

# Collective and Team Leadership:

## Preparation For Urban Schools

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A consensus has developed that principals and other leaders are crucial to the effectiveness of schools, second in importance only to teachers.<sup>1</sup> Different groups have come up with standards and lists of attributes that leaders should have – like the widely-cited ISLLC standards from the Council of Chief State School Officers National Board, and books like *Ten Skills for Successful School Leaders*. These efforts conceive of leadership as an *individual* trait, embodied in individuals and especially the principal. Such an assumption has then been replicated in public policy: two of the four “turnaround” models adopted by the U.S. Department of Education and required for all School Improvement Grants mandate replacing the principal. Most methods of evaluating principals (like the VALED system from Vanderbilt University) usually focus on what teachers and other members of the school community think of the principal.

But there’s another way to think about leadership, one that has become increasingly popular. In contrast to teachers, who work independently in most schools and have responsibilities for their classrooms only, leadership in this view is *collective* rather than *individual*. The shift in perspective from teacher to leaders is crucial, and an important part of leadership programs. As one graduate of our program expressed the difference:

Transitioning from the teacher mentality to the administrator mentality was a huge area of growth—and I mean that to say instead of being so narrowly focused on a particular learning community or subject area, or segment of a school, understanding the interconnectedness of choices and decisions that get made on the school level.

Such a collective view underlies the concept of distributed leadership initially articulated by James Spillane and his colleagues, where leadership is distributed among many individuals within a school including principals and vice-principals, teacher-leaders

including department heads or grade-level chairs, instructional coaches, and perhaps reform facilitators.<sup>2</sup> Then many individuals have leadership responsibilities, not just the principal, and in theory (if not in practice) all the leaders in a school can be consistent in their approaches to schooling and instruction. “Turning around” schools would then require changing the collective leadership and culture of a school, not just replacing the principal. Similarly, evaluating leadership would require information about the policies and practices enacted in a school (as the CALL system of evaluation does<sup>3</sup>) rather than just evaluating the actions of the principal.

Distributed leadership has often been conceived as delegating decision-making authority to various groups within a school. But this does not challenge the dominant hierarchical model of leadership, and it does not assure that the several individuals or groups leading a school agree on mission, values, and purposes of schooling, or what practices should be implemented to further school improvement. As a result many schools — particularly urban schools, it seems<sup>4</sup> — are contentious places, without the consensus necessary to develop consistent practices.<sup>5</sup> By collective or team leadership, we mean something slightly different: Decisions are made by several leaders deliberating together, including those in formal administrative positions as well as teacher-leaders, and they achieve consensus because they have similar norms, values, and conceptions of appropriate practice. As we will see, the similarity of perspectives among the members of leadership teams makes decision-making less contentious, more effective, and even more efficient.

Collective leadership therefore requires some mechanism to harmonize the values and norms of different individuals. One way of supporting collective leadership is for a

critical mass of leaders to have shared beliefs, values, and attitudes toward improving schooling because they attended the same leadership preparation program. Examining this possibility requires identifying schools where the leadership comes from the same program.

In this paper, we analyze the value of collective or team leadership as a result of multiple leaders attending the Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) at the University of California, Berkeley, a program that prepares leaders for urban schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. In its fourteenth year, the PLI now has over 450 graduates, 88% of whom work in the Bay Area, with 50% in just four partner districts. This has led to the phenomenon of teams composed entirely of PLI alumni, ranging in number from 2 to 9. (Other programs that prepare individuals for a small number of districts, or even one large district, should find themselves in the same situation.) We wondered what difference it makes to have several PLI graduates, with the same preparation, on a leadership team. What specific kinds of commonalities are important to leaders functioning in teams? And what might that mean for the preparation of leaders, for the formation of leadership teams, and for district hiring and leadership development? In the first section, therefore, we examine what PLI graduates say about the benefits of common preparation, particularly for their ability to enact the principles and practices of their learning and experience.

Since collective teams depend on commonalities in background and orientation, it is also crucial to know how leadership preparation can support the requisite capacities for collective leadership. Here leadership standards provide little guidance because they focus on leadership as an individual trait. How do aspiring leaders learn how to develop teams

composed of individuals from different backgrounds and experiences? What does instructional leadership mean, and how does one engender it from a collective perspective? How does a leadership team develop a vision for an underperforming school, and then develop unity (or “buy-in”) around this vision? It’s easy to create lists of necessary skills and dispositions, but lists alone cannot capture the complexity of the work. One way to answer these questions is to examine what practicing principals who enact collective leadership say about the capacities that are important in their work, and how the programs they attended developed those capacities — or, conversely what requirements their programs neglected. These capacities may be necessary in any program, but they prove to be especially valuable to collective leadership. In the second section of this paper, we examine the responses of PLI graduates about what they found most important in their preparation, after several years of experience on the job.

To analyze these issues, we interviewed 26 graduates of the PLI, with administrative experience ranging from one to ten years. All these graduates were in schools with two or more PLI graduates on the administrative team, and many have PLI graduates who work as part of the larger collective as teacher-leaders. They all had some experience in schools without other PLI graduates, however, so they could compare their experiences with and without fellow PLI students. In addition to background information on their leadership trajectories, our questionnaire asked about the advantages and disadvantages of working with PLI alumni, the capacities these individual felt were most important in their work, and how well or poorly the PLI prepared them. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then analyzed for common perspectives. Their responses

in this paper are direct quotes, lightly edited to eliminate redundancies and references to specific individuals and schools.

Having analyzed the advantages of working in leadership teams in Section I, and the characteristics that our respondents reported were important in their practice in Section II, the final section summarizes what this means for leadership preparation as well as for the potential responsibilities of districts.

### **I. Collective Leadership: The Advantages of Working in Teams**

As mentioned above, we interviewed individuals in schools with two or more PLI graduates on the administrative team. Most of the time this meant both a principal and an assistant principal, or a principal and multiple assistant principals, sometimes co-principals,<sup>6</sup> or sometimes three members of a leadership team; in one large high school the principal and 8 assistant principals and deans all came from PLI. In response to questions about the advantages and disadvantages of coming from the same preparation program, they overwhelmingly agreed that working with fellow graduates made a difference in three important ways: in the centrality of trust, common philosophies and values, and shared curricula and practices. Further more, they emphasized several distinct ways that the PLI program works to instill these capacities in its students.

**The Centrality of Trust:** First and foremost, they stressed the dimension of trust – an element missing in many schools but emphasized by many other educators (especially Barbara Schneider and Anthony Bryk in *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for School Reform*). Several individuals responded in almost the same ways:

[Working with a non-PLI team], some of the things that we focused on were building trust, sharing experiences. For the three of us as this [all-PLI] administrative team, these things never came up. We had an automatic sense of trust among each other. Even though we didn't know each other prior to August, we knew things about each other. We started running the race together as opposed to thinking about running the race together. It was ready, set, go — as opposed to, do I trust this person?

Another noted that trust facilitates other mutual benefits:

[Working with another PLI grad] makes it phenomenal because you're leading a school with total trust. You can close your eyes and just know that your colleague, your partner not only has your back but also will challenge you. Also will coach you, and help continue to build your capacity. But it starts with trust.

One basis for the greater trust they felt in other PLI graduates involved sharing similar personal values, resulting from a cohort of "like-minded people":

We're on the same page. You can talk candidly, you can talk honestly. There has never been a time when I couldn't say something, when I would be misunderstood. There is a respect for communication styles as well. When we do have conversations we are able to drill it down to what do we believe in; we do have a clear vision.

Another noted the importance of a common curriculum: "There is familiarity in terms of what we were taught. So that contributes significantly to the trust factor." Some mentioned that they didn't have to question the motives of other PLI graduates – they knew that fellow graduates would have the interests of students and the improvement of learning at heart:

I don't have to question motives of my teammates. I know that the basics can be assumed; I can assume that [other leaders from PLI] have the best interests of kids in mind, have a lens of the things I talked about earlier as far as underrepresented, disenfranchised, oppressed youth.

With a common background and trust, it is easier for administrators to support one another:

It's fun to talk about the PLI. But also to offer support, that if they need that—if they need resources as well. Folks that have gone through the program, we still keep in touch. Even though we're all in different places now, we still know each other on multiple levels.

In addition to a common curriculum and a selection process that attracts “like-minded people” to the program, the PLI conveys these bases for trust through its collective experiences including workgroups with problem-solving responsibilities. As one graduate said about small group work:

I appreciated being placed in a situation where you had no choice but to work with seemingly totally different individuals. It pushed me to think about certain things that we don't really think about: white privilege, identity, equity, how that would manifest itself in the classroom, in the school environment, in educational systems.

So there are many ways to engender trust among graduates of a program, though they have to be explicitly included in its practices.

**Common Philosophies and Values:** A second advantage is that fellow PLI graduates have similar philosophies, sometimes expressed as “the basics”, “fundamentals”, “vision”, or “common language.” Creating a community of shared values has been identified as a fundamental part of effective organizations.<sup>7</sup> This is due in part to selection mechanisms, since the PLI looks for applicants with backgrounds in urban schools, a commitment to equity, and experience as teacher-leaders. Such commonalities are also due to teaching and experiences within the program. As one principal in a co-administrator arrangement with another PLI graduate observed,

We share a whole set of shared values around what an administrator is, and that comes from the education that we had together, and also the screening process of who participates in the first place. I don't have to have any equity conversations. That is probably the single biggest piece of totally shared understanding that runs through PLI grads – much more than people coming from other places who may have differing perspectives, particularly on racial equity.

Another graduate noted the creation of common values in the curriculum itself, the “daily practice” of collective and problem-based exercises:

The PLI values and underpinnings—they are all part of a daily practice. If you aren’t on the same page with somebody on those fundamentals, then you would have somebody else that you are constantly managing to get through to the real work, which is for kids and families.

Using the phrase of “a common language,” one graduate linked this advantage to work groups:

[The benefit of having PLI teams is] having a common language about the work we do, and a passion for the work we do. The teamwork exactly mimics what we created in the very first year in PLI. Having PLI language and PLI research-based techniques gives us more drive.

Our respondents sometimes talked about the commonality of references as a kind of efficiency: with shared backgrounds, they don’t have to spend time on the “basics” and can make faster progress on reforms:

Compared to their compatriots who are in other assistant principal jobs, they [my PLI co-administrators] feel like they are spending a lot more time on things that matter and a lot less time on things that don’t matter.

Similarly, several graduates noted that coming to agreement on school policy would take time away from other efforts at reform:

Another huge advantage [of my PLI team] is we talk about changing systems and working on curriculum—and we talk about that process requiring some common language and common terminology, so that we all can have richer conversations. We’ve had to spend less time crafting our common language and been able to spend more time on actionable instructional reform. A group commitment has allowed us to do what we want to do a lot faster than we would have if we would have had to spend a year or two working on our language, our mission, our norms.

Another individual linked shared understandings to trust:

My principal was a former PLI-er, and so I knew that we would have things in common. So we have a lot of trust in each other.

Our respondents mentioned some specific philosophies, including those related to teaching and learning:

It makes a lot of difference in our day-to-day practice, that my two co-administrators assume it is perfectly normal and natural to go into classrooms, and they have a belief that they should be there, and that they should be giving feedback—there is an understanding that instructional leadership is the job.

A commitment to equity is another crucial perspective, as in the quote above that “I don’t have to have any equity conversation.” Similarly, an assistant principal on an all-PLI team said,

The way it impacts me the most is that I speak the same language and I understand the basic things that we don’t need to go over. We just take it for granted that there is an equity focus. That means that we work more smoothly together.

One value of similar philosophies is that they make it possible to have hard conversations and deal with difficult situations. As an assistant principal noted:

When really hard conversations come up we know how to check ourselves and we know how to enter the really hard conversations—because we know it’s what’s needed. We can bring things to the table that are scary or frustrating.

Another gave an example, of disciplining teachers, that is all too familiar in urban education:

There was a teacher who brought good public attention to the school and did some things that made the school look good in the community’s eyes. However, that teacher also had some really, really terrible instructional practices and the overall effect on the campus was harmful to students—particularly students of color, particularly struggling students. And so we all just moved to address that teacher and not allow that teacher to be harmful to the school. The fact that we all are on the same page played a role in how we responded to that situation.

In addition, a common vision prevents deep disagreements within the leadership team:

Way back in my interim job, there were different camps that were in opposition to each other. The administrators had more of a focus on getting the trains running on time, not so much on setting high goals as far as improving student achievement across all lines. It just seemed a different focus, and it seemed more petty and fighting. Not that we [the PLI leadership team] don't have disagreements now; we do, but it's all within a shared vision of what a school should be,

Overall, then, there are many elements of the PLI that contribute to common philosophies and values: the selection process; the initial orientation to the PLI, establishing collective norms and practices similar to those that should occur in schools; and the experiences of workgroups with collective responsibilities.

**Shared Curricula and Practices:** A third critical benefit of working in teams with fellow graduates is sharing references and practices. These observations parallel Schein's writings about creating a common language and conceptual categories.<sup>8</sup> Common readings from PLI seem to be an important part of this process:

[A fellow PLI graduate] and I have referred back to some of the readings from PLI. We've discussed equity, integrity, and we've also gone back to quotes that we remember – “you've got to go slow to go fast”,\* and lessons that stick with you.

The very idea of a leadership team and collective leadership seems to come from PLI practices:

We all know how to work as a team. One strength of the program was learning how to work in groups and how to have conversations around equity and those difficult conversations. That's the impact on my work—I can go to any of my team and close the door, and we know how to talk to each other.

Among the specific practices where shared understanding made a difference was distributed leadership. A graduate working with one other PLI alum noted,

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\* “Going slow to go fast” refers to a practice of reflection and inquiry, first ascertaining where other people stand (going slow) before charging ahead with reform (going fast).

Our leadership model has become a little bit more distributed, with [our current principal, also a PLI grad] — we have a very strong teacher-leader group. Way more than his predecessor, we use lead teachers to help make decisions. They are like mini-admin teams, even though they're not administrators.

Discipline is another specific area that many of our respondents mentioned, particularly the practice of replacing conventional punitive discipline with restorative justice:

We both do a lot of the discipline, and we have it split fairly evenly, but we both take a similar approach - we look at the whole child, and not just the action that caused them to come to our office. We both try to compliment them on the things that they're doing well, which might be a big change for them.

Another attributed several practices (including restorative justice) to PLI routines:

We [the all-PLI team] use a lot of the protocols we learned at PLI in meetings with our staff. The general mindset about education is coming full circle, as with bringing restorative practices into schools and RTI models of filtering out issues. And recording data on interventions to see if they're really going to change behaviors.

As in the case of common philosophies and values, then, several elements of the PLI engender shared practices: readings from different perspectives; the conduct of the curriculum, both overt (as in PLI routines and reading protocols) and covert or hidden (as in workgroups again); and pedagogical strategies like project-based learning and student-centered approaches.

Two other perspectives on collective leadership emerged less frequently from our interviews. While many elementary schools may have leadership teams with a principal, instructional reform facilitators, and/or coaches, the value of shared backgrounds and coherent teams is greatest at the middle and high school levels, where larger schools mean that administrative teams are larger:

At the secondary level where you have multiple team members — elementary school, by default, you are your own team — there is so much going on, and so

many of us are new and young administrators, that at least you have a team of folks who philosophically are on the same page and are willing to be supportive.

Finally, several respondents mentioned the importance of stability — the fact that administrative teams can become more coherent if their composition remains the same:

[My school] did not have a great record of consistency in leadership. A lot is made of the stability of the principal. But I don't think you could go back 25 or 30 years at our school and see a leadership team that was going to stay intact; this is after having a new principal every one or two years for 20 years. The fact that I have a team going into its fourth year intact—I don't know if that has ever been done here. [The current administrative team], all being from the same program and having some commonalities, has a big part to play in that.

In effect, stability is a much-neglected resource in schools, particularly in urban schools where students turn over at a high rate, teachers come and go more frequently, principals usually have short tenures and often impose new policies, and superintendents also rotate in and out of their positions, again bringing new policies and practices that can cause turmoil. (Currently in California, 50% of sitting principals have less than five years experience.<sup>9</sup>) But if a leadership team can stay together over a period of years, at least the school can have some stability in its instructional and managerial practices, and reform and improvement can take place without the distractions of other changes. Stability in turn is often linked to burnout, especially high in urban schools, but which may be reduced by having leadership teams rather than “hero-principals” who have to shoulder all the burdens of running a school. In addition, just as teacher induction programs have been shown to reduce teacher turnover,<sup>10</sup> the linkage of the PLI to principal induction — the Leadership Support program or LSP, a two-year program for new leaders from PLI described in more detail below — may be instrumental in reducing turnover among PLI graduates.

To be sure, not all of our respondents agreed that working with fellow PLI students results automatically in stronger working relationships. One noted that graduates vary in their learning and capacity:

Having the all-PLI team has been challenging, because my counterpart's experience at PLI was very different from mine. He told me about how he had a negative interaction and didn't do LSP [the induction program], and didn't want to do all these things. The way I look at things is very different from my [PLI] counterpart.

Another noted the variation among PLI graduates:

I had a certain expectation that everyone who went through PLI would work in the same way. And there are a couple of PLI grads, not on the admin team, who I had to reevaluate my thinking and say, just because he or she went through PLI doesn't mean that this person is wonderful.

So while the advantages of working with fellow graduates are substantial, they are not foolproof: they depend on individual circumstances such as the extent to which graduates have absorbed the program's central principles and their overall experiences within the program.

**Working with graduates of other programs:** Our respondents also described the challenges of working with graduates of other programs, in contrast to their positive working environment with PLI graduates. Often these comments involved differences in values and perspectives, and they echoed the commonalities we have already mentioned. For example, one individual complained about working in a school with an “old-style environment,” without any sense of urgency and mission:

The first school felt like a very old-style school environment. It just didn't seem as urgent as I had experienced when I was a teacher, working for PLI grads — where there was this sense of urgency; we have to help the kids out. In the second experience, when I was a VP, I felt like I worked myself to the bone and I didn't get the same level of work and focus and push from my colleagues.

With administrators who don't know one another's background, problems with trust may arise:

That makes me connect to the idea of distributed leadership: the first year here was more micro-politicking, less distributed leadership because we didn't trust anybody.

Again, a common foundation or language is crucial:

PLI gave us a foundational common language. Common language, common structures that we draw from or pull from whenever we feel the need to. Non-PLI teams, there is - I don't want to say a vacuum, but there is that lack of a foundation.

Differences in approaches to equity may arise:

Equity was mysterious to my co-workers. They didn't get it, they didn't have that construct. We would talk occasionally about closing the achievement gap, but in this well-defined way to move those kids kind of framework.

Another noted the problems with a well-known national program:

It was a little bit different the subsequent year, with [a non-PLI person]. He was New Leaders, and for different reasons it just didn't work. He was extremely data-driven, and it didn't seem as though equity was a focus. Being in tune to working well with other educators—the teachers—and helping to hone their skills was also not at the forefront. I don't think he took time to figure those out, or talk to people.

Conflicts around instruction also show up, like “a lack of any real shared understanding around instructional leadership - I was the only person who was regularly in classrooms.” Another complained about a non-PLI administrator,

He was more of a delegator. He wasn't necessarily an instructional leader. His focus was school safety, protocol, student behavior and expectations. Which were very strong attributes that he had; I learned a lot from him. But when it comes to talking about how do we teach kids? How do we teach teachers how to teach kids? Our children - how to differentiate? We didn't collaborate on that.

Disagreements over discipline and suspension may also arise with administrators from different programs:

The easy one that jumps off the page is the discipline piece. The previous two years I was at a school where there were four administrators—two of us were PLI, two of us were not. The rules in place when I got there, discipline-wise, were just berserk. Cutting class was a three-day suspension. Horseplay? Three-day suspension. Everything was a suspension. I felt it was oppressive. That was me being completely 180 degrees opposite of the principal.

Finally, several individuals made acid comments about a particular form of “preparation” by examination. In California administrators can become certified by taking a two-day test — the California Preliminary Administrative Examination, or CPACE — administered by the Educational Testing Service. Several programs have sprung up to prepare individuals for the test — a practice one might suspect of teaching to the test. But while such a process may respond to the shortage of administrators (in urban districts especially), it cannot possibly instill the perspectives that graduates value about the PLI and that we clarify in Section II — a commitment to the big issues, a deep focus on equity, an understanding of instructional leadership, and other characteristics that take time to develop. As one leader commented,

I’ve seen folks who take a test who are really just paper pushers and really good at getting forms turned in. They’re good at reacting. Whereas I think that being an alum [of PLI] carries with it a better conversation and a better understanding about actually doing the work.

Most PLI graduates, who have chosen a longer and more rigorous program, are therefore suspicious of alternate certification programs that are relatively short and specific.

According to them, the complexities of the principal’s job are too great to be learned through a test-prep program or summer institute.

Our evidence indicates that preparation does influence future leadership characteristics. In their schools, graduates of a program like PLI can enact the principles and practices of their program, and teams of alumni can do so in a collective manner

relatively quickly because of the presence of trust and common experiences. In contrast, when a graduate works as an assistant principal or instructional coach under a principal with a very different orientation, their ability to exercise leadership is limited under the traditional hierarchical model. Even when a graduate is a principal but working without like-minded administrators and teacher-leaders, it becomes much more difficult to implement a collective strategy.

## **II. Developing the Capacities for Collective Leadership**

The common values and practices that can be enacted by coherent leadership teams cannot benefit students unless they are effective in schools. We therefore asked our respondents, through open-ended questions, to clarify the most important capacities in their current positions. Their responses indicate not only what they consider to be crucial to leadership, but also how these capacities can be developed. There was substantial agreement on at least seven traits, perspectives, and capabilities, necessary not only for urban schools but also for collective leadership.

**A Focus on the Big Issues:** Virtually all our respondents emphasized the centrality of distinguishing large and important issues from the minor ones, no matter how pressing the latter might be. In contrast the specific details taught in any leadership program (or in any form of education, we suspect) — the details of Ed Code sections, the fine points of special education procedures, the minutiae of budget numbers, the specifics of statistical procedures — are quickly forgotten. In addition, they vary from district to

district and from position to position, so they are better learned on the job rather than ahead of time in university-based programs.

Disentangling the central issues requires a deep background in “academic” perspectives like one’s philosophy of education, or “a really good foundation in theory.” The principal of a continuation high school noted the importance of “becoming articulate about my philosophy of education, which had previously been ill-formed.” One purpose of philosophical work is to understand concerns about education generally, and equity in particular:

There was a lot of in-depth, diverse philosophy that was so important — talking in this Socratic seminar and looking at theory, looking at a diverse group of philosophers. PLI did an excellent job of trying to include different perspectives: you learn about Locke and about Dewey, you know? What about W.E. DuBois? He was a philosopher, so how do we tap into that?

Another graduate stressed the centrality of taking responsibility for educational problems (“discourse II”) rather than blaming students and parents, or avoiding responsibility for problems (“discourse I”):<sup>11</sup>

She [my former principal] was always embedded in discourse II, where if there was a problem or if I was bitching and moaning, she would help me redefine the problem, identify an act to make it better. I think here [at my current schools] it’s just discourse I —where people are like, “Oh, the detention policy doesn’t work and it can’t just be on me.” The way that my previous principal worked—how we worked — was when there is a problem we figured out a solution and tried to solve it, even though at times I was in discourse I and saying everything is hard.

Focusing on the big issues is one way of coping with the overwhelming demands on school leaders and establishing priorities. One leader expressed the importance of certain readings in this way:

Whether it’s *Pedagogy of The Oppressed* or *Bad Boys*, or any number of articles that one of us will bring up in an administrative team meeting, we definitely reintroduce readings, to bring back to the team a certain issue that re-centers us.

The readings that we were exposed to in the program become even more important when you're in the throes of running that up-tempo day, with no room to slow down. You need to get back to those readings every now and then to reset what you're trying to do, because it's easy to fall into the minutiae.

Another grad cited the “Covey quadrants”, an exercise intended to distinguish issues that are important but not urgent - that are likely to get ignored given daily pressures and “minutiae” — from those that are urgent but not as important:<sup>12</sup>

Covey's Quadrants: thinking about what's urgent, what's important. What was truly important for us were those two pieces, student learning for all and caring relationships. Instead of paying attention to - there are so many discipline issues here, or the management issues going on there. That's one thing you learn about in PLI - to be able to see how it applies to the bigger picture.

An understanding of these larger issues also requires some time and intensity:

The blessing of PLI is, it's a really time-intensive program - it needs that time and it needs that space to really be able to do the reading, do the research, have time for discussion, really delve into it, really understand it.

Many former students therefore appreciated the rigor of the program, and contrasted that with quicker ways of getting into administration:

[PLI] was really comprehensive, a pursuit of higher education. I hear about some individuals being able to take a test to become an administrator, or attend some short programs or some schools that seem superficial, but PLI was a master's program.

To be sure, the division of responsibilities into central and peripheral is a nearly impossible task, because principals are called on to carry out all kinds of actions. As a result many of our respondents said that a strength of the PLI was its balance of theoretical (or “academic”) issues and practical content. As a high school administrator said,

The strengths of PLI are matching the practitioner with the theory. I think of the number of classes where I was taught by people who had been principals alongside people who were theorists—I think that was a really important combo.

An assistant principal corroborated this: “Another strength was a good balance between the theoretical and the hands-on reality of the work that we do.”

Theoretical or general perspectives are developed through readings and seminar-like discussions. Practical skills are embedded in the curriculum in several ways: in readings, in group projects, in reflective exercises designed to force individuals to clarify their own priorities, in simulations of school tasks, field work, and other exercises that PLI students carry out in their own schools. To be sure, there was some skepticism about how “real” university-based projects and simulations could be, but one respondent articulated how even projects that seemed artificial could provide skills necessary on the job:

There was a huge emphasis on these pretty ridiculous simulations. But in some ways it did simulate real life, making a decision with people who didn’t agree with you or working under these tight timelines. There was just good practice in working under strict timelines and getting stuff done. You have to be that way in this role.

As we will outline below, not all students agreed that the right balance of theoretical and practical had been achieved, and many called for more attention to practicalities. But the vast majority found great usefulness in “philosophy” and “the academic.” Based on their comments, any preparation program that fails to include the most basic philosophies of education does not prepare its students for their lives as leaders. In addition, instilling common perspectives on how to establish priorities is a foundation for collective leadership.

**Equity and justice, including race and class:** A second salient feature of preparation, according to our respondents, is a focus on equity and justice, paying special

attention to the issues of race and class that are so central in urban schools. Even though there may be differences in how individuals conceive of equity and social justice,<sup>13</sup> most of our graduates agreed that these elements were crucial to their preparation — “it wouldn’t be PLI if it wasn’t equity-driven” — and then to their jobs: “The huge strength was just the unrelenting focus on equity, and giving us hope as a group that we could make a difference.” An African-American principal noted,

It’s about social justice - the civil rights movement is not over. It’s about restorative justice. What is social justice? Focusing on naming the isms in the education in our society.

Sometimes equity took very specific forms, as in the case of discipline — as the comment about restorative justice indicates. Another specific area is the allocation of resources, since low income and racial minority students are likely to suffer from unequal resources like fully qualified and experienced teachers. As the principal of a large high school said,

When I worked in the district office, people threw the word “equity” around a lot, but here was the place that had the most impact on resource allocation and you would find yourself struggling to make an argument for about a systemic change—like a tutoring program or a student support program that would put resources in direct contact with students who needed them. People see those resource discussions as being separate from an equity discussion, and there is a disconnect between those two.

The most difficult issue of all — in American society as in its schools — is the discussion of race. Several respondents were clear that the PLI was crucial in changing their attitudes about race. As one principal of a large high school said,

Looking at the ways in which inequities and disparities are systematized was also very eye-opening. I thought I was a fairly enlightened young guy at the beginning of PLI, in understanding how race and class play into education systems. But my knowledge, looking back, was really instinctual, or maybe a little simplistic. The content of PLI really fleshed that out for me. They really put a name on a lot of structural things that I didn’t understand before that.

Similarly, another graduate noted her development from a stance of “benevolence”:

My largest area of growth was being able to look at race and class. Prior to going into PLI I was benevolent: I thought that everybody should be treated the same. As I was going through PLI and having conversations - for instance, with several other PLI students who were African American and hearing how affected they were by their race. And making sure that in my day-to-day work, I recognize that race and class also have an impact on the way that the students I work with view the world.

One linked the discussions of race to the ability to have “hard” or “courageous”

conversations<sup>14</sup> about the most difficult racial issues in urban schools:

The support that you get for having hard conversations about race as it affects student achievement and student development is something that I don’t know you would be able to get anywhere else. In thinking about what I did at [another university] the race talk was there a little bit, but it would always get cut short. You’d have to hit the brakes and you would still want to talk.

The emphasis on equity and race is embedded in many aspects of the program.

From its inception in 1990, PLI has focused on preparing leaders for urban schools, and issues of equity are part of the curriculum — in readings like Geneva Gay’s *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*, Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow*, and Claude Steele’s *Whistling Vivaldi*; in readings and discussions about white privilege and, by contrast, the inequalities of privilege and status in our society; in exercises devised to surface racial attitudes; in meetings of both same-race groups and mixed-race groups; in forthright discussions of race and class so that students cannot avoid these issues or — as often happens in schools — treat these issues lightly in casual comments about “diversity”.<sup>15</sup> Instead, they are expected to interrogate their own power and privilege as individuals and how they will impact their leadership in urban schools. Understanding the dimensions of equity, including the inequities of race and class, is absolutely critical for anyone going

into urban schools.. but it is also one of the values, contributing to trust, that our graduates noted as a basis for collective leadership.

To be sure, some graduates felt that the program still did not spend enough time on racial issues. We will return to this subject subsequently, because we believe the treatment of race poses one of the most substantial dilemmas for all leadership preparation. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to note that many principals and assistant principals see equity as a central issue in their practice, and one that all leaders should understand.

**Learning with like-minded colleagues and collective leadership:** A substantial number of PLI graduates noted how much they learned from their fellow students: “I was so impressed to be among like-minded individuals who were really focused on making change in the school system, and making replicable efforts that could be used across schools and systems.” One consequence is the development of a shared vision, which (as we noted in the previous section) contributes to team leadership:

One of the strengths of PLI was the shared vision that permeated the program. And that vision being to go beyond the words and propositions, and move into some action—particularly using data to inform decision-making.

Another noted the importance of “hard” and “courageous” conversations — discussions about tough subjects including race — in work groups: “I valued the courageous conversations that we had with other cohort members, and the fact that those are real life conversations that you have in the real world.”

In effect, the PLI embodies the values of a professional learning community — a group of people working together to advance professional goals and responsibilities. This idea, emerging from conceptions of learning organizations and teacher collegiality, is now

a subject of great interest in the practice-oriented school reform literature (like DuFour and Eaker's *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, which PLI students read).

However, professional learning communities do not form themselves. At least three elements of the PLI create the conditions for collaboration:

- The PLI follows a cohort model (like many other leadership preparation programs), with students staying together for a fourteen-month period. This enables the development of trust, which in turn carries over into their leadership practices.
- Students are highly selected to have some experience in teacher-leader positions; to be committed to equity and urban schools; and to be open to collaboration with others. The fact that PLI graduates report their fellow students to be “like minded” is therefore intentional and constructed, not accidental.

- Groups of students work on projects together, where the teams are responsible for generating outcomes – equity plans, school vision statements, financial plans, discipline policies.

Working in teams with like-minded individuals gives PLI students an introduction to distributed or collaborative leadership, in contrast to the conventional hierarchical organization dominated by a single head (or autocrat):

One thing is the workgroups — the purposeful matching of folks. It was good for me to be with other folks that may not necessarily have the same personality type as you. It was intense. I think anything less than that would not have prepared me as well as I am now.

The principal of a large urban high school noted the immediate usefulness of work groups:

One strength of the PLI was the way we were configured into working groups and had to take on projects and assignments together, applied to problem solving and

project management. These were skills that were immediately applicable to work, in facilitating adult learning and trying to create systems within schools.

In effect, the PLI preaches the value of cooperative leadership both directly, in readings like James Spillane's *Distributed Leadership*, and indirectly through the structure of working teams with real responsibilities. And, like the other attributes reviewed in this section, this is one of the beliefs that is necessary for collective or team leadership to thrive.

**The emphasis on teaching, learning, and instructional leadership:** Historically, school leaders have been responsible for management, instruction, and political (or value-laden) decisions within the school, but in practice managerial responsibilities have dominated.<sup>16</sup> More recently, it has become common to argue that principals and other school leaders ought to be instructional leaders, responsible for the quality of teaching and learning. From its inception the PLI has preached the centrality of instructional leadership, and many graduates report this as one of its lasting influences:

The strengths were on leading instruction, and thinking of the instructional leadership role as being an extension of your teacher toolbox. And having it all grounded in sound pedagogy. Then the skills of supervising instruction were really strong - having an educational philosophy and applying it, and developing some understanding about teaching as a profession.

But while it has become fashionable to call for instructional leadership, most commission reports and how-to writing are silent about how to develop this capacity. The responses of PLI graduates are helpful in disentangling the various strands that such leadership requires. One is to prioritize teaching and learning over “getting the trains to run on time” and “minutiae”:

Supporting students and supporting teachers to get more effective at school is more important than making the trains run on time. I mean, the trains still have

to run on time. But it's not the job – it's the thing that chronically gets in the way of the job.

Another prerequisite is an understanding of different approaches to instruction and pedagogy. Even though PLI students have gone through teacher training, many such programs are inadequate. As one new assistant principal noted,

The PLI was the most I ever learned about the art of teaching. Just basic stuff - direct instruction, teacher-centered versus student-centered, the different learning styles, the different teaching styles, the different ways of helping students to create - it was all brand-new to me. My teaching credential program I learned nothing from. I wish PLI had been my teaching credential program.

Another stressed the importance of

learning about cognitive theory. It wasn't something that really came naturally to me, to understand how kids learn. What I learned was how many mistakes I made as a young teacher; how important it is to slow down the process of ingesting material and embedding it.

A different dimension of instructional leadership is learning about specific techniques for improving instruction, which include such practices as classroom observations, discussions with teachers about instruction, one-on-one coaching, professional development aimed specifically at improving instruction, teacher supervision including formal evaluations, and sometimes the allocation of resources (like providing new teachers with more attention, peer mentors, and lighter responsibilities).

As one principal noted,

Prior to PLI, I would have gone into a class and seen a teacher talking and a bunch of kids quiet, and thought, well, that's good instruction. But now if I go in and I see that a lecture goes on and on and on, and I after ten minutes five or six kids are checking out - it better prepares me to coach teachers and to talk to them about [teaching], because they probably didn't get it in their credential program, either.

Instruction is an immensely complex subject, and no leadership preparation program (and no short teacher training program) can cover all its complexities. But leadership programs can at least make instruction one of the top priorities, and start the lifelong process of learning how to improve instruction.

**The personal dimensions of leadership:** Many theories of leadership stress the personal characteristics of leaders, and many lists of competencies include various individual traits and attitudes. Some of these personal characteristics reflect beliefs we have already discussed, like student-centeredness, a belief in equity and fairness, sensitivity to racial and ethnic discrimination, the ability to work with others. However, PLI graduates mentioned other beliefs and dispositions that they found valuable. One cited identity and a sense of self as important:

I also appreciated just the personal aspect of it, talking about not just leadership in an abstract sense, but what does it mean to be a leader for you; who are you, what is your identity, how do you work when you are approaching a problem? Being able to articulate better and understand better the way I approach problem solving and being a leader.

Thinking about one's personal identity, and linking that to larger issues, is part of the process: "I really appreciated the summer where we worked on our identities, and then linked it to the power of race and demographics and results in education." Others stressed developing greater sensitivity to their own biases, including their racial biases:

The focus on doing a self-audit into your own cultural biases was important. Some of the discussions we had around privilege were discussions that should be constant.

The centrality of relationships was embedded in group work:

I want to start with relationship building. The staff were masters at relationship building and believing in their students. So I want to start with that strength - being able to trust your professors.

The list of personal characteristics is nearly endless. Some of them are part of the student selection process; some can be taught directly; others emerge from the emphases of a program; some are embedded in the structure of a program, in the way responsibility is allocated between instructors and students, or the way students work in groups; some require immersion in moral texts, like Lisa Delpit’s *Other People’s Children* or Stephen Carter’s *Integrity*; some require self-reflective activities. But programs that neglect these personal aspects cannot possibly prepare individuals to be strong leaders.

**Reform and change management:** American schools have been in a constant agony of reform throughout their history — a process of “reforming again, again, and again”, in the words of Larry Cuban<sup>17</sup> — especially since 1983, when *A Nation at Risk* initiated a long series of reforms. Urban schools are particularly susceptible to change efforts since they face so many challenges. Ultimately these reforms succeed or fail within schools, and leaders are therefore responsible for their implementation. To respond to this trend, the PLI embeds current state and federal reforms and their effects on schools and learning throughout the curriculum. For some PLI graduates, this is one of the most important legacies of the program. For one graduate who started a new school,

Change was something that we, as an admin team, were definitely looking at—changing the way we do business. We didn’t just want to create what we know hasn’t worked at other school sites. So one of the things that we’ve done as an admin team is that we’ve really looked at our scholars, looked at our environment, looked at our team, looked at our teachers—and we have created almost every rule and procedure based on our environment, as opposed to replicating other environments. Looking at how to make change in schools was definitely part of the curriculum.

Another made a comparative claim: “PLI alumni have a better understanding of change and reform at the school site level; can articulate that, can address it, and can act on it.”

For some people, learning about change and improvement required a shift in approach and personality; as one hard-driving individual said,

I learned a lot about change management, and about going slow to go fast. And not being the level of bully I'm kind of prone to be. Because I'm like—bring the change! Pro-change! We need to be there! Let's go, people! And it's baffling to me when people don't want to. A lot of things crystallized during the PLI experience that have made me a much better change manager.

So initiating and implementing reforms requires many dimensions, and school leaders need to be prepared in several different ways for this role.

**Data and Evidence:** Finally, some individuals noted the importance of data and its use as evidence to disentangle effective from ineffective programs. Indeed, “data-driven reform” has become a mantra in school improvement, though typically it implies only the use of standardized test scores. Our graduates have instead focused on the need for expanded conceptions of data such as community mapping, action research, and formative assessment in order to draw appropriate and informed conclusions. As one assistant high school principal noted,

What PLI has been able to do is train us to draw upon the research - the best practice. Who is out there? Who is doing what? And then try to come together and really explore it, versus anecdotally saying we think this is a good idea. Well, where is the research?

Typically this is not a characteristic that teachers have developed, and therefore leadership preparation programs must be responsible:

[In PLI] I started thinking about data a lot more, and analyzing data in different ways. Because [as a teacher] the classroom is one in which you don't look to data because you're looking at small issues – it's important to see the kids.

PLI graduates mentioned different dimensions of their responsibilities related to data. One was helping teachers:

Being a new school, one of our biggest decisions was to take a step back with the staff. We were under the impression that our staff understood how to work with data. So we sat down with our staff, following district protocols, and we passed out the data. The teachers, for the most part, couldn't read the data. So I rewrote the directions on how to pull the data out yourself. We started having them question the data, as opposed to just be hand-delivered the data. The teachers went from staring at the data and not saying much, to having fairly deep conversations regarding the data.

Another noted the value of data in dealing with discipline and suspensions:

The district had made it very clear they wanted suspensions lowered. We decided to look at academic achievement and discipline data, broken down by ethnicity. And it was pretty astounding. They [teachers] asked for it to be broken down further. So I did it further broken down, and they said, the reason we did that is we wanted to introduce restorative justice.

Relying on evidence, and being able to help others (like teachers) understand data, are therefore some of the common practices that help PLI graduates when they work in teams.

We also asked our graduates about the weaknesses of the PLI. Their criticisms highlight several dilemmas that all preparation programs must confront.

**The Balance Between General and Practical Content:** While many graduates praised the balance between general or “academic” perspectives and the highly complex skills required in daily practice (sometimes derided as “nuts-and-bolts” or “minutiae”), a number reported that there was too little attention to practicalities. Some complained that the implications for practice of readings and “academic” exercises were sometimes unclear:

Sometimes what happens is there is this yes, we want you to be familiar with all of these ed codes, et cetera. But sometimes there's a disconnect between what is intellectually discussed in a classroom versus what is practically happening day to day and how to be able to transfer that.

Others stressed the need for greater knowledge of legal requirements:

There were some practical things that I had to learn on the job - about legal, ed code issues. Discipline, especially laws around discipline, laws around special ed, complaint processes, laws around things that come up every single day. Some of the more nuts and bolts of the day-to-day job [should be covered].

Some specific courses seemed too academic:

It [the data course] was rigorous in a way that I appreciated—but it was so grounded in the academic definition of research and data that it didn't make me a sophisticated user of the type of data that we use in schools. I was prepared well enough to understand the importance of it, but not necessarily for some of the logistics, the pragmatics of how to get there.

Still other graduates moved into specialized positions where they need more specific preparation than the PLI provided. For example, one assistant principal found himself in charge of discipline in a large high school:

I didn't know at the time that I would end up primarily situated with discipline and safety. So while we were strong with respect to pedagogy, looking back now I think I could have had more preparation when it came to school discipline.

Such responses highlight a dilemma that all preparation programs face. A program that spent all its time on general perspectives about education and leadership might be considered too “academic”; indeed, Arthur Levine's critical *Preparing School Leaders* devoted one section to the irrelevance of the curriculum to practice and another to inadequate clinical instruction. But a leadership program that devoted itself exclusively to nuts and bolts, or “getting the trains to run on time” might produce little bureaucrats ready to be “paper pushers” (as one graduate cited above noted), without broader perspectives that contribute to a vision of what schooling can be. The challenge for every preparation program is to balance general perspectives and specific skills. Inevitably some individuals will find that their own program has emphasized one over the other –

especially when they find themselves in specialized positions that require more specific skills.

**Attention to Equity and Racial/Ethnic Dilemmas:** Another difficult balance involves the attention that leadership programs devote to equity, and especially to racial and ethnic dilemmas. Our respondents generally reported that their developing perspectives about equity, race, and class were among the most valuable features of their preparation. However, some graduates felt there was still not enough attention to these dimensions of urban schools. One said,

The reality of the race and equity piece in this society is a life work. I come upon it constantly. We tried to delve a little bit more deeply in PLI, but really only touched the surface.

A Latino assistant principal admitted that the PLI did more about equity than most programs, though he still found that inadequate:

I wish PLI would have done a better job of challenging the white candidates to look at their own lens, push them a little bit as agents of social change. And also challenge them in terms of what they're doing in the schools. To a large degree, I was teaching my white colleagues, or I had to kind of slow down my own learning. At [my school] it was even worse because there were really some entrenched beliefs about race, kids of color. Whereas in PLI, at least there was the understanding that we needed to take it differently, and there was that sense of I want to be an agent of change.

In general, students of color, with their long personal experiences of discrimination in and out of schools, were more likely than white students to call for even more attention to equity and race, while white students were more likely to stress how much their perspectives had changed. This in turn reflects differences in the racial perspectives that students come with; as the Latino assistant principal quoted above noted,

On issues of equity, we all start at different places. So moving the needle will vary, depending on where we're at. There is that understanding that we are driven by issues of equity: how is it helping all kids? How is it helping the neediest students?

Once again, all leadership programs must find some balance in their treatment of equity. Programs that devote little attention to equity — and many programs are rated by their graduates as poor to fair in preparing them to work in racially and economically diverse environments (as *Educating School Leaders* noted) — are inadequate for urban and even most suburban districts. On the other hand equity cannot push all other topics out of a leadership curriculum. Inevitably, given a varied group of students working in different types of schools, some individuals will be dissatisfied.

**External and Internal Barriers to Innovation:** Some PLI graduates complained that the program failed to prepare them for the forces that impede reform. For example, one principal said:

What the PLI could have done is understand how everything from district office systems and collective bargaining agreements can make creating a school vision difficult. I was a little naïve in terms of how your vision for kids becomes a lot more complicated when you have to run it through the district office, school boards, and certainly union contracts, community issues. So maybe a little more of that macro stuff would have been helpful.

(See also the critique in *Educating School Leaders* of inadequacies in preparing leaders “to work with external constituencies such as parents and with school bureaucracies.”) In addition, some respondents wanted the program to stress the internal politics of schools somewhat more:

We learned about the basics of micro-politics within the school, but at [my school] the community is incredibly political. And being able to navigate that and stay afloat of the politics with the teachers, the community, the other staff, the kids - I don't feel like we did as much practice or awareness around what it feels like to navigate a political system.

Again, this critique has been anticipated in *Educating School Leaders*, which found that half of their respondents “gave their programs only fair to poor ratings for preparing them to deal with in-school politics.” Evidently, preparation programs including the PLI so emphasize the responsibilities of leaders to change their own school communities that they neglect the barriers to doing so.

**More Specific Preparation for High Schools:** A small minority of respondents noted that conditions in high schools are different than they are in elementary and middle schools, and called for more preparation specific to high schools:

The program wasn't differentiated so much for secondary. Even in my own district, the majority of folk in leadership positions tend to come from an elementary background. But to me, they are drastically different; from the managerial standpoint the sites are entirely different. I didn't get a lot of practical experience; I didn't have the skill set around master scheduling or the discipline process, which is much more complex at the high school level.

Another high school assistant principal noted the obvious problem of size:

The challenge we're constantly facing is the size. This is a very large high school. How do you manage a school this size? How are you the instructional leader? If we're the instructional leader, who manages the school? Who does all the clerical?

These views corroborate the analysis of one of us (Grubb) in his book *Leadership Challenges in High Schools*, based on interviews with about 50 high school leaders. High school leadership differs in at least eight specific ways from that in other levels of the K-12 system, with substantial implications for leadership preparation. However, almost none of the vast leadership literature mentions these specific conditions. Virtually no preparation programs devote any time to the special demands on high school leaders, and most districts do not provide specific experiences to prepare their high school principals.

Unfortunately the high school has been the most difficult to reform of any level, and until the country pays more attention to high school leadership this is unlikely to change.

**The Need for Principal Induction Programs:** A small number of respondents argued that leadership preparation should continue after pre-service education — consistent with the notion that learning about instruction is a life-long work, or that “the reality of the race and equity piece in this society is a life work”:

There are still many layers, pieces that are missing. There needs to be a convention where all PLI grads in administration are brought together, so we’re challenging ourselves and exploring what has worked, what hasn’t. How are we using best practices? Because once we leave it seems like it’s easy to fall back in a rut and not challenge ourselves in terms of the reading, the research, the policy.

Since this particular alumnus graduated, the PLI has developed a two-year induction program called the Leadership Support Program (LSP), which PLI graduates (and some non-PLI graduates) enter after assuming administrative positions. The program examines the dilemmas practicing administrators face through narrative analysis; explores further dimensions of instructional leadership, including prioritizing time in order to pay enough attention to instruction; analyzes the trajectory of leaders from novice to expert; promotes a problem-solving approach to leadership; and reinforces the centrality of equity. Unfortunately high-quality induction programs for leaders are quite rare. Currently, 18 states have leader induction mandates, though with great variance in program length, the specific administrator population served, and program requirements.<sup>18</sup> California has very recently mandated a two-year induction program for the second-level leadership certificate, but most states that claim to require induction have at most a two-day or week-long seminar. Evidently, the

preparation of school leaders requires a certain time and intensity to master the perspectives and skills required on the job, and development should continue throughout the period of leadership.

### **III. Conclusions about Leadership Preparation**

From our interviews with PLI leadership teams, several conclusions emerge. One focuses on what leadership preparation programs can do: instill in their participants the basic values and broad perspectives that they take into practice. These deep understandings are what stay with graduates, even over long periods of time, and such capacities are crucial on the job. These conclusions come specifically from graduates of the PLI, but any leadership program can determine which of its elements are helpful as well as what is missing, simply by following their graduates and learning what is crucial on the job.

Second, as we saw in Section I, leadership teams composed of graduates from the same preparation program have many inherent advantages. Increased trust, a commonality of philosophies and perspectives, shared language, references, and practices enhance the leadership capacities of each individual and team, and accelerate the complex process of reforming schools. While it may be impossible for such leadership teams to emerge in some small districts, or where the graduates of preparation programs are dispersed, they can certainly be created in regions where leadership programs prepare their students for a restricted number of districts.

Third, many preparation programs (and the national and state standards that drive them) focus on *individual* traits, and there's no question that many of them are necessary on the job. But it is necessary to go beyond the laundry list of such beliefs and capacities because they cannot by themselves foster the collective leadership that is so necessary in schools — particularly in urban schools with their contentious personal relationships, lack of trust, incoherent policies, and lack of consensus necessary to develop consistent reforms. While the capacities we outlined in Section II may be necessary, they are not sufficient for *collective* leadership. Instead, the right kinds of collaboration, problem-based exercises, and practice via workgroups are necessary to prepare graduates for collective leadership.

Fourth, school leadership is complicated and difficult work, as more and more educators and policy-makers have come to understand. PLI graduates generally support the need for preparation of substantial length and rigor, even though it is difficult. The demands they experience on the job are so overwhelming that only a substantial program can prepare them. And many — now nearly 100% of PLI graduates who obtain administrative positions — enroll in the Leadership Support Program, so they evidently advocate a lengthening of preparation and an induction program once they get into administrative positions. There are no short cuts to becoming an effective school leader.

Finally, our findings highlight the potential importance of district policies toward leadership development. Schools and districts could put together leadership teams with some concern for similar philosophies, values, and perspectives on educational practices, the prerequisites for collective leadership. Otherwise the development of strong working relationships — of trust and shared responsibility in particular — takes time and

attention away from other crucial activities. In addition, districts could and should scrutinize the programs from which they hire administrators and teachers to see whether their teachings are congruent with district goals and challenges. For example, they might be suspicious of any program that fails to devote substantial time to equity, or to instructional leadership, or to collaborative leadership, or to school improvement. They might avoid alternative or emergency credentialing programs that are short and specific. And they could foster induction programs or other ways of extending leadership preparation, since the job of developing leaders is never done.

Looking across the landscape of leadership preparation, there is now substantial fragmentation and differentiation in programs. Traditional university-based programs still dominate, but they have come under serious criticism, and some states and districts are taking steps to regulate their way into improvement. Emergency credentialing programs have proliferated, including test-based and work-based options relying on limited periods of “apprenticeship” with established administrators. Short, intensive programs are being devised by a few education schools. Some charter management organizations have set up their own leadership programs, as have groups of innovating schools. There’s much greater variety of leadership preparation than there used to be even a decade or two ago. But no one knows much about what these programs do, or whether they recognize the complexity of leadership, or what their commitments to equity and instructional improvement are, or whether they are effective. Based on the responses of PLI graduates, the demands on the job are so varied that only a comprehensive and intensive preparation program can possibly be adequate.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The obligatory reference is Kenneth Leithwood, Karen Seashore Louis, Stephen Anderson, and Kyla Wahlstrom, *How Leadership Influences Students Learning*. University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement; and University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies In Education, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See James Spillane, *Distributed Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006. For empirical work on the practice of distributed leadership, see the website of the Distributed Leadership Study, [www.distributedleadership.org/DLS/Home.html](http://www.distributedleadership.org/DLS/Home.html).

<sup>3</sup> The CALL system (Comprehensive Assessment for Leading and Learning) developed at the University of Wisconsin asks teachers, administrators, and other instructional personnel to answer questions about a school and its collective focus on learning, and asks relative few questions specifically about what school-level leaders do. For a brief introduction see Richard Halverson, Carolyn Kelley, and James Shaw, "A CALL for improved school leadership." *Phi Delta Kappan* 2014, 95(6): 57-60. See also the website at [www.leadershipforlearning.org](http://www.leadershipforlearning.org).

<sup>4</sup> See Charles Payne, *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2008. He describes urban schools as contentious and fragmented because of the differing values and personal animosities among school staff members.

<sup>5</sup> On the value of consistency and coherence in schools, see especially Fred M. Newmann, Betty Ann Smith, Elaine Allensworth, and Anthony S. Bryk, "Instructional Program Coherence: What It Is and Why It Should Guide School Improvement Policy," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 23(4): 297-32, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> On the *potential* advantages of co-principals, see W. Norton Grubb and Joseph Flessa, "A Job Too Big for One: Multiple Principals and Other Non-traditional Approaches to School Leadership," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 42(4):518-550, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> See L. Lezotte, *Learning for All*. Okemos, MI: Effective School Products, 1997; and C. Enz, *Power and shared values in corporate culture*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> See E. Schein, *Organizational culture and leadership*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. edition. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Bland, J., Sherer, D., Guha, R., Woodworth, K., Shields, P., Tiffany-Morales, J., & Campbell, A. (2011). *The status of the teaching profession 2011*. Sacramento, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> See Richard Ingersoll and Thomas Smith, "Do Teacher Induction and Mentoring Matter?", *NASSP Bulletin* 88(638), March 2004.

<sup>11</sup> The language of discourse I and II comes from Ralph Eubanks, Ralph Parish, and Dianne Smith, "Changing the Discourse in Schools", in *Race, Ethnicity, and Multiculturalism: Policy and Practice*, ed. Peter Hall (New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> On the Covey quadrant, see Stephen Covey, A. Roger Merrill, and Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> For many different conceptions of equity, see W. Norton Grubb, *The Money Myth: School Resources, Outcomes, and Equity*, Ch. 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). For varying conceptions of social justice and social justice education, see Tina Trujillo and Robert Cooper, “Framing Social Justice Leadership in a University-Based Preparation Program: The University of California’s Principal Leadership Institute”, *Journal of Research on Education Leadership* Feb. 2014, describing the PLI programs at Berkeley and UCLA.

<sup>14</sup> On courageous conversations, see especially Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks CA: Corwin Press, 2004). See also See J. Abrams, *Having Hard Conversations*. Corwin Press, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> For this argument see Mica Pollak, *Colormute: Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> See especially Larry Cuban, *The Managerial Imperative and the Practice of Leadership in Schools* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> See Larry Cuban, “Reforming again, again, and again”, *Educational Researcher* 19(1): 3-13.

<sup>18</sup> See Susan Villani, *Mentoring and Induction Programs that Support new Principals*. Corwin Press, 2006.