscores the obligation of leaders to *develop people* through intellectual stimulation, promotion, and support of those engaged in change and through modeling of shared beliefs. *Developing the organization* is a significant aspect of effective leadership that is grounded in viewing the school as a professional learning community embedded in a local community context. Effective school leaders contribute to *developing and strengthening the school culture*, *modifying organizational structures* (assignments, allocation of resources, and procedures) to create optimal conditions for learning and teaching, *building collaborative processes* to enhance school performance, and *managing the environment* by proactively engaging parents, community citizens, agencies, and business and government leaders to learn about legitimate concerns, develop shared understanding and meaning, and garner support.

Third, “Successful school leaders respond proactively to challenges and opportunities created by the accountability-oriented policy context in which they work” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 5). Policies directed toward increasing school

accountability provide opportunities for leaders to design practices that fit unique school contexts and needs. For example, the task of *creating and sustaining a competitive school* requires responding to private sector market models and choice options. When education accountability mechanisms mandate *empowerment*, school leaders can ensure that participatory decision making and shared governance are effective and focused on enhancing student learning. When state policies stress standards-based professional performance, school leaders can provide *instructional guidance* by being knowledgeable about best practices and creating conditions for professional growth of teachers and others in the school. If *strategic planning* is mandated as a school improvement mechanism, school leaders need to be knowledgeable about planning processes; they also need to be able to monitor initiatives and take corrective action.

Finally, “Successful school leaders respond productively to the opportunities and challenges of educating diverse groups of students” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6). Changing community contexts and increasing diversity in student characteristics are compelling educators to examine prevailing practices to ensure that those who have been least well served by schools historically learn and succeed so that as adults they can participate in the social, economic, and political mainstream of American society. The breadth and depth of the needs of these children require that teachers and administrators increase their knowledge and strategies for working with particular types of children. A review of empirical research suggests that school leaders working effectively in school settings with highly diverse student populations focus their efforts on four distinct tasks:

1. *Building powerful forms of teaching and learning* that are appropriate and effective with the children served. This requires examining conventional practices that have failed, developing instructional strategies and curricula that are engaging and that motivate students, assessing students’ progress, monitoring progress, and adjusting school and classroom practices (class size, student grouping, staffing, etc.) to facilitate learning.
2. *Creating strong communities in schools* characterized by a strong sense of affiliation, small learning communities, and personalized environments in which students can succeed. Effective leaders foster the development of professional learning communities to enhance teacher efficacy by nurturing commitment; building collaboration, trust, and caring; and sharing in decisions about the school’s core technologies, curriculum content, and pedagogy.
3. *Expanding students’ social capital valued by schools* by recognizing students’ knowledge, values, preferences, behavioral habits, and attitudes toward schooling as assets rather than deficits. These forms of social capital acquired through interactions with parents and other individuals in their respective social networks can be used to frame potential learning opportunities and create a school climate that is caring and builds trusting relationships among teachers, parents, and community citizens.

6 • The Superintendent as CEO

4. *Nurturing the development of families' educational cultures* to enhance student learning and success in school. When parents value education and have the knowledge, resources, and desire to guide and help their children learn, "family educational cultures" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 7) are strengthened and positively influence student achievement. Leaders can strengthen family cultures by nurturing trust, improving communication, adjusting school practices, and providing parents with the knowledge and resources needed to help their children succeed.

The task force report describes a major expansion and reconceptualization of superintendents' roles and requisite skills. Findings like these have led many to recommend wide-ranging reforms in superintendents' preparation programs.

SUPERINTENDENT PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The history of educational administration programs is rather brief, and its development is neither as orderly nor as well defined as that of preparatory programs of other professions such as law, medicine, and dentistry (McCarthy, 1999a, 1999b), which have state and national boards that influence program standards, content, instructional processes, and licensing. Since the 1950s, state education agencies, universities, and professional associations, referred to as the "iron triangle," have collaborated in defining requirements for administrator licensure. Consequently, these requirements have influenced the number and content of courses taught in universities. Most principal preparation programs have a common core of management-oriented courses, including courses on personnel, law, school-community relations, and finance, that are aligned with principal licensure requirements. Critics argue that these programs are not coherent and are merely a collection of unrelated courses designed to meet certification requirements promulgated by states over 30 years ago. Unfortunately, superintendent preparation programs are often characterized as extensions of principal preparation programs even though the nature of work is qualitatively different. In addition, superintendent courses and programs of study vary greatly with regard to subject content, degree of difficulty, and practicum or internship experiences.

The profession has not conducted a definitive study of superintendent preparation programs, faculty, and student enrollment and characteristics during the past decade, but scholars have made some general observations. Preparation is usually protracted over several years and is characterized as serving individuals who are midcareer, in their mid-30s to mid-40s, and married with family responsibilities. These conditions typically produce part-time, commuter students who pursue graduate degrees or administrator certification by enrolling in evenings and in summer school courses. Despite these limitations, more and more superintendents have been pursuing advanced graduate degrees over the past 30 years, particularly the doctorate. In 2000, only 8% of superintendents surveyed by Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000) indicated that the master's degree was the highest degree they had attained.

A higher percentage had earned a master's degree plus additional coursework (24%), a specialist degree (22%), or a doctor's degree (45%). The percentage of superintendents earning doctorates increased from 29% in 1971 (Knezevich, 1971) to 45% in 2000 (Glass et al., 2000). These data suggest that the education community and superintendents themselves are placing a higher value on advanced graduate degrees.

Several findings on preparation programs may prove useful in identifying problems and opportunities for corrective action. For example, student enrollments in superintendent preparation programs tend to be low in comparison with principal preparation sequences; courses are lodged in departments that have few faculty (2%) whose primary area of specialization is the superintendency; and programs tend to be scattered across a wide range of institutions in states (McCarthy, Kuh, & Beckman, 1997). Consequently, in some institutions most courses are taught by adjuncts who are either retired or practicing superintendents. Although they contribute valuable insights that add to the relevancy of classroom instruction, they have little time for scrutinizing current research, few incentives for developing alternative instructional strategies, and less motivation to engage in long-term program development activities, and they are not fully integrated into the mainstream of academic departments.

Over the past several decades (1977–2003), critics have labeled educational administration programs as “seriously deficient” (Achilles, 1988; Thompson, 1989, p. 372) and have indicted them for failing to adequately prepare school and district leaders. In several national surveys from the 1980s to the present, superintendents have generally given their preparation programs favorable ratings, despite critics' assertions that superintendents have a low regard for their preparation (Cunningham & Hentges, 1982; Glass et al., 2000): The most recent survey found that 74% of superintendents rated their experience in these programs as either “excellent” (26%) or “good” (48%), only 22% rated it as “fair,” and fewer than 4% rated it as “poor” (Glass et al., 2000). Nevertheless, in the last three 10-year studies conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (Cunningham & Hentges, 1982; Glass, 1992; Glass et al., 2000), which asked superintendents to identify specific strengths and weaknesses of their preparation programs, the three main weaknesses that superintendents consistently reported were a lack of hands-on application, inadequate access to technology, and a failure to link content to practice. These criticisms are very much in line with the recommendations that national commission and task force reports have offered for preparation programs during this same period.

From the 1980s to the present, numerous scholars, associations, policy makers, and reformers have suggested changes in how principals and superintendents should be prepared to assume a leadership role in keeping with national educational reforms. Some of the major organizations involved have been the UCEA, a consortium of universities in the United States and Canada; the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA), sponsored by the UCEA; the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), founded by the UCEA to provide a unified voice on policy issues affecting the field, advocate improvement of preparation

8 • The Superintendent as CEO

and practice, and monitor changes; the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP); the AACTE; the Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership; and the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP), established in 2001 to “examine and improve the quality of educational leadership in the United States” (Young, 2002, p. 4) by reviewing recent reform initiatives and the work and recommendations of previous commissions and task forces with regard to standards and accreditation issues.

Several major recommendations have emerged from these efforts. First, there is a consensus that course content and course sequences should be revised to reflect a coherent and integrated curriculum closely linked to emerging work demands (NCEEA, 1987; NPBEA, 1989). The Danforth Foundation (1987) additionally recommended that university-based programs expand their focus from simply acquiring management skills to coupling notions of good management with transformational leadership focused on improving student learning. Consequently, it suggested that school and district leaders have a working knowledge of teaching, learning, and curriculum issues (Björk, 1993; Cambron-McCabe, 1993; Hoyle, 1993; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998; Murphy, 1993a, 1993b) and the capacity to engage parents, teachers, and citizens in local communities in the process of school reform and working within changed decision-making and policy contexts characterized by shared governance, participatory decision making, and school-based councils.

Second, there is a consensus that university-based preparation programs need to reconnect with the field. For example, the NCEEA (1987) and the NCAELP (Young, 2002) have both proposed that universities and public schools share responsibility for preparing aspiring school leaders. Similarly, the NPBEA in 1989 called for universities and school districts to create partnership sites for clinical experiences, field residencies, and principal apprenticeship programs and to engage in action research. Further, the NCEEA (1987) recommended forging partnerships between practitioner associations and university associations that shared an interest in restructuring professional preparation programs.

A third, related area of consensus is the recommendation that instructional strategies be modified in alignment with calls for universities and school districts to share responsibility for professional preparation. Reports call for increasing use of classroom-oriented simulations and case studies and for the creation of clinical sites to support work-embedded learning, including practice-based/problem-based learning and action research (AACTE, 1988; Hoyle, 1982; NASSP, 1985; NCEEA, 1987; Young, 2002). In addition, researchers have underscored the importance of orienting curriculum more explicitly toward problems of practice, using reality-oriented instructional formats, and creating more opportunities for integrating the acquisition and application of knowledge, in what has been characterized as “student-centered” rather than “professor-centered” instruction (Björk, 1999, 2001; Bridges & Hallinger, 1991, 1992; Murphy, 1990). Ashe, Haubner, and Troisi (1991) have asserted that field-based activities provide a template for the acquisition of formal and experiential knowledge, enhance learning and transference to different settings, and provide a means for practitioners to become partners in the preparation enterprise. Although the notion of work-embedded learning is now a keystone in

the redesign of professional preparation programs (Björk, 1996b, 1999, 2001; Griffiths, 1988b), success is contingent upon the resolution of intransigent problems, including district collaboration, release time, and program cost-effectiveness.

A fourth set of recommendations has been concerned with recruitment to programs. Several national commission reports have urged that professional preparation programs raise entrance requirements and performance standards to ensure that aspiring administrators will exhibit leadership potential, analytical capacities, and knowledge of learning and teaching. They have recommended that educational administration programs abandon practices relying on self-selection as a means of enrolling students and instead adopt proactive strategies in identifying and recruiting the “best and brightest” candidates (AACTE, 1988; NPBEA, 1989). As Carver (1988) pointed out, recruiting highly qualified candidates necessitates developing close working relationships among school districts and university programs. He suggested that joint action in identifying exemplary candidates contributes to cohorts that are highly motivated and cohesive and that reflect, in symbol and substance, institutional partners’ common commitment to excellence. Further, reports have stressed the recruitment objective of ensuring that future cohorts reflect diverse ethnic, racial, and gender differences of society.

A fifth area of consensus has been the necessity of adopting more stringent quality controls for preparation programs. For example, in 1987 a report by the NCEE, *Leaders for America’s Schools*, recommended closing 300 of the 500 programs in the nation that did not meet standards of program quality. Another report, *Improving the Preparation of School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform* (NPBEA, 1989), called for eliminating inadequate professional preparation programs, strengthening the content of those remaining, and reducing student-faculty ratios. In 1996, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) adopted the unified curriculum guidelines developed by the NPBEA in 1994 for accrediting educational administration programs. These guidelines were first used in conducting program reviews in 1997.

A final area of consensus has been described by the NCAELP as the need to use leadership standards to assess and improve professional development programs to ensure that they enhance leadership skills and improve student learning and success (Young, 2002). Since the development of standards serves other purposes as well, it is considered in the next section.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND LICENSURE

Over the past two decades, professional associations have taken the lead in a movement to develop professional standards for school executives and apply them to improving the profession. Such standards serve several important functions. First, within the profession they help guide the reform of preparation programs and assess student progress. Second, at the state level they provide a template for reviewing credentials for licensure. Third, at the district level they provide a framework for evaluating the performance of principals and superintendents. Fourth, they engender an

10 • The Superintendent as CEO

aura of professionalism among those with whom school and district administrators work, including parents and other community members, and support a sense that they are worthy of public trust.

The AASA *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* (Hoyle, 1982) was the first widely distributed set of preparation guidelines/standards for building and central office administrators. This document presented such skills for school leaders as encouraging a school climate and interpersonal behavior that fosters learning communities for students and teachers; building support for schools; developing school curriculum; developing instructional management strategies; evaluating staff; developing staff competencies; allocating resources; and evaluating and planning programs and policies. These eight skill areas became the template for later standards and recommendations by NCATE, the NASSP, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), AACTE, the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the NCEEA, the AASA, and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC).

Subsequently, AASA supported a number of research studies that examined and validated skills and competencies enumerated in its 1982 report (Hoyle, 1982, 1985). The AASA's *Skills for Successful School Leaders* (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1985) enumerated eight performance goals: skills in (a) designing, implementing, and evaluating school climate, (b) building support for schools, (c) developing school curriculum, (d) providing instructional management, (e) evaluating staff, (f) developing staff competencies, (g) allocating resources, and (h) doing research and evaluating and planning programs and policies. The 1990 edition presented an overview of the application of standards for improving professional preparation and licensure.

During the early 1990s, the AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency, composed of executives from the AASA and the NPBEA, superintendents, professors of educational administration, and a consultant from Educational Leadership Services, developed an initial set of professional standards that integrated the knowledge base in educational administration with research findings on performance, competencies, and skills exhibited by effective superintendents. Before publication, these standards were reviewed by "a national 'Jury of 100' composed of an 'Education Governor,' business executives, training officers for corporations, national and state educational agency officials, superintendents, professors, and classroom teachers" (Hoyle, 1993, p. 5). In addition, the AASA sought comments from its Executive Committee and two national associations: the UCEA and the National Council for Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA). In 1993, the AASA published *Professional Standards for the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993). The eight professional standards and indicators generally follow the eight performance goals enumerated in *Skills for Successful School Leaders* (Hoyle et al., 1985; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1990). They are (a) leadership and district culture, (b) policy and governance, (c) communications and community relations, (d) organizational management, (e) curriculum planning and development, (f) instructional management, (g) human resources management, and (h) values and ethics of leadership. These standards are intended to reflect changing realities of public schooling and superintendent leadership roles, reform superintendent preparation

enterprise, focus staff development, provide criteria for employment and continuing performance evaluation, and guide state licensure, superintendent evaluation, and regional and national program accreditation.

The AASA's Commission on Standards for the Superintendency intended its work to be used to guide improvement of professional preparation programs and ongoing professional development of individuals aspiring to system administrative positions, especially the superintendent position. Earlier efforts by the AASA, including the guidelines in *Skills for Successful School Leaders* (Hoyle et al., 1985, 1990) and *Skills for Successful 21st Century School Leaders* (Hoyle et al., 1998), represent significant attempts to advance professional preparation/licensure and development for both campus and central office administrators. *Skills for Successful 21st Century School Leaders* was the initial effort to synthesize the most widely recognized standards, those of the AASA, NCATE, and the ISLLC, to provide a coherent and interconnected structure to promote professional excellence for principals and superintendents. The authors recommended using the eight standards to assess the quality of superintendent and principal preparation program content and delivery, including, but not limited to, problem-based learning, clinical experiences, teaching cohorts, and coaching and mentoring. Furthermore, they persuasively argued that state certification requirements and exams (ISLLC, etc.) should be aligned with the eight standards.

Following the groundbreaking work of the AASA in developing professional standards, the NPBEA established a consortium with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 1994 to develop a set of national licensure standards intended to drive change in principal preparation program content, instructional strategies, and clinical experiences. The ISLLC standards (CCSSO, 1996) intended to improve educational administration programs by unambiguously shifting away from management to leadership and linking leadership to student learning. The six standards developed by the ISLLC integrated those formulated in 1983, 1992, and 1993 by the AASA for superintendents and principals as well as those adopted by NCATE in 1996 for accreditation of educational administration programs. Thus, they represented a significant shift in thinking in how school and district leaders were prepared.

The six ISLLC standards are most appropriate to principal licensure and focus on the following: (a) developing a shared vision within schools; (b) creating cultures that support learning; (c) ensuring safe, efficient, and effective learning; (d) collaborating with the broad community; (e) acting in a fair and ethical fashion; and (f) understanding the socioeconomic, legal, political, and cultural contexts of schools. In addition, these standards are used to assess the capacity of aspiring and veteran administrators to integrate formal knowledge with performance and reflective practice (dispositions).

A key element of ISLLC licensure requirements addressed the need for individuals to demonstrate their capacity to link knowledge to improving practice. In 1999, ISLLC and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) collaborated in the development of a licensure portfolio that would require demonstration of knowledge, dispositions, and performances of ISLLC standards and indicators. In addition, the School Leaders

12 • The Superintendent as CEO

Licensure Assessment (SLLA), a performance-based assessment instrument based on the ISLLC standards, was developed by ETS to be used in combination with other methods for initial principal licensure. As Kelly and Peterson (2002) noted, ISLLC standards are grounded in a basic understanding of effective schools research and literature and present a general framework for improving and restructuring initial principal preparation across providers. They do not, however, systematically identify specific skills and knowledge needed or how they can be learned and transferred to school contexts that have a significant influence on the success of school leaders, including racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics of the community as well as school size, governance patterns, and school culture. In acknowledging that ISLLC standards provide an essential foundation for the profession, Kelly and Peterson (2002) also cautioned that they are not “an attempt to identify expert knowledge and skills of highly effective administrators” (p. 314). Although ISLLC standards provide a common framework for improving and restructuring preparation in the field, it is incumbent upon professional preparation programs to help aspiring and veteran administrators to attain higher levels of proficiency.

The most current standards for administrator preparation, *Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership*, were released in 2002 by NCATE. Whereas the 1996 ISLLC standards were primarily directed toward preparing campus administrators, and the previous NCATE and AASA standards were written for campus administrators, superintendents, and other central office positions, the 2002 NCATE standards were created to cover all these positions except for business administrators. Thus, they are a synthesis of the latest versions of the NCATE, ISLLC, and AASA standards.

AASA, ISLLC, and NCATE licensure and program standards provide a powerful means not only of improving professional preparation but also of leveling the playing field for all those involved in the preparation enterprise. We believe that the AASA standards are the best guide for the preparation of superintendents because they focus on strategic elements of superintendents' work.

Although standards continue to provide a framework for redesigning preparation, reformers must indicate how they fit emerging contexts. As a consequence, universities, professional associations, and private sector organizations will be faced with a set of common challenges as they improve standards-based approaches to preparing district leaders. First, redesigning the curriculum to focus on the changing work of superintendents requires an understanding of changing global, national, and local contexts as well as superintendents' role in aligning districts and schools with these emerging realities. In accomplishing this task, programs must focus on how management and leadership skills can be brought to bear on the central tasks of improving student learning, building the capacity for shared leadership to sustain long-term change, and using data to manage standards-based reform. Second, professional preparation must be redesigned in a manner that effectively embeds learning in work contexts and supports learning through the use of technology. Third, learning materials must be redesigned to ensure alignment with the new curriculum. Fourth, student evaluation systems must be redesigned so that they are aligned with AASA standards and attend to both the acquisition of knowledge and its

application to improving student learning. These four challenges provide a template for using standards to improve how the next generation of school leaders is prepared.

BOARD CERTIFICATION

In 1999, the NPBEA first brought up the idea of creating the American Board for Leadership in Education (ABLE) to provide national board certification for school leaders, and the project is currently being considered within both the UCEA and the NCPEA. The proposed mission of ABLE is to codify what school leaders should know and be able to do and to define rigorous and relevant performance-based certification standards. The UCEA and NCPEA plan to conduct a series of studies to help determine which standards are the most reliable predictors of school leaders' success. National board certification would be offered at several levels, from novice to distinguished, with endorsements for specialty areas. This initiative focuses on providing advanced certification rather than replacing states' prerogatives for licensure. Such certification would be parallel to specialty board certification of physicians, which follows completion of medical school and multiyear residency and internship experiences.

RELICENSURE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Aspiring superintendents earn certification primarily through completing university-based academic degree programs to qualify for middle management, central office positions many years before they decide to seek the superintendency. Glass et al. (2000) found that 62% of superintendents completed degree or licensure programs well before the educational reform movement began in the 1980s. For example, more than 40% of this group had completed their highest degree more than 15 years before completing AASA's 2000 10-year study survey. An additional 22% of respondents had completed their degrees between 11 and 15 years previously. These data raise serious questions about conventional licensure practices and whether they can continue to assure the public that those in candidate pools possess knowledge and skills relevant to present district circumstances. Although many aspiring superintendents participate in professional development activities, these tend to be job specific—that is, middle management oriented—rather than focused on their future careers as chief executive officers. In addition, superintendents' participation in professional development (PD) delivered by professional associations, universities, and state departments of education "leadership academies" is often random. PD program content tends to be general rather than aligned with specific needs of superintendents or district problems, is rarely standards based, and employs questionable pedagogical practices in that it is short term, trainer focused, and context free.

For these reasons, there has been a movement to establish relicensing processes and redesign professional development programs for sitting superintendents. During 1998, ISLLC shifted the focus of its activities from defining standards

14 • The Superintendent as CEO

for initial principal licensure to relicensure of veteran administrators through professional development. Two key projects were launched. The first was the Collaborative Professional Development Process for School Leaders (CPDP), a performance-based, professional growth process for school leaders, the focal point of which is work-embedded school improvement. The second was the ISLLC Assessment Portfolio, which builds upon the foundation of initial, standards-based licensure to relicensure veteran school leaders. Such initiatives advance the NCAELP's vision of preservice leadership preparation and inservice professional development, not as separate dimensions, but as a cohesive, standards-based system that helps to improve student learning over time (Young, 2002).

INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN SUPERINTENDENTS' EDUCATION

The drive to base standards and preparation programs on new conceptions of leadership, teaching, and learning shows that the theory movement in educational administration, far from having ended in the early 1980s, as Murphy (1999) asserted, continues to flourish and has merely changed its character and become more integrated with practice (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Hoyle, 2002a). *The Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (Boyan, 1988; Murphy & Louis, 1999) and its predecessors, which have been an integral part of the professional knowledge base since 1964 and tend to emphasize knowledge that is important to the field at the time they are published, reflects this shift. The structure and content of the first edition of the *Handbook* (Boyan, 1988) reflected traditional areas of research ("knowing about" educational administration from theory on organizations and leadership behavior) and conventional categories of administrative work ("knowing how" to do educational administration by learning about planning, organizing, budgeting, personnel administration, and evaluation).

The second edition of the *Handbook* (Murphy & Louis, 1999) is, however, conspicuously different in several respects and reflects the changes taking place in both the academic and the practice branches of the profession. First, it recognizes the importance of administrators to improving learning and teaching and reflects a shift in emphasis from school management to transformational leadership. Second, it is organized around contemporary and emerging issues facing education, principals, and superintendents. Thus, it reflects the pragmatic expectations of today's aspiring and veteran school administrators (Maxey, 1995) that their preparation programs will address issues of practice, or "knowing how" to do administration, that go beyond management tasks. Divergent perspectives held by professors who "know about" (theory) and administrators who "know how" (practice) have divided the profession for over 30 years. But the new *Handbook's* integration of research findings into discussions of school and district problems affirms that research and practice are not mutually exclusive but complementary dimensions of effective leadership. This shift has sweeping implications for professional preparation programs and practice. The second edition's integration of the acquisition of formal knowledge ("knowing about"

administration) with best-practice or craft knowledge (“knowing how” to improve learning and teaching) also reflects efforts by scholars to bridge the gap between the academic and practice branches of the profession. Björk, Lindle, and Van Meter (1999) extended this line of thinking by connecting notions of “knowing about” (theory) and “knowing for” (practice) with constructivist notions of “knowing why” (reason) improving American public schools is fundamental to strengthening American society and “knowing how” (process) these goals can be achieved through shared governance and decision making.

CONCLUSION

National commission and task force reports released during the past two decades acknowledge that educational reform initiatives are changing the nature of schooling, call for improving the profession, and explicitly state that university-based administrator preparation programs must not only focus on executive leadership for learning but also reconfigure how the next generation of superintendents will be identified, prepared, selected, and nurtured over time. These reports stimulated a national conversation to transform preparation within the university community and reinforced critics' conviction that it was necessary to end university hegemony in the field and transfer responsibility for preparing school and district leaders to the private sector. National commission recommendations initiated by AASA's *Professional Standards for the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993) and the recommendations of the Task Force on Developing Research on Educational Leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership (NCAELP) (Young, 2002) provided a framework for redesigning leadership preparation programs. These recommendations and others drawn from new developments in professional preparation are reflected in the structure and content of this book.