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UC BERKELEY

# PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

PLI

## Impact Report

## Alumni and District Partner Feedback

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2012, UC Berkeley Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) published an impact report focused on the breadth of regional impact and strength of the PLI model. This 2013 report describes PLI's impact as identified by alumni and district administrator feedback from our four partner districts, Berkeley Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, West Contra Costa Unified School District, and San Francisco Unified School District, who employ 50% of our graduates. The triangulated results of alumni surveys, district partner feedback, and quantitative and qualitative studies indicate that UC Berkeley's Principal Leadership Institute consistently provides rigorous and effective preparation for school leaders in the Bay Area and beyond. These studies highlight PLI's strengths, including a focus on equity, social justice, instructional leadership, and the formation of leadership identity and relationships.

*“I would like to thank all my professors for opening my mind to systems-thinking and to the idea that an individual’s personal behaviors can have far-reaching effects. Leadership—like teaching/acting—is a craft to be perfected over time. It begins with **presence and attitude**, and is sustained by **collegial relationships** and **student-centered** hard work.”*

*—PLI Alumnus*

## INTRODUCTION

Over its thirteen year history, PLI has successfully recruited and prepared over 450 diverse and highly skilled leaders. In the 2011-2012 school year, 66% of PLI graduates held school or district administrator positions and 24% worked in teacher leader roles, such as out of classroom coaches. In October 2012, UC Berkeley Principal Leadership Institute published an impact report focused on the breadth of regional impact and strength of the PLI model. This 2013 report describes PLI’s impact as identified by alumni and district administrator feedback from our four partner districts, Berkeley Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, West Contra Costa Unified School District, and San Francisco Unified School District, who employ 50% of our graduates.

## ALUMNI SATISFACTION

One fundamental part of PLI’s ongoing program evaluation efforts is an annual alumni survey that collects data on PLI completion rates, alumni’s current positions and awards, as well as other interesting information that can inform program improvement. Because the majority of our alumni work as school leaders, the intent of the survey is to query practicing administrators as to the effectiveness of their administrative preparation program now that they are serving in the roles for which they were prepared. Their professional feedback coupled with deep knowledge of the program provides important and relevant information to both improve our program and measure our impact.

The most recent survey data was collected in the fall of 2012. An electronic survey was sent to all of our alumni (twelve cohorts) and the response rate was 55% (n=240). **94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that PLI provided strong preparation for work as a teacher leader or school administrator.** Several alumni described PLI as the “best education I’ve ever received.” Many highlighted key areas of the curriculum that support their

leadership practice. For example, “the training on conducting observations and post conferences was very valuable. I’ve had teachers tell me they have never had such a thorough performance review!” Others described the process of personal growth. “Now that it’s over, I can say it really transformed me into a leader. I think it was one of the most rigorous things that I’ve done in my life, but it was worth it in the end. Do I recommend it for everyone? No. But, I do recommend it for people like me that needed to be shown their leadership potential and guide them to the leader that they can become!”

The Leadership Connection Rubric provides a guiding framework for the program. **All seven aspects of leadership that form the PLI’s core vision of social justice leadership received strong marks** from alumni respondents.\* Equity and Advocacy was rated the highest, followed by Identity and Relationships, Presence and Attitude, and Change and Coherence. Figure 1 provides more detail.

\* Full Leadership Connection Rubric available at [http://principals.berkeley.edu/pli\\_pub.html](http://principals.berkeley.edu/pli_pub.html)

LEADERSHIP CONNECTION RUBRIC ELEMENTS AND OUTCOMES	
LEADERSHIP ELEMENT	URBAN SCHOOL LEADERS
<b>PRESENCE AND ATTITUDE</b>	Communicate a compelling presence and a steadfast belief in the power of the possible.
<b>IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIPS</b>	Demonstrate personal and professional self-awareness and nourish trusting relationships in a culturally and racially diverse learning organization.
<b>EQUITY AND ADVOCACY</b>	Advocate for equitable academic, civic and social-emotional outcomes for students who have been historically underserved by schools and society.
<b>CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION</b>	Cultivate high expectations and ensure durable academic and social-emotional learning outcomes for students and adults.
<b>ORGANIZATION AND SYSTEMS</b>	Align systems, structures, and resources that sustain a culturally consonant environment in the service of student learning.
<b>CHANGE AND COHERENCE</b>	Engage all adults in change efforts that respond collectively and coherently to the assets and challenges in schools and communities.
<b>ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	Exhibit a persistent focus on teacher and student learning outcomes by developing, aligning, and monitoring an equity-driven assessment system.

LEADERSHIP CONNECTION RUBRIC ELEMENTS	AVERAGE RANK (1-5)	AVERAGE PERCENTILE	STANDARD DEVIATION
Presence and Attitude	4.27	85%	0.81
Equity and Advocacy	4.65	93%	0.64
Identity and Relationships	4.31	86%	0.82
Curriculum and Instruction	3.94	79%	0.88
Change and Coherence	4.22	84%	0.79
Organization and Systems	3.92	78%	0.89
Assessment and Accountability	3.81	76%	0.92

**FIGURE 1: PLI ALUMNI FEEDBACK ON PREPARATION IN THE SEVEN CORE LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS (2012)**

“I really appreciate my PLI experience. It molded and continues to mold me as an **instructional leader**. Since the time that I have graduated from PLI, district board members, my district’s superintendent, regional executive directors, and even U.S. Congressman George Miller have come to my school and viewed my **students’ work**. I owe much of my success and my students’ success to PLI.”

–PLI Alumnus

Respondents also provided specific examples of how the seven core elements of the leadership framework have impacted their leadership in the open ended response section of the survey.<sup>1</sup>

These results are consistent with an earlier evaluation of PLI completed by Mary Alice Callahan in 2008.<sup>2</sup> She focused on how well PLI meets its objective to prepare teacher leaders to serve as administrators in urban school settings. To this end, the researchers developed a questionnaire to collect information from PLI alumni, as well as non-alumni in one partner district to serve as a comparison group. Callahan’s evaluation compared results from PLI graduates with the results from non- graduates in the partner district. The final sample included 52 PLI graduates and 20 non-graduates. **Overall, PLI graduates reported being significantly better prepared than non-graduates by an average difference of 30 percent.** Figure 2 compares the responses across the four core domains.

AVERAGE PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO FELT WELL OR VERY WELL PREPARED ACROSS THE CORE DOMAIN			
	NON-PLI	PLI	DIFFERENCE
Setting the Vision	49%	77%	28%
Nurturing the Instructional Program for Students and Staff	39%	71%	32%
Building a High Capacity Organization	40%	67%	27%
Developing Equitable Schools	44%	74%	30%

**FIGURE 2: COMPARISON OF PLI GRADUATES AND NON-PLI ADMINISTRATORS, 2008**

The results indicate that on every single measure included in these questions, PLI graduates indicated greater levels of satisfaction with their program, and closer alignment of what they had learned to conditions on the job, compared to non-graduates of the PLI. This suggests that the PLI is a more effective program than others in the Bay Area.

<sup>1</sup> For each response, key phrases and concepts related to the core elements have been highlighted in bold text

<sup>2</sup> Callahan, M. (2008) A study of the Principal Leadership Program at UC Berkeley. Unpublished manuscript.

“As a white woman entering a dominantly African American and Latino school, I realized the work I would need to do to form **relationships** with the families in order to **collaborate** toward the success of our scholars. The work around **equity** that I did in the PLI program opened my eyes to the **unconscious behaviors** I exhibit that may reduce **trust** between myself and parents of other racial/ economic backgrounds. By making some of what is unconscious conscious, I have made **intentional** efforts to gain **trust** from the community. I have walked the neighborhood and make an effort to shop and eat at the establishments near my school. I communicate with families about the **positive** strides . . . their children have made, prior to letting them know the poor decision that brought them to my office. PLI helped to **transform** me from a person who acts benevolently to one who recognizes my faults and **biases** and acts with **intention**.” –PLI Alumnus



Front: Nathan Geller, Daniella Quinones, Stephanie Khaziran, Alex Horowitz, David Norris (PLI Cohort 14)  
Back: Dolores Williams (PLI Cohort 13)

## STRENGTH OF SOLIDARITY

In the 2012 alumni survey, 97% of alumni respondents reported that when choosing between two candidates with equal qualifications, they would be more likely to hire a PLI graduate. When asked to explain why, the four most common reasons included common understanding and values, a focus on equity, rigorous and high quality preparation, as well as a vision for change. The following quotes provide examples of alumni responses.

“It is a **very rigorous program**, so I know that the person most likely has a strong work ethic, as well as a good skill set and an eye on equity.” –PLI Alumnus

“The PLI candidate is trained to **think like a change agent**. PLI graduates are not afraid to go against the grain, if necessary.” –PLI Alumnus

*“There are certain intangibles (a focus on **equity**, interpersonal maturity, respect for **diversity**) that are difficult to gauge in an interview. Someone who has completed PLI is likely to have those.” –PLI Alumnus*

*“There is an assumption of having **delved deeply into thoughts of race and identity** that would make them a more well-rounded and equitable administrator.”*

*–PLI Alumnus*

*“Because I know the quality of the PLI program. The guiding principles of the program, **equity and advocacy for students, families, and communities** are infused throughout the readings, discussions, and seminars. I would know that the PLI candidate and I have a common place to start our discussion having been exposed to the same material. Additionally, the training that all candidates are put through- the mock interviews, reflective feedback, affinity group discussions, work group discussions, and projects- speaks to the PLI candidate’s **ability to work with diverse groups of people and represent themselves well in the most challenging of circumstances.**” –PLI Alumnus*

A few alumni wrote responses that described their existing working relationships with PLI graduates. These descriptions resonated and elaborated on the responses above. For example, one alumnus wrote:

*“I am currently working with two PLI graduates. Although we did not know each other prior to the beginning of the school year, we have found that we have common foundational beliefs and skills. We are building a school that is beautiful inside and out. **We have an unwavering commitment to the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students.** We are not afraid to have the critical conversations with teachers, parents, staff, and students about underlying beliefs about what students can and cannot do. **We do not strive for acceptable, but the extraordinary.**”*



Front: Lindsay Dowdle, Janelle Bugarini, Yvette Garcia (PLI Cohort 14)  
Back: Sean Gass (PLI Cohort 13)

## DISTRICT PARTNER FEEDBACK

Annually, PLI conducts meetings with high level representatives from its four district partners to discuss programmatic and state policy changes, and to gather district feedback. This practice of approaching district partners to solicit and take seriously their opinion of program graduates is an important opportunity to deepen relationships and collaboration between the university and the districts.

In analyzing notes from district meetings with over fifteen district representatives **over the past ten years, PLI has consistently received positive feedback at 100% of the meetings.** Areas of success regularly highlighted include alumni's equity focus, instructional leadership stance, and diversity. Furthermore, staffing patterns suggest that PLI graduates are in high demand. In the last three cohorts (2010-2012), for example, **99% of graduates who were interested in pursuing an administrative position upon graduation were hired.**

These results are aligned with the results of Flessa and Tredway's<sup>3</sup> 2010 study focused on the perspectives of central office administrators responsible for the recruitment, selection, and support of new leaders. Administrators from three of four partner districts were interviewed; all were able to assess candidates' strengths and weaknesses compared to candidates entering the districts from other routes.

Respondents consistently praised program graduates for their equity focus and for their capabilities in shaping professional learning communities. They are seen as equipped to hit the ground running, "to take on roles and to do them well from the start," according to one respondent. They are viewed as knowledgeable about district social and

<sup>3</sup> Flessa, J. & Tredway, L. (2010) Urban school administrator preparation: Learning from program evaluation. Unpublished manuscript.

## PLI ALUMNI TEAMS

As a result of the alumni responses from the 2012 survey, a qualitative study of 30 alumni who work on school leadership teams composed exclusively of PLI alumni was conducted in 2013 by Grubb and Cheung. Eleven Bay Area schools were identified including four high schools, five middle schools, and two elementary schools representing all four partner districts as well as other surrounding areas. The size of the teams ranged from two to eight leaders and represented cohorts 3 through 13.

The themes that emerged from this study were extremely consistent across participants. When asked how working on an all-PLI alumni team supported their leadership, respondents highlighted the following:

- **Shared philosophies and values for doing the work such as the importance of classroom observations, instructional leadership, social justice and equity, discipline, suspension, vision, distributed/collaborative leadership, and courageous conversations.**
- **Common language and knowledge of theory that allow the leaders to make faster progress because there isn't a need to spend time on creating shared meaning.**
- **Strong relational trust among the other administrators**
- **Similar personal values for improvement such as openness and reflection**

Challenges of working with non-PLI graduates included lack of focus on equity, lack of urgency, a focus on management instead of change, lack of shared understanding and trust, and a non-collaborative working style.

organizational contexts, skilled in the use of data to inform decision-making, and committed to educational equity. In terms of PLI's focus on instructional leadership, according to district supervisors, one realm where PLI candidates excel is leadership for and modeling of instructional practices. As one respondent put it, "I like the fact that they have a broad array of instructional strategies that they can call on and refer to." Another supervisor, when asked to describe what if anything stood out as a particular strength among the PLI cohort, replied, "The people I'm looking at? I'd say instructional practices." Others stressed the ability to collaborate and to work in the practices of distributed leadership: "They are really good with relationships. Relationship building and building collaboration at the school site...Every last one of the people I work with," she said, "that I supervise, they are really good in collaboration." In addition, central office administrators in **all three districts mentioned cohort diversity as something that distinguished the PLI graduates from other groups of administrators**, explaining that a diverse cohort provided the district with a versatile pool to take on different kinds of situations.

## CONCLUSION

The triangulated results of alumni surveys, district partner feedback, and quantitative and qualitative studies indicate that **UC Berkeley's Principal Leadership Institute consistently provides rigorous and effective preparation for school leaders in the Bay Area and beyond**. These studies highlight PLI's strengths, including a focus on equity, social justice, instructional leadership, and the formation of leadership identity and relationships. Comments from alumni and district partners demonstrate the focused preparation that PLI provides to a diverse cadre of urban school leaders. Findings show that the preparation and support PLI provides puts graduates in high demand in the greater Bay Area. Furthermore, findings show that alumni are retained in school leadership positions over time—a unique phenomenon in the current leadership landscape.

## CREDITS

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For further information about how you can become engaged in the work of the Principal Leadership Institute and Leadership Program, contact us at:

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\*All data was collected from alumni surveys and publicly accessible records.