

The Principal Residency Network Program Components and Requirements

Performances

Learning Plan

Each aspiring principal develops an individualized learning plan that determines her particular program of study. The aspiring principal (AP) crafts the learning plan in conjunction with the mentor principal (MP) and the project director, ensuring that it addresses the ISLLC standards and takes into account previous experiences, personal strengths and weaknesses, and professional goals. The learning plan, which remains a work in progress, includes a timeline that the AP revises regularly. It outlines proposed project work, research, and reading and explains how this work will lead to mastery of the program's learning goals and competencies.

There are also a core of common experiences each aspiring principal is expected to participate in and/or lead. Each aspiring principal outlines these experiences and then documents and provides evidence of accomplishment in each of the ISLLC standard areas.

Action Research Project

Aspiring principals choose a challenging action research project through which they develop essential skills in both instructional leadership and management. Project-based work involves identifying a problem or need, analyzing school-based data, developing strategies for change, engaging stake holders to build consensus, planning to or implementing the plan of action, evaluating outcomes, and making mid-course corrections. AP's review critical literature associated with their project and visit other schools to inform their decision-making.

Writing

Aspiring principals are asked to continually reflect on and write about their work and their leadership development. They are expected to regularly exchange journal entries with their MP.

Sharing and Reflecting

Aspiring and Mentor Meetings

Each team meets daily for at least a half hour to check-in on logistical matters and to promote continual communication. In addition, teams are expected to schedule weekly extended meetings to debrief the events of the week and to plan the coming week. At these meetings, mentors give critical feedback to their AP's and discuss ways in which the AP's can improve their practice. To prepare for these meetings, pairs are encouraged to share their journals or other reflective writing.

Institutes/Retreats

Institutes and retreats allow program participants to spend concentrated, in-depth time together as a broad learning community. Aspiring and mentor principals come together for two days to share their work, receive critical feedback, and take part in seminars and workshops. The first of these retreats is held in the fall and serves primarily as an orientation/ professional development opportunity for new participants. In January, first exhibitions take place. At the spring retreat, participants present their project work and portfolios. In June, graduating aspiring principals present their final exhibitions in order to demonstrate that they have achieved the ISLLC's standards and met the competencies needed to earn their principal certification.

Workshops

Residency-based project work comprises the bulk of aspiring principals' learning experiences, yet periodically the program organizes workshops to supplement AP's school-based studies. Program participants with special training in a given field, faculty or professionals – such as lawyers specializing in education – lead this intensive, subject – specific seminars. Workshops are structured to incorporate relevant, authentic examples from participants' schools. They may be held either as part of the network seminars or at an institute.

Cross-School Visits

Aspiring principals are expected to visit at least three other schools that represent a diversity of demographics, level and or size of program. The purpose of these visits is twofold – to expose participants to different school practices, designs, and cultures and to build critical friends' groups within a network. Visiting AP's writing a detailed account of the visit, which is included in their portfolios.

Assessment

Vision Paper

Aspiring principals articulate their vision and explain how it developed, how it guides their work and what questions or puzzles still remain. They examine their own vision in light of the school's philosophy and structure and then describe how their action research supports their vision and contributes to school improvement efforts.

Portfolios

Aspiring principals develop extensive portfolios that illustrate their action research work, writing, research, and reading. These portfolios manifest both the depth and the breadth of residency-based study and provide physical documented evidence of completed work and learning. Graduates use the portfolio, along with the final transcript, to demonstrate proficiency in each of the six ISLLC standards and demonstrate their leadership experiences and work readiness to both Departments of Education – for purposes of certification – and potential employers.

Exhibitions

Twice each year, aspiring principals present their project work to a panel of other AP's, MP's, faculty, and members of their school community. These presentations, called exhibitions, give participants a chance to reflect on the growth awarded by their in-school experiences, connect that growth to the program competencies, receive critical feedback, and identify learning areas that demand further work. At each exhibition, panel members fill out feedback forms that help inform subsequent revisions of the learning plan/curriculum map and document the participants' leadership development.

Mid-Year Self-Assessment

Aspiring and mentor principals write detailed narratives assessing the AP's work following a self-assessment process. These documents outline the project work done in the school and give critical public feedback to the AP.

Feedback Circle

Each aspiring principal enlists members of the school community to participate in an on-going evaluation of his/her service to the school. The critical-friends group provides the feedback and support necessary for the AP to grow as a leader. The AP is expected to check in with members of the group regularly and to meet with them formally at least three times in the course of the year. At the culmination of the program, feedback members write a detailed recommendation for the graduating AP.

Final Paper

The final paper consists of three parts:

1. understanding yourself as a leader
2. crystallizing your leadership learning
3. charting your course

Drafts are distributed to three mentors in addition to the project director, for review and feedback.

Final Assessment

Mentor principals and the project director complete a final assessment of the aspiring principal and determine each to be distinguished or proficient. A designation of adequate requires additional time beyond the one year, and a designation of unsatisfactory would result in termination well before June.