



The *Chicago Public Schools Office of Principal Preparation and Development* would like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that has been made by the *School Leader Task Force* to identify critical issues and recommendations for addressing school leadership in our state. The position papers that we have had the opportunity to review have elaborated on these recommendations and overall, we have found many areas of agreement. We would like for the committee to take into consideration the following reactions / observations as the deliberative process continues.

Candidate Recruitment: Responding to State and District Diversity

Given the geo-political diversity in the state of Illinois, it is difficult to envision a single set of entry criterion; skills and dispositions that would satisfy the interests of prospective employers / school districts across the state. Though not addressed in the well-thought out considerations discussed in *School Leader Preparation: A Blueprint for Change* (Pages 17-19) a criterion to “screen for” would be the willingness and capacity of a principal candidate to see *new ways of being* and a candidate’s propensity for leading *adaptive changes* in our schools; ie generating unique responses for challenges in which the necessary knowledge to solve the problem does not yet exist. (Wagner, Kegan 2006) Increasing the number of principals with an orientation to adaptive solution seeking would yield principals capable of working in a wider number of contexts / types of schools within districts and diverse districts across the state.

A Broader Purpose for Schools and Schooling

It is also important to “select for” / develop principal candidates who have the capacity to lead communities in discussions about the multiple purposes of schooling. For example, in addition to focusing on the school’s role in developing the academic proficiency of students, what is the leader’s role in challenging the school community to think about the ways in which the school might also promote the growth of students as healthy, competent and moral people? (Noddings, 2005)

Conditions

Principal preparation programs must attract / develop principal candidates who have the acumen and willingness to work in and change district environments that are far less than ideal. Some of the conditions principals may encounter include: impatient school boards and publics who define school success in a mono-dimensional way; ie. standardized test performance, transiency at the superintendent level resulting in frequently changing policy and philosophical perspectives, the reality of inadequate funding, and the conditions normally found in hard to staff low-performing schools. Principal candidates are needed who possess strong moral convictions and have the ability to operate in politically unstable, sometimes ambiguous environments in which the district mission / vision is sometimes incongruent with their own values / vision. They must also be able to respond to limited autonomy to act in ways which are consistent with personal values, and to make decisions consistent with values and vision and that have a high probability of impacting the core work of the school.

Principal preparation program re-design in the State of Illinois should address all of the issues cited in *School Leader Preparation: A Blue Print for Change*. Given the considerations of the task force and with respect to these issues, we think the following questions have value.

- What are the other “look-for’s” / attributes of high potential school leaders?
- What kind of curriculum grows these “look-for’s” / attributes in potential school leaders?
- How does one structure internships that enhance these “look-for’s” / competencies in potential school leaders?
- How does one assess at the time of program completion for evidence / proficiency in the “look-for’s” / identified competencies?

References

CPS Principal Competencies (2004)

A Foundation for Change: A Gap Analysis of Illinois Leadership Preparation Programs (2007)

Haberman, M. (1999) *STAR Principals Serving Children in Poverty*

Noddings, N. (2005) *The Challenge to Care in Schools*

School Leader Preparation: A Blue Print for Change (2006)

Wagner, T. Kegan, R. (2006) *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools*