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Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk for **help in determining if the research shows a consensus about the best way to prepare those who aspire to be principals.** Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research-based education questions.

Please note that REL Southwest has not done an evaluation of the resources themselves, but offers this list to you for your information only.

Question: Does research offer any consensus on the best way to prepare aspiring principals?

Black, W. (2011). Who are we? Collaborative inquiry and the description of one state's principal preparation programs. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(2). <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ973827.pdf>.

A profile of Indiana's principal preparation programs is presented in this article. The collaborative inquiry process used to develop a program narrative instrument and to capture data on characteristics of all 17 state-approved programs is provided. The statewide preparation program characteristics profiled in this article include: missions and rationales, recruitment and admissions, student enrollment and completion, curriculum and pedagogical approaches, internship qualities, and assessment features. The author discusses implications of the findings across the preparation program landscape as well as the challenges and promises of collaborative research conducted across preparation programs.

Bridges, Edwin (2012). Administrator preparation: Looking backwards and forwards. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50(4), 402-419. Retrieve from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ970579>.

From the ERIC abstract: The purpose of this paper was to conduct a critical analysis of the origins and implementation of problem-based learning in educational administration as a window into the limitations of this approach and more generally administrator preparation. Design/methodology/approach: The author reviewed the published work of the originator from 1970-2009, as well as his preparation program for principals, and evaluated his approach primarily in light of two perspectives, emotional labor and positive emotions. The paper probes the utility of using these sociological and psychological perspectives in studying and understanding the emotional side of

administration through interviews with principals. Findings: The major finding of this analysis was to question whether sufficient attention is being paid to the emotional aspects of administration in problem-based learning in particular and administrator preparation programs more generally. The analysis reveals several areas where more attention should be paid and provides some insight into the nature of mental and emotional labor of principals. Originality/value: The paper combines two theoretical approaches in a novel way to raise a series of questions that can be used to evaluate programs for preparing administrators in terms of a critical, but for the most part neglected, area—the emotional side of administration. The author describes an approach that might be used for those who choose to incorporate this facet of administration into their preparation programs..

Clayton, J. K. (2014). The leadership lens: Perspectives on leadership from school district personnel and university faculty. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 9(1). <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1024109>.

From the ERIC abstract: This study examined the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for aspiring school leaders from the perspective of university faculty in educational administration programs and acting school administrators and teacher leaders. The author sought to understand the congruence and/or dissonance between university faculty in educational administration programs and acting school administrators and teacher leaders in their view of necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes for aspiring school leaders. Using a qualitative research design, the author interviewed both university professors in education administration programs and current administrators who serve as principal, assistant principal, curriculum supervisors, superintendents, department chairs, and other school leaders.

Davis, S. H., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). Innovative principal preparation programs: What works and how we know. *Planning and Changing*, 43(1-2), 25-45. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ977545>.

From the authors' abstract: This article provides an overview of the contexts, the key features, and the evidentiary data—the criteria regarding candidates to engage in administrative work—for five innovative principal preparation programs. Short case studies and cross-case analysis of the sample programs are used to provide thorough descriptions.

Gray, D., & Lewis, J. (2011). Preparing instructional leaders. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(3). <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ974242>.

From the ERIC abstract: This publication is a "collection" of three separate manuscripts: (1) "A Paradigm Shift in Preparing Instructional Leaders" (published in December 2010); (2) "Transitions" (an introduction to the "Revisited manuscript"); and (3) "A Paradigm Shift in Preparing Instructional Leaders Revisited" (published in June 2011). The 2010 manuscript describes an innovative experience-laden curriculum for aspiring school leaders at the University of South Alabama developed between 2005 and 2007. The 2011 manuscript revisits the topic with a completed research study providing data

related to responses from mentor principals, cohort members, co-workers, and observers. (Contains one figure, three tables, and 12 footnotes.)

Grigsby, B., & Vesey, W. (2011). Assessment training in principal preparation programs. *Administrative Issues Journal: Education, Practice, and Research*, 1(2), 18-31. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1055017>.

From the ERIC abstract. The role of the administrator has evolved over the past 30 years from manager to instructional leader. As instructional leaders, administrators are now responsible for student achievement on high-stakes state-mandated assessments. Therefore, it is imperative principal preparation programs provide the necessary training instructional leaders need to analyze and interpret assessment data and make informed decisions toward school improvement. This descriptive study analyzes four syllabi components to determine the extent to which testing and measurement are covered in each course: objectives, classroom sessions, resources, and activities. Based on responses from 30 universities across the United States, less than 30 percent of principal preparation programs are preparing candidates to be data-driven decision-makers. The most frequently adopted textbooks provided practical applications, and respondents used a wide variety of activities that provided relevant data-driven experiences; however, less than 50 percent of respondents spent at least 19 hours on testing and measurement in a 45-hour semester. The researchers make recommendations principal preparation programs may include to increase data-driven decision-making experiences.

Hale, E. L., & Moorman, H. N. (2003). Preparing school principals: A national perspective on policy and program innovations. *Institute for Educational Leadership (NJ1)*. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED504276>.¹

From the ERIC abstract and the report: This document is a distillation of the national conversation about school leadership and principal preparation programs. It also presents promising approaches and practices as illustrated by selected changes being made or promoted in and/or across state systems, in local school districts, in universities and colleges, and in new provider organizations across the nation. The report focuses on two areas in which state policies and programs can have particular influence on school leadership: licensure, certification, and accreditation requirements; and administrator training and professional development. Topics covered include: how state policies shape the talent pool and the current condition of leadership preparation.

Kearney, W.S., & Valadez, A. (2015). Ready from day one: An examination of one principal preparation program's redesign in collaboration with local school

¹ This older source is included because it presents the national conversation around the principal preparation programs; thereby, speaking more to whether “consensus” regarding principal preparation methods exists.

districts, 26:27-38. *California Association of Professors of Educational Administration*. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1062264.pdf>.

From the ERIC Abstract: This paper presents a newly implemented model of principal preparation at a public university in the southwestern United States. The authors identify a number of innovative practices currently being carried out within educational administration programs across the United States. Informed by the context of the national models, the authors present their university's design. This is followed by a discussion of implementation issues (both positive and negative), which the administrators of this program have encountered. Finally, an evaluation matrix is presented which will be utilized in assessing the effectiveness of this principal preparation model.

Taylor Backor, K., & Gordon, S. P. (2015). Preparing principals as instructional leaders: Perceptions of university faculty, expert principals, and expert teacher leaders, *NASSP Bulletin*, 99(2) 105-126. <http://bul.sagepub.com/content/99/2/105>.

From the ERIC abstract: Although research has established links between the principal's instructional leadership and student achievement, there is considerable concern in the literature concerning the capacity of principal preparation programs to prepare instructional leaders. This study interviewed educational leadership faculty as well as expert principals and teacher leaders to determine their perceptions concerning applicant screening; content to be taught, including functions, knowledge, skills, and dispositions; teaching and learning strategies; field experiences; and induction support. The researchers found considerable agreement across the three groups.

Yoder, N., Freed D., & Fetters, J. (2014). Improving school leader preparation: Collaborative models for measuring effectiveness. *Ask the Team (American Institutes for Research)*. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED555659>.

From the ERIC abstract: Parallel efforts in principal evaluation and educator preparation are prompting new conversations among states, higher education programs, private foundations, and professional associations about strengthening school leadership development pipelines. In this "Ask The Team," the authors highlight state activities and pertinent research on principal preparation, specifically, state efforts to measure principal preparation program effectiveness. State efforts to create models for leadership program accountability face numerous methodological challenges. To inform collaborative efforts across a variety of policymakers and stakeholders, they reviewed information on principal preparation accountability models, examined existing reports on pilot approaches in states, and identified existing partnerships that are tackling this work. Further, they offer examples as starting points for discussions on principal preparation program effectiveness, continuous improvement, and accountability.

METHODS

Search of Databases and Websites

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) website (<http://www.ies.ed.gov>)
- ERIC database (www.eric.ed.gov)
- Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)

Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Searches:

(administrator education, administrator preparation, instructional leadership preparation, leadership effectiveness, effective leaders, effective principal preparation, preparation models, principal preparation).

Criteria for Inclusion

REL Southwest selected resources that provide research on principal/administrator preparation programs. When REL Southwest staff reviewed resources, we considered – among other things – three factors:

1. Date of Publication: The most current information (primarily published from 2010 to the present) is included.
2. Source and Funder of the Report/Brief/Article: Priority was given to publications written in relevant, peer-reviewed journals or reports or produced by well-known research organizations.
3. Methodology: sources include reported studies, literature reviews and policy reports.

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