
Published: March 2, 2005

New Leaders Group to Train Principals in Baltimore

By Catherine Gewertz

An unusual partnership between a nonprofit organization and the state of Maryland will certify principals for the Baltimore schools without the involvement of a university.

New Leaders for New Schools, which seeks to train thousands of top-notch principals to lead urban schools, aims to train 40 principals for Baltimore within three years, enough to fill one-fifth of the district's principalships.

The arrangement, supported by local and national philanthropies, unfolds as about half the 90,000-student district's school leaders are reaching retirement age.

The Feb. 22 announcement marked the inclusion of Maryland as the sixth site participating in New Leaders for New Schools' effort to bolster the principal corps. The group has training programs in Chicago, the District of Columbia, Memphis, New York City, and Oakland, Calif.

About half of the projected \$3 million cost of the three-year Baltimore program will be borne by the school district and local philanthropies, with national foundations providing the rest, said Jonathan Schnur, a former policy adviser to President Clinton who is now the chief executive officer of the New Leaders group, based in New York City. ("**Urban Principals' Program Debuts**," Sept. 5, 2001.)

"A number of national and local leaders in the private and public sectors have united around the insight that in order to have great public schools, we need great principals," Mr. Schnur said last week. "It's critical to have people working across all kinds of lines for what is good for kids."

Part of a \$10 million grant to New Leaders from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also announced last week, will go toward the Baltimore partnership. The agreement won praise from Maryland Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley, and Baltimore schools Chief Executive Officer Bonnie Copeland, among others.

Real-World Training

New Leaders candidates are recruited and screened through extensive networks, then placed in an intensive six-week summer training program. They each shadow an

experienced principal for a year, then receive three years of on-the-job coaching when assigned to their own schools.

About 150 people have graduated from the program since it began in 2001, Mr. Schnur said. New Leaders is seeking to place 2,000 principals in schools nationwide within a decade.

Typically, program graduates matriculate through a local university that partners with New Leaders, Mr. Schnur said. The Maryland arrangement is unusual because the state has essentially approved New Leaders as the provider of principal training, rewarding completion with full certification.

“This is very groundbreaking for us,” said Nancy S. Grasmick, Maryland’s state superintendent of schools. “This is the first time we’ve allowed an entity other than higher education to grant all of the requirements for certification.”

Ms. Grasmick said she was willing to cement the partnership because of the rigorous nature of New Leaders’ training, and the level of cooperation and oversight she was able to secure from top Baltimore officials. She said she envisions similar agreements with other districts in Maryland.

Frederick M. Hess, the director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank, welcomed the Maryland partnership as a way to open up innovative routes to principal training. For a successful outcome in such arrangements, Mr. Hess said, states must evaluate potential training partners sufficiently, and exercise enough oversight, to ensure high-quality training.

Vol. 24, Issue 25, Page 3

FROM THE ARCHIVES

“Tackling an Impossible Job,” September 15, 2004.

“Major Study to Identify What Good Leaders Do Right,” September 8, 2004.

“Debate Heating Up On How to Lure Top-Notch Principals,” June 4, 2003.

“D.C. Program Promises Principals Freedom,” February 12, 2003.

“Institute to Help Principals Meet New Challenges,” January 8, 2003.

“Novice Principals Put Huge Strain on N.Y.C. Schools,” May 29, 2002.

“Urban Principals' Program Debuts,” September 5, 2001.

“Nonprofit Group Aims To Groom New Breed of Leaders,” September 20, 2000.

For background, previous stories, and Web links, read **Leadership**.