

Leadership Preparation Program Essential Elements, Diane Rutledge, LUDA

District –University Collaboration

The relationship and communication that occurred between Springfield Dist. 186 and the Department of Education Administration and Foundations at Illinois State University proved invaluable in preparing administrators and education leaders that could “hit the ground running”. The program was co-developed, thus meeting the needs of each institution. A balance of courses was taught between university professors and district administrators. This formula allowed for a balance of theory and practice of instruction.

Course- Embedded Internships

Students had the opportunity to apply their learning in weeklong internships throughout their program. These short-term internships gave experiences and a foundation of knowledge that allowed students an experience base from which to have class discussion, personal reflection, and a basis for writing and researching. Effort was made to place students in positions different from their own; therefore giving varied experience upon which to build. The cost of the internships was a substitute teacher.

Yearlong Internships

The district, defined by future hiring needs, provided a select number of yearlong internships. Incumbent principals applied to have an intern and were selected based upon their own evaluations, the work of improvement in their schools, and the degree of innovation and change that was occurring in their schools along with the commitment of their staffs. Interns applied for their positions and were accepted based upon the needs of the district, their accomplishments during their preparation program, and recommendations from district-level administrators who had taught in the program, along with their own principals.

The yearlong internship allows aspiring principals the opportunity to learn from master principals and to apply their newly acquired skills in a realistic environment. Additionally, their experiences have fidelity and are not artificial. They are able to experience a school year from beginning to end, to build relationships with students, staff, and families, and have the time to develop their skills, values, and beliefs.

Leadership Development for Aspiring School Leaders

Not every school leaders desires to be a principal. Our program worked to support the learning of classroom teachers, assistant principals, deans, department chairs, athletic directors, and instructional coaches. Preparation programs in the future have the opportunity to differentiate among leadership positions and to prepare more specifically to the needs of districts and desires of aspirants.