



# A License to Lead?

*A New Leadership Agenda  
for America's Schools*

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Progressive Policy Institute  
21st Century Schools Project

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# Preface

Every day across this country thousands of tireless school leaders work against daunting obstacles to help educate our nation's youth. While we ask our educational leaders, particularly public school superintendents and principals, to engage in an enormous and complex challenge, we pay very little attention to their recruitment, training, and support. In fact, while considerable attention is rightly paid to training and development for teachers, the need for and nature of training for educational leaders is a forgotten part of the equation.

As education scholar Frederick M. Hess lays out in this report, this situation is in part self-inflicted by the profession and the result of a too-often change-averse culture in education. However, Hess also shows that inattention by policymakers to serious questions about the nature of leadership positions in our public schools, the skills and knowledge they demand, and how best to recruit, train, and retain talented people for educational leadership roles greatly exacerbates these problems.

This paper provides an analytical framework and comprehensive direction for reform to help policymakers design specific solutions. Hess rejects simplistic reforms such as merely expecting "celebrity" nontraditional candidates to meet the need for more school leaders, but also makes clear that many current approaches are far from sufficient to meet the challenges at hand and, in some cases, work at cross purposes with efforts to improve achievement. Just as Hess rejects one-dimensional solutions, readers of this nuanced paper must likewise resist the temptation to ascribe to it only the things they most like or dislike about Hess' ideas.

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The 21st Century Schools Project at the Progressive Policy Institute works to develop education policy and foster innovation to ensure that America's public schools are an engine of equal opportunity in the knowledge economy. Through research, publications and articles, and work with policymakers and practitioners, the Project supports initiatives to strengthen accountability, increase equity, improve teacher quality, and expand choice and innovation within public education.

The goals of the 21st Century Schools Project are a natural extension of the mission of the Progressive Policy Institute, which is to define and promote a new progressive politics for the 21st century. PPI's core philosophy stems from the belief that America is ill-served by an obsolete left-right debate that is out of step with the powerful forces reshaping our society and economy. PPI believes in adapting the progressive tradition in American politics to the realities of the Information Age by moving beyond the liberal impulse to defend the bureaucratic status quo and the conservative bid to dismantle government. More information on PPI is available at [www.ppionline.org](http://www.ppionline.org).

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January 2003

## ***A License to Lead?***

### ***A New Leadership Agenda for America's Schools***

*"It is time for a new generation of leadership, to cope with new problems and new opportunities. For there is a new world to be won."*

*—John F. Kennedy, July 4, 1960*

**A**s the nation's schools struggle to meet the needs of ill-served children, rise to the challenge of the No Child Left Behind Act, and adjust to a world of accountability and growing competition, educational leaders face unprecedented challenges. Yet we retain a system of recruitment, preparation, and induction that does not recruit the leaders we need, does not prepare them for their positions, does not reward them on par with their responsibilities, and locks out candidates with vital knowledge and experience.

American schools suffer from a lack of effective leaders and sensible leadership models at both the school and the district levels.<sup>1</sup> In 2002, Paul Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), said, "The pool of good [superintendent] candidates is shallow. Five years ago, the pool was fairly shallow, and I thought it was as bad as it could get. I was not nearly pessimistic enough. It's gotten worse."<sup>2</sup> A recent national survey of superintendents found that fewer than 40 percent were happy with their principals' ability to make tough decisions, delegate responsibility to staff, involve teachers in developing policies and priorities, or spend money efficiently. When filling a principal position, 60 percent of superintendents agreed they have had to "take what you can get."<sup>3</sup> Concerns about rickety recruitment systems and leadership quality are coupled with shortages in many states.<sup>4</sup> The problem, however, is not a lack of warm bodies; it is a need for individuals with the skills, training, and knowledge to lead 21st century schools and school systems.

Today, 47 states license principals and 43 license superintendents before deeming them eligible to apply for a position. These states have mandated costly and onerous preparation regimens for which even an exhaustive search can

uncover no evidence documenting their contribution to improved student learning.<sup>5</sup> Typically, principal licensure requires three or more years of K-12 teaching experience, completion of an approved degree program in educational administration, and an internship. In several states, candidates are also required to pass the State Leaders Licensure Assessment, an exam designed to ensure they hold professionally sanctioned values and attitudes. Superintendent licensure involves similar requirements, though states are often more lenient about how candidates fulfill them. In theory, most states offer alternative licensure routes or are able to issue waivers, but—aside from a handful of high-profile superintendencies—these are rarely used in practice.

Current reform efforts largely fall into one of two opposing camps: raising barriers to entry or recruiting a smattering of high-profile "superstar leaders" from careers outside of education. However, neither approach addresses the long-term challenge of deepening the talent pool, enhancing accountability, and providing sustained support to talented practitioners in the field and to those who would join them.

In the world of 21st century schooling, leaders must be able to leverage accountability and revolutionary technology, devise performance-based evaluation systems, reengineer outdated management structures, recruit and cultivate nontraditional staff, drive decisions with data, build professional cultures, and ensure that every child is served. It is not clear that teaching experience or educational administration coursework prepares candidates for these challenges. On the whole, traditional administrators have fared poorly in recent decades, even as private sector and nonprofit managers have made great strides in addressing similar tasks.

Answering the educational leadership crisis requires reform that will attract and develop leaders equal to the challenge. In lieu of the existing regimen of restrictions and regulations—one punctured by occasional and awkward loopholes—it is time to adopt a straightforward three-point standard. Leadership candidates ought to be required to:

- ▶ hold a B.A. or B.S. degree from an accredited college or university and pass a rigorous criminal background check;
- ▶ demonstrate to the potential employer experience sufficient to exhibit essential knowledge, temperament, and skills for the position;<sup>6</sup> and
- ▶ demonstrate mastery of essential technical knowledge and skills, to the extent that policymakers can pinpoint and agree on concrete and identifiable skills without personal command of which an administrator is incapable of effective leadership (in areas of education law, special education, etc.).

Appropriately, points two and three will have different implications for school-level and district-level leadership. However, while the principalship of a small school and the superintendency of a large district pose fundamentally different challenges, the framework for finding and cultivating quality leaders remains consistent.

These changes must happen in tandem with a New Leadership Agenda to:

- ▶ reconceptualize leadership so that we no longer imagine that each leader must embody the entire range of knowledge and skills the organization requires;
- ▶ produce performance-oriented criteria for recruiting and hiring leaders;
- ▶ develop reliable systems to monitor leadership performance and hold leaders accountable; and
- ▶ provide support systems and ongoing professional development.

These steps are similar to teacher licensure reforms that I and others have previously proposed to address teacher quality and shortage concerns. In the case of education leadership, however, these steps alone are not enough. In the case of teachers, the basic challenge is providing a competent, self-sufficient professional to every classroom in the nation. Because practitioners generally operate independently in self-contained classrooms, it is appropriate to use an assessment that ensures each candidate has mastered essential knowledge. And teachers are charged with clear responsibilities that can be readily assessed through student outcomes. Leaders, on the other hand, operate as part of a leadership team and have more amorphous responsibilities. Because leadership roles need not be fixed in the way that teaching roles are, it is rarely necessary that each administrator embody a particular skill or piece of knowledge—only that members of a leadership team together, *as a team*, possess requisite skills and knowledge. Whereas concern for teacher quality implies that each professional must be an island of competence, efforts to promote quality leadership are bound by no such constraint.

This New Leadership Agenda would benefit both school leaders and students. Greater competition would force school systems to pay a fair rate for managerial talent and create new opportunities for educational leaders to command the kind of professional support and respect enjoyed by their counterparts in other sectors.

Additionally, the New Leadership Agenda would increase flexibility and open doors for new approaches to distributing educational leadership. Richard Elmore of the Harvard Graduate School of Education points out that leadership can be “distributed” throughout schools and systems in ways that tap into diverse expertise.<sup>7</sup> However, that kind of flexible thinking is too often stunted by the regulations and restrictions of current arrangements. Central to reforming licensure is the need to rethink the roles of administrators more generally. Administrators who have only a limited ability to shape their staffs, to reward and sanction personnel, or to allocate resources are constrained in their ability to serve their students and cannot be held fully responsible for organizational outcomes. Truly professionalizing educational leadership requires granting them the same

tools and responsibilities enjoyed by leaders in other vital fields. Finally, increased flexibility in job descriptions and authority must be accompanied by increased flexibility in compensation, making it easier to reward and retain quality leaders.<sup>8</sup>

This agenda is not an attack on educational leadership—it is a commitment to professionalize it. The first to benefit from these changes will be the tens of thousands of talented and hard-working principals and superintendents grown frustrated with narrow job descriptions, an inability to assemble a coherent management team, a lack of support and respect, and ambiguous expectations. Moreover, urging that we overhaul state licensure systems is not meant to suggest that all or even most districts must immediately hire nontraditional candidates or restructure leadership. Districts where existing arrangements are working should feel no compulsion to change. Instead, rather than mandate change, the New Leadership Agenda permits new approaches in those schools and school systems that want more flexibility to achieve their educational goals.

This paper proceeds in two parts. First, it analyzes the current licensure system, including its history, costs, and the presumptions it rests on. The shortcomings of current reform strategies, such as seeking only nontraditional candidates or further raising the bar to licensure, are also discussed in this section. The second part describes the New Leadership Agenda and the related challenges and opportunities in greater detail.

## ***Closing the Door to Talent***

In any debate over the desirability of licensure, the burden of proof rests squarely upon those who would require licensing. Why? Remember that licensure *prohibits* those who don't meet the guidelines from applying for work. This only makes sense if we are certain that someone who has not taught and has not completed an educational administration program *cannot* be an effective principal or superintendent. If we are not certain, if we just believe that former teachers will *generally* make better leaders, then

licensure is neither necessary nor desirable. It is not necessary because, if former teachers and graduates of educational administration programs are more qualified, they will be hired ahead of other candidates. Licensure is not desirable because, unless we believe that nontra-

ditional candidates *cannot* be effective, there will be times when the best candidate is not licensed—and the districts will be barred from hiring her.

Even were nontraditional candidates uniformly unqualified, licensure would only be necessary if we assumed that districts were unable to judge candidate quality or to resist the temptation to hire incompetent rather than qualified personnel. To make the point even more strongly, leadership licensure is really only necessary if one presumes that districts will systematically *prefer* the incompetent or that the costs of hiring the wrong leader are likely to be catastrophic. Otherwise, if districts do seek competence, which seems increasingly likely in the world of modern accountability, they can be expected to hire more-skilled and better-prepared candidates and to quickly rectify any serious miscues.

Existing licensure arrangements presume that educational leadership is so unique that experience which does not include K-12 teaching and specialized coursework is irrelevant. This seems curious, as leadership in education and elsewhere typically entails mentoring, monitoring organizational performance, taking responsibility for facilities and payrolls, managing crises, responding to public concerns, and so on. This list sounds so familiar because the demands of leadership are broadly consistent across time and place.<sup>9</sup>

While establishing such impassable barriers to school-level leadership for those who have not taught in K-12 schools, we recruit an enormous percentage of principals and superintendents from the ranks of the nation's gym teachers. In 1999-2000, 34.1 percent of the nation's principals had been coaches or athletic directors.<sup>10</sup> Despite the rhetoric about the delicacy of "instructional leadership," in most states, all a high school gym teacher must do to become an elementary principal is to complete a series of night

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school courses and a desultory internship. What uniquely equips a high school coach, rather than a director of an inner-city tutoring program or former library director, to lead an urban elementary school? It is particularly unclear when we consider that crucial tasks likely include forging community partnerships and monitoring performance goals—roles in which the former teacher enjoys no obvious advantage.

Meanwhile, our reliance on former teachers and graduates of schools of education has fostered an educational leadership culture that is too-often hostile to accountability, ill-suited to manage by objective, and ill-equipped to implement new technologies or use them as management tools. Most troubling, entrenched resistance to the precepts of accountability and reluctance to be held accountable for student learning exists among leaders. Forty-eight percent of principals surveyed in 2001 thought it a “bad idea” to “hold principals accountable for student standardized test scores at the building level” and just 34 percent considered it a “good idea.”<sup>11</sup> We need leaders who welcome responsibility for student learning, whether they came from the classroom or not.

Current educational administrators are not trained or experienced in using outcome measures to manage in new and more effective ways. I have noted previously that, although accountability systems make possible more flexible management, “scant evidence exists that administrators are...[using accountability] as a managerial tool, instead demanding that teachers generate extensive paper trails...[and] scrupulously follow standardized curricular guides.”<sup>12</sup>

### ***The Nature of Leadership***

Leadership is both art and skill. It entails both the prosaic skills of managing routine processes and the dynamic task of leading individuals through technological, organizational, and cultural change. The managerial role emphasizes planning and budgeting, organizing, and staffing, while the leadership role requires the ability to set an organization’s direction and then align, moti-

vate, and inspire. These two sets of skills are distinct, can be cultivated in very different ways, and may be found in different kinds of individuals.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond that, there is tremendous ambiguity as to what good leadership requires. In his 1977 classic book, *Leadership*, James MacGregor Burns observed, “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.”<sup>14</sup> Warren Bennis, author of 27 books on leadership, explained in 2002, “I don’t think [leadership] is yet a ‘field’ in the pure sense. There’s something like 276 defi-

nitions of leadership. You can’t say that there is a paradigm, any agreed-upon set of factors, that is generally accepted.”<sup>15</sup>

Students of leadership emphasize three kinds of relevant skills: technical, conceptual, and human. Technical skills are the knowledge and tools that a leader in a given role needs to employ—ranging from budget management to assembling curricula. Conceptual skills refer to the ability to formulate and communicate a vision. Human skills are those needed to establish expectations and then mentor, lead, inspire, and discipline subordinates so that they achieve them. While each of the three strands poses particular challenges for efforts to identify and train future leaders, what is striking is how closely these conventional leadership skills map onto those we seek for educational leaders.

Experts in educational administration dismiss the broad body of work on leadership and offer their own formulations. Prominent thinkers on educational leadership, such as Thomas Sergiovanni in *Leadership for the Schoolhouse*, argue that “corporate” models of leadership cannot work in education and that, “We [must] accept the reality that leadership for the schoolhouse should be different, and...we [need to] begin to invent our own practice.”<sup>16</sup> Such simple-minded dichotomies are mistaken. There is neither one style of “corporate leadership,” nor a unique “educational leadership.” Rather, given that some schools or districts need managers, some need leaders, and because it is difficult to draw hard and fast distinctions between these, the sensible course is to opt for flexibility whenever feasible.

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## Who Should Lead?

Let us look for a moment at a leadership challenge in a very different context. In the early 1990s, former industrial titan IBM had fallen on hard times. The company was losing billions of dollars a year, had cut manufacturing capacity by 40 percent and its workforce by one-quarter, and was looking for a new CEO.

Observers wondering if the lumbering enterprise could survive were aghast when the board recruited as CEO an executive without technology experience. Critics declared that the candidate, a veteran of the food and tobacco industries, would be ineffective and starting at “a huge disadvantage...[because] the computer business was like no other...[it] moved at a faster pace than other industries; competition came from...fanatics who thrived in the often quirky and murky world of digital chaos [and]...[t]he very best leaders in the industry possessed both management and technical skills.”<sup>17</sup> The candidate, Lou Gerstner, CEO of RJR Nabisco, was thought to be desperately unprepared.

By the late 1990s, IBM was again a technological innovator, feared competitor, and profitable entity. Gerstner was hailed for delivering one of the most impressive managerial turns of the era. Might another leader, especially one with more experience in technology, have done better? Sure. Were the concerns about Gerstner’s lack of experience valid? Absolutely. However, overlooking him based on a pinched reading of his experience would have been a mistake. The larger lesson is that Gerstner provided what IBM’s employees, investors, and customers needed: a CEO “who could penetrate the corporate culture and change the company’s insular way of thinking and operating.”<sup>18</sup> Gerstner was that man.

A similar case was that of Meg Whitman, a brand manager at consumer products giant Procter & Gamble, who was hired in 1998 to lead Internet auctioneer eBay.com. Despite widespread initial doubts that Whitman’s lack of familiarity with the Internet or the New Economy would hold her back, her marketing experience proved invaluable as she

steered eBay through the dot-com boom and the aftermath of the tech wreck.<sup>19</sup> Gerstner and Whitman are hardly unique, or even unusual, cases.

What is the lesson? Of course, sector-specific experience is generally advantageous. The question is whether schools or school districts—unlike IBM, eBay.com, the Red Cross, or the local YMCA—should seek leaders only among those who have made a career in the field and completed a specified sequence of formal training.

Before returning to education, let us briefly consider a very different kind of public organization that also wrestles with leadership preparation: the U.S. armed forces. After all, while educators hold the fate of children in their hands, nowhere are the consequences of leadership failure as devastating as on the battlefield, where an officer’s incompetence can result in the deaths of those entrusted to his care.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, the need to screen out the ill-suited and ensure essential mastery is at least as great as in public education. Moreover, the U.S. Army is hailed as perhaps the most cohesive, equitable, diverse, and efficient public institutions in our country. So how do the U.S. Army, for instance, manage this task—and what lessons might we draw?

Recognizing that it never has enough good leaders, the armed forces provides an array of avenues by which individuals can enter its ranks. Aspirants can apply to West Point out of high school, enlist and then seek promotion, enroll in ROTC while in college, or apply to Officer Candidate School (OCS) from outside the military.

The West Point model—extensively training hand-picked aspirants from an early age—makes evident sense, as does promoting competent veterans. The most interesting example, however, is OCS. The U.S. Army devoted decades of research to ensuring that it only entrusts combatants to prepared leaders. How long does that training take? The answer may surprise. For those who enter OCS and demonstrate the required competencies, it is possible for individuals with no previous military experience to be in the field leading troops after as little as 40 weeks.

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On the basis of decades of training, research, and retooling, the Army determined that nine weeks of basic training, 14 weeks of OCS, and as little as four months of specialized preparation suffice to teach all the leadership and technical expertise essential for combat leadership.<sup>21</sup>

In an ideal world, the Army would train OCS personnel, or even West Point cadets, for another two to three years. However, the Army recognizes that it cannot afford arbitrary barriers that might cost more in talent than they return in preparation. So after as little as nine months of training, the U.S. Army permits individuals with no prior military experience to lead soldiers into combat. However, it provides substantial ongoing training and support to its officer corps. For the leaders of our public schools, these opportunities for support and professional growth are too often missing. Despite considerable attention to the professional development needs of teachers, such opportunities for principals and superintendents are almost non-existent.

### *How Did We Get Here?*

It was in the first years of the 20th century that the superintendency first grew to include elements of business management as well as educational oversight. The modern principalship emerged a bit later, as reformers sought solace in the “scientific” management of schools. Reformers sought to centralize control of community schools under professionally trained educators who would then operate in accord with their training, free from political interference.

The field of educational administration was launched by Elwood Cubberley in the 1920s. From the beginning, the field was marked by a curious disconnect—administrators expressed a preference for spending time on instructional leadership, the area to which they devoted the least time.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the new science of education management failed to bear fruit, taking root in professional educational schools that would turn away from research in favor of philosophizing.

In the 1970s, critics started to attack principals and superintendents as out of step with the

public and unconcerned with school quality.<sup>23</sup> Training was criticized for deterring the nation’s educators from entering administration, enshrining embarrassingly low standards, and featuring too many weak programs that graduated too

many unprepared administrators.<sup>24</sup> The criticisms prompted a wave of state efforts to boost licensure requirements that were later deemed largely ineffective.

By the 1980s, research on “effective schools” had pro-

duced widespread attention to the importance of principals and had given birth to the notion of “instructional leadership”—an umbrella term (or, in the educational parlance, a “multidimensional construct”<sup>25</sup>) that referred to school leaders who support a culture focused on the core business of teaching and learning, provide professional development, use data to evaluate performance, and so on. Lost amidst the jargon was any recognition that the qualities of instructional leadership, when depicted in a coherent fashion, were largely interchangeable with the precepts of effective management and leadership more generally.<sup>26</sup>

In 1987, ongoing concerns about educational leadership prompted the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) to form a blue-ribbon panel to address concerns about school leadership. The National Council on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEE) recommended potentially promising reforms, including reducing the number of preparation programs, partnering universities with schools, increasing professional development, and reforming licensure standards.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the push for change was captured by client groups such as professional administrators and schools of education that used the reform process to increase licensure barriers and strengthen the status quo.

In 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which included the major school administration client groups, developed the “Standards for School Leaders.”<sup>28</sup> By 2002, the ISLLC standards had been incorporated into policy by some 35 states and the Educational

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Testing Service (ETS) had developed the complementary School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA).<sup>29</sup> Today, the ISLLC shrouds banalities and ideology in the guise of standards, embedding its norms in a test unanchored by research or empirical knowledge. More on this later.

## The Licensure Presumption

Licensure is a crude device, one best suited to making sure that the clearly incompetent do not prey upon an uninformed public. It is

especially well suited to professions like medicine or psychology, where practitioners are often independent, not subject to public scrutiny, and whose quality of work is difficult for clients or the public to gauge. Educational leaders, on the other hand, work in an extremely visible context, for larger organizations, and can now be monitored on the basis of a wealth of readily available data.

Effective licensure requires clear standards of competence against which aspirants can be measured to determine the adequacy of skills and preparation. If we agree that lawyers need to know a specified body of law or civil engineers need to know specific scientific principles, it is relatively simple to judge whether candidates are competent. Where such standards do not exist, we appropriately hesitate to prohibit someone from practicing a profession. This is not because we think incompetence acceptable, but because we recognize licensing is an ineffective and potentially pernicious way to control quality. Licensing without concrete benchmarks leads to public officials or designated gatekeepers making subjective decisions about who may pursue a given career. We are properly fearful of such an outcome.

Even in professions with clear knowledge-based benchmarks for certification, as in law or medicine, licensure is primarily useful as a way to establish minimal competence. A medical or law license is not imagined to ensure competence in ambiguous, subtle skills like comforting a patient or swaying a jury—skills analogous to the interpersonal relations at the heart of leadership. Few would choose a doctor or attorney solely on the basis of a test score without also considering rec-

ommendations, experience, manner, and methods. However, licensing on such traits is difficult, due to disagreement about what they entail or how they should be assessed.

The problem with leadership licensure is that management and leadership are contextual and

adaptive.<sup>30</sup> As William Rothschild has observed in *Financial Executive*, although “we have been taught to believe that there is one type of leader for all situations...research makes clear that there are a variety of leadership types and the key is to have the right leaders for the

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right situation.”<sup>31</sup>

Asking licensure to bar unsuitable leaders disregards much of what we know about leadership. When techniques and approaches are variable, standardized licensure is a poor mechanism of quality control. This is why we cannot imagine licensing business or political leaders and why the general business credential (the MBA) is not a license, but a credential that employers value as they see fit.

The best public administration and business programs routinely prepare people for a host of public and private sector positions and focus on skills and knowledge bases rather than on narrow preparation. On the other hand, education leadership programs teach the same kinds of classes—in finance, facilities, personnel management, political leadership, and so on—but apply them narrowly and prescriptively to schooling.<sup>32</sup> In a world of accountability, research-based instruction, more flexible compensation, entrepreneurial opportunities, site-based budgeting, and fast-evolving technology, educational leaders need to draw upon nontraditional skills. The newness of these challenges suggests a role for leaders with competencies unfamiliar to those in the conventional orbit of educational administration but second nature to those engaged in other kinds of management training or practice.

In fields ranging from law to engineering to finance, managers and executives emerge in various ways and along varied paths. Even in day care and higher education, where we require formal credentials for entry into the profession, we

do not require additional credentials to pursue leadership positions. Some individuals in these fields obtain formal leadership training, but many do not. In education, we have too long chosen to rely upon a bureaucratic and clumsy system that substitutes credentialing for judgment and an emphasis on procedure for one on performance.

### ***The Four Faulty Assumptions of Administrative Licensure***

Four assumptions underlie the existing approach to licensure. The first of these is that one has to have taught in order to be an effective educational leader. The second is that the preparation one receives in the course of meeting licensure requirements is so critical that it is impossible for an uncertified applicant to fulfill the requirements of the position. The third is that licensure provides quality control. The fourth is that licensure helps to make educational leadership more “professional” and thereby bolsters its allure and rewards. Each of these assumptions is fundamentally flawed.

#### ***Only Former Teachers Can Lead***

Especially at the school leadership level, licensure presumes that *only* former teachers can possibly be effective leaders. Let us begin by noting the inconvenient fact that in recent years, a number of non-teachers have performed competently as district superintendents or charter school principals.

The notion that only former teachers can lead teachers begins with the claim that only a former teacher can provide “instructional leadership.” As defined above, however, when “instructional leadership” consists primarily of generic skills that any effective leader ought to possess. Moreover, research has found that principals and superintendents spend little or no time on the curricular or pedagogical components that might plausibly be regarded as education-specific. Few principals spend even one-quarter of their time on instructional questions and those in low-performing

schools spend almost none.<sup>33</sup> Rather, the tasks principals deem most demanding have less to do with classroom instruction than with more conventional managerial challenges like terminating unfit employees, addressing employee grievances, handling an extended work day, and balancing the demands of job and family.<sup>34</sup>

Even were we to restructure leadership so that principals spent more time on instructional issues, the belief that principals (though perhaps not superintendents) need to have taught rests on two articles of faith: only former teachers can monitor classroom personnel, and only those who have taught can mentor teachers and support instructional improvement. Both claims are of dubious merit. The first may have been plausible when we did not collect outcome data on teachers, and administrators had little capacity to judge teacher effectiveness except by observing the occasional class and monitoring parental complaints. Today, however, we have a wealth of information on achievement, and entrepreneurial managers are finding ways to gather more data on more facets of teacher performance. In this new world, the always-minimal value of sitting in the back of a teacher’s classroom two or three times a year has diminished even further, while the value of understanding and applying data is at a premium.

The claim that only former teachers can mentor is equally problematic. In those schools or systems where no one else is available to work with teachers on curricular or instructional issues, it is obviously essential that a school or system leader be willing and able to play this role. Such situations are quite rare, however. Typically, principals and superintendents head up teams of administrators and/or senior faculty. These teams include a variety of individuals with different styles and strengths, providing a skilled leader with the ability to match faculty with appropriate mentors. An administrator who builds a team, identifies faculty needs, and then deploys her personnel accordingly can provide more thorough and expert assistance than a solitary leader trying to coach in her spare time and drawing upon only her own knowledge.

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Schools are among many institutions that help raise and educate children and share many traits with tutoring programs, counseling programs, youth clubs, preschools, and so on. While good educational leaders must be committed to serving children, it is not clear that only teachers have the requisite passion. As one nationally acclaimed former superintendent observed, “Good principals have to be passionate about kids and be committed to the idea that all children can learn. But this says nothing about whether they need to have taught—one of our problems is that too many classroom teachers don’t really believe that all children can learn.” While many teachers do have the requisite commitment, are we so blessed that we can turn away non-teachers who have already proven their mettle by launching or leading organizations committed to helping every child learn?

Doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other professionals routinely work in public and private organizations led by individuals from other fields. We are willing to accept that doctors can work for a World Health Organization task force led by an economist, attorneys for a federal agency led by a former accountant, engineers for a corporate unit headed by a marketing executive, yet presume that teachers alone among professionals are so iconoclastic or fragile that they can only work for one of their own?

Tellingly, we do not presume that architects need to have started as bricklayers, senators as civil servants, airline executives as pilots or baggage handlers, or hospital administrators as doctors. Rightly, we understand that different roles may require different talents and training, that competence in one role may not translate to another, and that narrow selection criteria stifle creative thinking, shrink the talent pool, and require us to push effective employees into jobs which may not play to their strengths. A similar open-mindedness regarding education would serve us well.

### *Licensure Preparation Is Essential*

Contradicting the assertion that mandated preparation equips candidates with skills or habits of mind essential for educational leadership, there is no evidence—and little reason to believe—that the existing regimen does so. Educational administration programs have little expertise in accountability, technology, or data-driven management, and at times faculty even express

hostility toward these tools themselves. Gerald Tirozzi, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, declared, “The training candidates receive from administrator preparation programs is often inadequate, and ongoing professional development is episodic at best.”<sup>35</sup>

Martha McCarthy, chancellor professor of education at Indiana University, observed, “The bad news is that we do not have data linking [reforms in administrator preparation] to our asserted purpose of producing capable leaders. ... Studies are not currently available to counter the allegations that university preparation for school leaders is inadequate or perhaps even wrongheaded. ... Virtually no studies track changes in leadership preparation to success as a school leader, much less to student performance in the schools they lead.”<sup>36</sup>

Richard Andrews, dean of the school of education at the University of Missouri, and Margaret Grogan, professor, surveyed leadership preparation in 2002 and concluded, “Many essential skills and much important knowledge cannot be delivered by a traditional university-based program.”<sup>37</sup> In their 2002 book, *The Principal Challenge*, Marc Tucker, president of the National Center for Education and the Economy, and Judy Coddling conclude that administration preparation programs are incoherent, ask little of students, and provide weak substantive training.<sup>38</sup>

While licensure proponents argue that leadership challenges necessitate training in pedagogy or curriculum, it is not clear that trainees receive even this preparation from university faculty often long removed from practice. For example, a national survey of 1,400 middle school principals found that more than one-third had taken no coursework on middle school educational practices and that over 70 percent had taken two courses or less.<sup>39</sup>

There is a legitimate concern that leaders be sensitive to the cultural needs of the organizations they lead. However, administrative preparation today devotes little or no attention to such considerations, and even sophisticated corporate trainers have no pat answers about teaching these skills or ensuring that leaders master them. Sensitivity to organizational rhythms is a real advantage and does suggest one benefit enjoyed by former educators, but it is neither cultivated nor assured by the existing licensure regime.

*Licensure Provides Quality Control*

Unlike business schools or graduate programs in public administration, even elite educational leadership programs generally impose little quality control. James Guthrie, chairman of the educational leadership department at Vanderbilt University, and Ted Sanders, chief executive of the Education Commission of the States, lamented in 2001, "University preparation of educational administrators has fallen into a downward spiral dominated by low-prestige institutions, diploma mills, outmoded instruction and low expectations. Many...programs have virtually no entrance requirements, save the applicant's ability to pay tuition."<sup>40</sup>

Because education schools do not make available their admissions data for administration and leadership programs, it is not possible to assess institutional behavior by directly comparing these figures to those for business schools. However, comparing admissions data from business schools to that of the education schools that house the nation's top-ranked educational administration programs provides a rough idea of selectivity. Business schools of moderate reputation are consistently more selective than even top-ranked educational administration programs.<sup>41</sup> This holds despite the fact that business schools are accepting candidates for a master's degree in business administration while education administration programs are often accepting candidates for doctoral work—though it should be noted that the vast majority of principals and other administrators hold master's degrees, not doctorates.<sup>42</sup>

Salary schedules and licensure systems that require teachers to enroll in professional development, and award them pay for completing courses or degrees, mean that administrative programs frequently serve more as a mechanism to boost teacher pay and subsidize schools of education than to identify or prepare effective leaders.<sup>43</sup> Emily Feistritzer, a national authority on alternative administrative licensure who has studied the process in every state observed, "A lot of teachers take professional development

because it's subsidized by the district and they get a salary boost for the course hours or degree, so they take the classes and many get the credential. But it's not really because they want to be a principal."

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Such a system results in educational administration faculty shirking responsibility for quality control and viewing their programs largely as a service to regional teachers. As one education school dean conceded to me, "We're not

about actively weeding out candidates. We train people to lead schools...[The training] helps candidates discover whether they're suited for the work. Our schools are short on administrators as it is, so I'm not sure we want to be using professional schools to eliminate experienced teachers who want to take the next step."

*Licensure Bolsters Professionalism*

Disturbed that their field lacks the professional esteem of law or medicine, professors of educational administration argue that stricter licensure will elevate the prestige of school leaders. If licensure were the key to professional respect, however, we might expect that more would be accorded to traffic school instructors, athletic trainers, nail care professionals, and practitioners of the many other certified fields for which the public exhibits no special regard. There is nothing about licensure that necessarily raises a profession's prestige or attracts more able practitioners. The oft-cited cases of law and medicine do not offer the guidance that proponents imagine. In those fields, the public has evidence that practitioners have mastered essential knowledge—an impossible task in the case of educational leadership, where such a canon does not exist.

Educational administration is a sub-specialization of the sprawling field of leadership and management. Construing educational administration as a self-contained field has severed its links to the larger body of management knowledge and practice, and dampened the attention that the broader management community pays to education. The result is a field of educational

administration unfamiliar with and uninterested in the broader body of work on management theory and practice. For instance, one can read entire issues of *Educational Administration Quarterly* and encounter not one reference to critical theoretical or empirical scholarship on management.

The result is training that does not introduce educators to broader management networks and does not expose them to the body of thought that conventionally trained executives deem essential. Major publishers have specific lines of “educational administration” texts that number hundreds of books, though they provide nothing similar on managing pharmaceutical firms, retirement communities, or fire departments. The lack of cross-pollination leaves educational administration an intellectually flabby, doctrinaire, and lightly regarded backwater.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the leading “contribution” of educational administration scholars has been to promote a litany of education-oriented jargon that stands in for research-based knowledge while implying that educational leadership is a wholly unique endeavor.<sup>45</sup>

The sordid truth is that too often civic leaders and public officials privately express contempt for most public school administrators. If educational leaders were less isolated, they would be better able to demonstrate the rigors and demands of their roles and consequently boost the prestige of their profession. Likewise, if experienced leaders from other backgrounds could compete for educational positions, they could bear testimony to these challenges and help educational leaders earn broader respect. Little in recent years has done as much to boost respect for and attention to the urban superintendency as the influx of nontraditional leaders who routinely attest to the awesome demands of the job.

### *The Costs of the Status Quo*

Not only does licensure fail to achieve its proclaimed purposes; it entails significant costs. It dissuades potentially effective leaders, burdens those who do pursue licensure, lures unsuited people into administration, stifles diverse and innovative approaches, and undercuts meaningful professional development.

### *Potentially Effective Leaders Dissuaded*

Licensure makes it more costly and frustrating to seek educational leadership positions, making other professions relatively more attractive and dissuading potentially effective administrators. If the hurdles screened out the incompetent or ill-suited, that would be one thing. However, there is no evidence and little reason to believe that one’s willingness to decipher convoluted guidelines regarding requirements and paperwork; take lightly regarded courses during evenings, weekends, and summers; and pay tuition says much about one’s aptitude or suitability for leadership. Willingness to bear such burdens may reflect a lack of interest in teaching, a lack of attractive alternatives, or a hunger for a position of authority just as readily as a commitment to students.

While proponents of licensure argue that educational leadership positions are so challenging that nobody wants them, enormous numbers of accomplished individuals are eager to pursue positions in educational leadership. In 2002, New Leaders for New Schools had 400 applicants for 33 fellowship slots in its principal cohort; the Broad Center for Superintendents had over 1,300 inquiries and more than 200 applications for 25 slots; and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Principal Academy had 410 applicants for 20 slots.<sup>46</sup> In addition, hundreds of public charter schools have been launched and managed by non-educators and an impressive array of individuals have taken leadership roles in large urban school districts. The situation is similar in teaching, where licensure proponents claim barriers do not deter promising prospects—only to watch candidates flock to accessible non-traditional programs.<sup>47</sup>

The most talented and hardest working candidates may be the least willing to sit through poorly regarded courses or suffer procedural hurdles. In fact, an extraordinary number of high-powered entrepreneurs pursue charter school leadership positions—despite the obstacles, uncertainty, and reduced compensation—because they are unwilling to sit on the sidelines for years until permitted to seek a position in a conventional district school.

Martha McCarthy acknowledged, “The United States is somewhat unique among nations in the amount of education required for school leaders and the expense of such education.”<sup>48</sup> The

costs fall particularly heavily on those who love teaching and are hesitant to shortchange their commitment to classroom teaching. They may also fall most heavily on single parents and the less affluent. Since this pool is disproportionately African-American and Hispanic, the current system effectively undermines efforts to promote diversity in the ranks of educational leaders. Just 35 percent of principals in central cities are African-American or Hispanic, while student populations are routinely 80 percent or more minority.<sup>49</sup> Reducing barriers to entry will make it easier to promote minority candidates or recruit accomplished candidates from other walks of life.

The monetary costs to the candidates themselves are offset, in part, because many districts subsidize professional costs. However, while this may lighten the burden on candidates and deter fewer potential candidates, it does so only by redirecting resources from instructional activities and burdening taxpayers. Because *public* universities routinely charge \$250 to \$300 or more per credit hour, and typically require candidates to complete 30 or more credit hours of coursework in order to earn an education administration credential, the tuition cost alone of a typical licensure program amounts to \$9,000 or more.<sup>50</sup> This tally does not include the costs of fees, books, transportation, time off from work, or any other related costs. With about 15,000 master's degrees in education administration and supervision awarded each year,<sup>51</sup> candidates and districts are spending more than \$100 million a year on tuition for administrative coursework.

### *Wrong Candidates Lured*

The current system of licensure and preparation too often does not attract the candidates most likely to be effective administrators. There is little reason to suspect the qualities that lead one into teaching will necessarily translate into leadership. In fact, as was argued earlier, not only is teaching experience *not* essential to educational leadership, but the skills that characterize effective teachers may hinder managerial performance. While teachers must balance empathy and firmness in a manner appropriate to children, and while many are

attracted to the profession for its child-centered character, leadership of an adult staff may require a different temperament. Consequently, administrators are selected from a talent pool constructed without regard to aptitude for leadership and one that excludes many who may be well suited to serve.<sup>52</sup>

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Though experts in educational leadership argue that principals and superintendents—especially those in troubled venues—must be proactive risk-takers who engage in “creative insubordination,”<sup>53</sup>

research has found that “teachers tend to be reluctant risk takers.”<sup>54</sup> Careers that emphasize procedures rather than performance, allow credentials to insulate practitioners from accountability, and offer little room for entrepreneurial individuals, risk attracting candidates more concerned about security than success.<sup>55</sup> In a 2000 Public Agenda survey of teachers, just 16 percent thought requiring teachers to pass a test of subject-area knowledge would be a very effective way to improve teaching, and just 12 percent agreed that eliminating teacher tenure or linking teacher rewards and sanctions to student performance would be very effective.<sup>56</sup>

It is not much of a stretch to suggest that teachers reluctant to link rewards to student performance or to require content mastery may be ill-suited for some unpleasant but crucial managerial tasks, such as delivering negative evaluations or terminating employees. The president of the Challenger, Gray & Christmas outplacement firm has observed that firing people “is the worst nightmare ... [it] makes you feel so guilty ... You wanted the job you’re in because you are accomplishing goals, learning new things. Then you find yourself instead being the bearer of bad news to people you got to know personally.”<sup>57</sup> *Los Angeles Times* columnist Ron Brownstein has observed that, while non-educators may lack classroom experience, “[t]hey are also less tied into the dense web of understandings and accommodations that make it so difficult to change any large organization ... they don’t know why things can’t be done.”<sup>58</sup> If teaching cultivates collegial and risk-averse relationships, or fosters too great a sympathy for educators, it may leave veterans unprepared to lead and transform ineffective or reticent staffs.

## *Ideology Imposed*

Licensure systems require gatekeepers. Typically, we reduce the risks this poses to intellectual diversity and to innovative practice in one of two ways. In fields where there are established, evidence-based norms, as in medicine or accounting, instructors are disciplined by the licensing criteria. Otherwise, intellectual freedom and diverse practices are protected by the presence of sparing voices in the licensing institutions. Unfortunately, educational leadership offers neither protection.<sup>59</sup>

Through contemporary licensure systems, the state essentially endorses a doctrinaire philosophy of educational leadership motivated by a particular vision of “social justice” and “democratic community,”<sup>60</sup> and dismissive of conventional management theory. Prominent professors of educational administration argue that: students need not master factual content; accountability systems are morally problematic; high-stakes testing is a tool of racial hegemony; efforts to relax teacher certification are part of a conspiracy to undermine public education; allowing administrators to more readily terminate poor teachers is a threat to workplace democracy; and so on.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, basing licensure on anything other than demonstrated mastery of specified tasks or knowledge entails infusing the beliefs of the gatekeepers with quasi-official status.<sup>62</sup>

These reigning views often diverge sharply from those of more mainstream scholars of leadership. For instance, Ronald Heifetz and Donald Laurie argued in a classic *Harvard Business Review* article that those leaders who are most committed to their followers should not protect their employees from the external world, tell them their best is good enough, or seek to smooth over conflicts.<sup>63</sup> In an argument that would constitute heresy in any educational administration program, they suggest that responsible leaders forge tough, resilient organizations by seeking to stir anxiety; allow employees to feel the pinch of reality; demand that they surpass themselves; and force conflict to the surface.<sup>64</sup> Whether one agrees with Heifetz and Laurie is immaterial. Theirs is an important point of view, but one of many silenced by the status quo in schools of education.

The problem is not that the beliefs of leading education administration professors are hostile to standardized accountability, disciplinary leadership, and incentive-based management; after all,

such disagreements are the essence of academic freedom. The problem is that the gate-keeping function of administration programs permits these instructors to impose their ideology on all aspirants and to deter candidates who don’t share their views.

## *Alternative Models Stifled*

Establishing a few specific roles and narrowly describing job descriptions, compensation, and preconditions for employment makes it difficult to think anew about locating or harnessing leadership talent. Existing constraints limit the ability of school districts to draw upon particular sources of skill or expertise from outside the conventional structure. The evolving challenges that educational leaders face, the range of milieus in which they operate, and the varied skills they bring suggest that multiple models would be preferable to an effort to distill “one best model” of leadership. The trickle of nontraditional leaders into district leadership and charter school principalships has started to foster new models of leadership, such as the district-level role of “Chief Academic Officer” (CAO) in which a nontraditional superintendent gives a deputy the lead role on instructional issues.

Taking fuller advantage of available leadership talent requires loosening the cords of statute, practice, and culture. A 2001 study by Public Agenda reported that 54 percent of superintendents and 48 percent of school principals said that they “feel like [their] hands are tied by the way things are done in the school system” and that they “must work around the system” to get things done. In the same survey, fewer than one-third of principals or superintendents felt they had enough authority to remove ineffective teachers and staff or to reward effective ones.<sup>65</sup> The point here is not to urge any particular model of management upon schools or districts, but to create the flexibility that allows them to construct arrangements that meet their needs.

## *Meaningful Development Undercut*

Contrary to claims that licensure raises the quality of professional preparation, it has served to undercut substantive professional development. Since licensure preparation is generally pursued by practicing teachers on a part-time basis and consists primarily of clocking the req-

quisite credit hours, faculty and candidates generally work under a tacit agreement in which faculty are undemanding and candidates are complacent.

While education scholars have yet to systematically study the value of administrative preparation, scattered evidence speaks to the flaws with current programs. In a national study of 1,400 middle school princi-

pals, 52 percent reported that their university coursework was of moderate or little value and 55 percent said the same of their university field experiences.<sup>66</sup> In a market where new competitors were free to enter, that kind of record would create an opportunity for more effective training.

Professors of education Naftaly Glasman, James Cibulka, and Dianne Ashby observed in *Educational Administration Quarterly*, "The market for educational leadership programs has not been one that historically has emphasized rigor...The demand for high-quality programs from potential entrants has been relatively weak. Many of those who seek entrance to leadership programs gravitate toward those programs based on convenience and ease of completion, with quality of program hardly a leading criterion."<sup>67</sup>

The result is a cottage industry of desultory "professional development." David Green, vice president for research and knowledge management at the New American Schools explains, "Administrators are initially reluctant to participate [in new programs] because they're resigned to inadequate professional development. The dissatisfaction with what exists is very high." District officials and lower-level administrators regard professional development primarily as a procedural obligation.<sup>68</sup>

## **Remedies We Have Tried**

For decades, we muddled through with the status quo, and it even made a certain kind of sense. Licensure is most useful when professionals are not being held accountable on the basis of results or when they face little public scrutiny. Similarly,

if the only managerial lever an administrator can pull is a plaintive appeal to faculty camaraderie, the bond forged from shared classroom experience is important.

Fortunately, public education has changed in recent years. We have taken great strides to clarify outcomes, provide more management tools, and develop more flexible schools and districts.<sup>69</sup> The kinds of rote preparation and reliance on

former teachers that may have made some sense under the old order are increasingly anachronistic today.

To date, reformers have emphasized two approaches in trying to meet the leadership challenge. The educational leadership community has sought to raise professional standards in an effort to ensure quality. Meanwhile, frustrated reformers have turned to recruiting non-educators famous for their leadership skills to guide urban reform efforts. Neither of these approaches offers much in the way of a long-term solution to the fundamental problems.

### ***Raising the Licensure Bar***

The educational leadership community has endorsed the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's (ISLLC) push for "standards." Championed by ISLLC client groups, the standards assess individual beliefs rather than knowledge or skills. The six standards assert that school administrators should "promote student success" by doing things like "facilitating ... a vision of learning," "collaborating ... with community members," and "influencing the larger political, ... legal, and cultural context."<sup>70</sup> These sentiments are pleasing primarily to those who embrace the ISLLC's notions of "diversity," endorse constructivist pedagogy, and believe school leaders ought to wield political and legal levers to advance social justice. Nonetheless, they prove highly troubling in practice.

Because these reformers have been unable or unwilling to identify with any specificity the essential skills or knowledge required for effective leadership, their efforts amount to an extensive system of documentation and of "disposition correction." The result is a gradual

move toward increasingly exhausting and expensive processes that do little to concretely establish leadership qualifications, but do a great deal to advance certain points of view.

The problems are made clear by ISLLC School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), which several states now use to assess the competence of principal candidates.<sup>71</sup> While the exam's designers claim that it is "grounded in research,"<sup>72</sup> the exam does not assess legal, budgetary, management, research, curricular, or pedagogical knowledge but fidelity to ISLLC values. As the ISLLC's chairman, Ohio State University professor Joseph Murphy, concedes, "[The exam] is a statement of values about where the profession should be."<sup>73</sup>

Of the four sample situations and 25 sample questions in the online SLLA preparation materials, not one asks a candidate to exhibit an understanding of specific scholarly research, empirical evidence, legal statute, or budgetary concepts. Moreover, the "right" answers to these questions make clear how the ISLLC translates its norms into practice. Although "a belief that all children can learn" might be manifested through an emphasis on measured academic performance rather than "celebrating differences," the "correct" SLLA answers make it clear that standards and an emphasis on shared norms are regarded as inconsistent with the ISLLC criteria.

One of three sample vignettes asks candidates to determine what is "in the best interest of the particular student" in the following case: A high school senior, failing a class that he does not need to graduate, asks the principal to be allowed to drop the class. The principal allows the student to drop the class although it is "contrary to school policy." Test-takers are asked to assess the principal's action and whether it served the student's "best interest." Those who regard such questions as fraught with complexity might be surprised to learn that there are "right" and "wrong" answers here—responses endorsing the principal's decision earn a perfect score while test-takers are marked down for suggesting it is essential to teach children the importance of rules and hard work.<sup>74</sup>

Right now, in the states requiring it, the SLLA is unproblematic only because passing scores are low.<sup>75</sup> Should the test become a significant impediment to entry, or be linked to

bonuses or other benefits, its bias and disdain for substantive knowledge would be cause for concern. There are other ongoing efforts to develop standards for leadership but, as with teacher preparation, the criteria purported to be outcome-based often rely heavily on doctrinaire determinations governing process.<sup>76</sup>

### *Recruiting "Superstars" from Outside*

There is nothing wrong, per se, with pursuing high-profile, nontraditional superintendents. Such hires have brought into education a number of promising executives, challenged shopworn assumptions, and produced effective new leadership strategies. Current searches for nontraditional leaders, however, too often devolve into problematic searches for "white knights." Harvard business professor Rakesh Khurana points out in *Searching for a Corporate Savior* that pinning an organization's hopes to a high-profile savior can backfire by stirring employee resentment and distracting attention from fundamental problems.<sup>77</sup>

Most current nontraditional superintendents were hired not on the basis of a reasoned assessment of their strengths and skills, but because they were thought forceful and accomplished individuals. The fascination with leadership that can be readily transferred from one field to the next has sometimes been shockingly simplistic, as with the presumption that generals would make good superintendents because they run taut organizations, or that attorneys would because they are familiar with law and politics.<sup>78</sup>

Nontraditional recruiting can repeat the worst excesses of "celebrity CEO" hiring by the private sector. When businesses are doing poorly, directors often seek to bring in a white knight and focus on candidates with outsized reputations. This produces a thin, hard-to-recruit pool of individuals not necessarily suited for the task at hand.<sup>79</sup> Important skills may not be attached to sexy résumés, and seeking out only glamorous, nontraditional leaders narrows the nontraditional pipeline to a trickle.<sup>80</sup>

American education does not just need a couple dozen superintendents swimming against the tide, but tens of thousands of competent superintendents, principals, and administrators working in tandem. We do not need a

few great “leaders,” but a river of skilled, thoughtful, and talented individuals flowing through our schools and districts. The problem with today’s focus on nontraditional candidates is that it is not an integrated component of larger efforts to recruit thoughtfully out of an expanded candidate pool, build and support teams, and rethink management. Instead, it is too often one-shot prayers in which the district hopes that charisma and personal credibility can jumpstart improvement and alleviate the need to tackle the underlying problems.

## ***A New Leadership Agenda***

In place of both hyper-regulation and a search for nontraditional superheroes, the New Leadership Agenda proffers a flexible approach that seeks to widen the talent pipeline while recognizing the sensitive and unusual demands on educational leaders. In lieu of the restrictions and regulations—punctured by some relatively gaping loopholes—that govern educational leadership today, it recasts licensure into a three-point standard:

- ▶ hold a B.A. or B.S. degree from an accredited college or university, and pass a rigorous criminal background check;
- ▶ demonstrate to the potential employer experience sufficient to exhibit essential knowledge, temperament, and skills for the position;<sup>81</sup> and
- ▶ demonstrate mastery of essential technical knowledge and skills, to the extent that policymakers can pinpoint and agree on concrete and identifiable skills without personal command of which an administrator is incapable of effective leadership (in areas of education law, special education, etc.).

Do these criteria imply that anyone is entitled to serve as a school administrator? No. Am I suggesting that preparation is unnecessary? Absolutely not. Being permitted to seek work does not equate to the right to hold a position. Making more applicants eligible deepens the talent pool and makes employment more competitive. Training, experience, and preparation are encouraged and rewarded in a sensibly designed system.

Moreover, the criteria will apply differently to school and district administrators, just as they will apply differently in different locales. It is particularly important to note that the criteria will apply equally to all candidates, whatever their background. If the state deems it vital that every administrator master knowledge of special education law or school funding formulas, then every administrative candidate—former teacher or not, graduate of an education administration program or not—must pass.

The proposed model recognizes that certain knowledge and skills are critical, but that we do not know how to screen for these on the basis of paper barriers or résumés; that a leadership team requires a set of skills, but that we should not try to universally prescribe how those will be distributed; and that a more flexible system will support higher quality and more useful professional development.

The New Leadership Agenda will help address ongoing concerns about how we can more appropriately compensate educational leaders. In 2001, the average salary for a superintendent in the nation’s 50 largest school districts was about \$175,000 and that of principals was about \$70,000 or \$80,000.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, compensation in the private sector routinely topped \$10 million for major corporate CEOs and \$250,000 for division heads. A more competitive approach would help force school systems competing for managerial talent to pay competitive rates, boosting the rewards for high performers and augmenting their ranks.

Critics may fear that this slimmed-down system will mean the end of administrator development or preparation. Such concern is unfounded. Thousands of aspiring professionals flock to journalism schools and business schools, even though such training is not mandatory, because it may make graduates more effective and therefore more attractive to employers. Aspiring administrators would continue to attend those teacher training programs thought to add value or enhance employability.

To decouple professional development from licensing merely recognizes that licensure too often does not encourage the kind of contextual, applied, and nuanced preparation that is useful and appropriate. The current system weighs on schools of education as much as on anyone.<sup>83</sup> State regulations force training programs to abide by a bureaucratic template of rigid course requirements and practicum experiences that stifles innovative

thinking, makes launching unconventional programs a frustrating proposition, and often prevents programs from serving constituencies outside of their community. We must first put schools of education on equal footing with other new providers and free them from the heavy hand of state regulation, and then let them compete on fair terms.

Districts could contract with schools of education, state agencies, or consultants to provide training, or they could provide it internally. Changes could potentially create new rewards for veterans, broaden the impact of the best trainers and programs, create incentives to improve services and demonstrate effectiveness, encourage new quality programs, and shift the focus of training from ticket-punching to performance.

The best schools of education will thrive in this environment. As the dean of one prominent education school explained, “So long as we’re free to compete fairly, we’re happy to see the system opened up. We’ve been doing this a long time, we’ve got good people, and getting us out from under the state’s thumb will give us more freedom to do what we do well. All we ask is that you let us play by the same rules as these other new providers—don’t tell us to compete and then prevent us from doing it.”

Seizing on the promise of the New Leadership Agenda requires making the structure of leadership more flexible, reshaping recruitment efforts, enhancing accountability, and improving the quality of professional training. Let us briefly consider each in turn.

### *Flexible Leadership Structures*

Only a handful of leaders in any field are ever likely to possess more than a few of the qualities we might desire in an “ideal” leader. As Susan Moore Johnson of the Harvard Graduate School of Education has explained, “There are some individuals whose talents run more to building programs ... and others to demolishing them and making hard decisions about what to put in their place. While an effective superintendent should be strong in all those areas, it’s not common to find someone who is.”<sup>84</sup> The likelihood that we will find 15,000 superintendents who fit the bill,

much less 90,000 principals, is slim. Rather than trying to prefabricate ideal leaders, we need to build systems that seek out individuals with appropriate skills and then work to support and complement them.

Challenges and resources vary dramatically from place to place; it makes sense for leadership structure to vary as well. It is essential to think creatively about compensation and the structure of administrative and faculty positions, relaxing

the statutory and contractual distinctions that define the roles of administrators and teachers.

### *More Effective Recruitment*

Districts are not currently equipped to make reasoned choices when selecting nontraditional school leaders. Because leadership positions are poorly defined, hiring agents tend to focus upon procedural guidelines rather than performance criteria. Principal searches typically entail promoting an assistant principal currently in the district, while assistant principals tend to be hired with few criteria and little quality control. Superintendent searches tend to be run by search firms that assemble “balanced” slates heavy on known names. The results are, not surprisingly, disappointing. For instance, in 2000, 65 percent of the board presidents of Indiana districts that had recently hired a superintendent rated the quality of candidates as average or poor.<sup>85</sup>

Concerns about the inability of agents to hire skillfully are more pressing in the case of leaders than in the case of teachers, where employees are sought for a role with well-defined expectations and criteria and where the amount of hiring produces established routines and accumulated expertise. Fortunately, the hiring challenge posed by the New Leadership Agenda is straightforward and familiar. Various public and private organizations routinely set benchmarks for leadership performance, develop leadership performance expectations, identify essential skills, and develop coherent recruitment strategies. There is no need to develop “new” educational models; only to adapt proven executive identification and recruitment policies. Today, it may be too costly or time-consuming for more than a handful of

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schools or districts to develop the infrastructure and processes equal to these tasks, while states and universities are equipped to support and model appropriate measures.

### *Enhanced Accountability*

It is difficult to gauge leadership performance solely on student outcomes, as individual managers are responsible for some activities that will not show up in near-term gains and others that may not show up in such measures at all. Because leaders allocate resources, it is necessary to evaluate them on the full array of activities for which they are responsible—otherwise there will be pressure to skimp on important tasks. Relevant considerations might include school safety, fiscal management, technology investment, parental satisfaction, or performance of vendors.<sup>86</sup> This is an area where there ought to be particular attention to distinguishing expectations for school and district leadership.

This does *not* mean that we cannot rigorously evaluate leaders, only that we cannot dismiss concerns with simple analogies to classroom-level accountability. Creating appropriate evaluations for managers is readily accomplished and is something that well-run companies and nonprofits routinely address with “balanced scorecards” that factor in multiple measures of organizational performance.<sup>87</sup> Districts ought to adopt the practice, assessing student achievement and outcomes on other essential tasks.

In education, we can be confident there will be public scrutiny of leaders. In an age of accountability and easy access to information, it is increasingly possible to gauge performance. Scrutiny, however, is not enough. Today, children too often suffer because we do not readily remove ineffective school leaders. We must use performance contracts to make it easier to replace ineffective leaders and to hold them accountable for performance on identifiable criteria. The length and terms of such contracts ought to be crafted with an eye to the district’s needs, but they will necessarily require ending the practice of administrative tenure. Performance contracts ought not be so restrictive as to tie the hands of managers, but should forge clear links to student achievement and other measures of organizational performance.<sup>88</sup>

### *Improved Support Systems and Professional Development*

The New Leadership Agenda creates new opportunities to transform professional development, by creating incentives for candidates, district personnel, and trainers to attend to the quality of preparation and the impact on leadership performance. The infrastructure for these programs is in place. As of 2001, 25 states had some sort of statewide leadership academy, consortium, or institute.<sup>89</sup> While current efforts tend to be weak, they provide a framework to support modular training on critical subjects. Some development models will focus on pre-service, others on current administrators; some will be based on-site and others at universities. Programs may be comprehensive or modular, and may focus on managerial skills such as budgeting and personnel management, or education-specific skills relating to pedagogy and curriculum.<sup>90</sup>

Farsighted districts have already taken strides to cultivate their professional development or work with appropriate university partners.<sup>91</sup> New training programs like the Broad Center for Superintendents, New Leaders for New Schools, and the KIPP Principals’ Academy suggest what some of the new models of development might look like. These programs include elements such as residential components, weekend learning, mentoring, field-based action projects, and individual skill-building in collaboration with staff, in accord with a particular vision of preparation. The KIPP Academy, for instance, chooses to accept only experienced K-12 educators. In addition to more traditional educators, the Broad Center seeks superintendent candidates who have little direct experience in conventional K-12 schooling, while New Leaders seeks “hybrid” candidates who have some kind of teaching experience in a K-12 setting as well as a demonstrated ability to lead.

One model of sustained support is being developed by New American Schools (NAS), which is partnering with school districts to promote research-based professional development for practicing administrators. The NAS program features a combination of job-embedded work, residential instruction, team-based development, and utilization of Web-based technologies. Of course, as one NAS official noted, “Removing the licensure hurdle would make this a lot easier on us, the districts,

and the candidates, but right now we have to find ways to work around the system as it stands.”

### ***Leadership, Accountability, and Choice***

The New Leadership Agenda complements broader changes taking place in American education. Increased accountability, fostered both by performance assessment and charter schooling, reduces the need for input regulation. The ability to monitor performance with these kinds of mechanisms creates new opportunities for flexibility in operations. The ability to monitor leadership performance on the basis of student performance, faculty feedback, and parental satisfaction makes it possible to dramatically reduce regulation of who can serve as a school leader and under what conditions. Moreover, the success of the No Child Left Behind Act and related state efforts will turn heavily on the presence of leaders able to leverage the possibilities of and build a culture around the precepts of accountability.

Choice-based reform, most particularly charter schooling, recognizes that different families and teachers may desire different kinds of schools. Choice-based reform makes it less problematic if a given leader is unconventional, as it becomes possible to place her in a school entirely populated by faculty and families comfortable with her vision. Moreover, not only does the success of charter schooling depend on the availability of a growing pool of potential leaders, choice-based reform is more likely to spur systemic improvement when school leaders are able to summon systemic responses and pioneer meaningful change.

### ***Conclusion***

Today, our approach to educational leadership fails to secure enough of the leaders we need, forces effective teachers to forswear their chosen work in order to lead, ghettoizes the field and study of educational leadership, and offers no coherent accounting of the benefits that result. The point is not that nontraditional leaders should be preferred to seasoned educators. It is that licensure systems routinely make it prohibitively difficult for schools to garner the benefits of a diverse leadership team and to tap into skills not conventionally prevalent in education.

A decade ago, the New Leadership Agenda would have been dismissed as radical. Today, as educators and policymakers increasingly focus on teacher qualification rather than teacher certification, it no longer seems farfetched. And several states and districts—such as Michigan, which abolished state licensure of school administrators in 1999; California, which radically streamlined administrative licensure in 2002; Houston, which put administrators on performance contracts; and New York City, which began to offer performance bonuses to principals—have already taken steps in this direction. Today, the New Leadership Agenda seems the sensible way to provide teachers and students with the qualified, committed, and accountable leaders they deserve, and to provide school leaders with the respect and professional opportunities they merit.

In the years immediately following World War II, business administration was a minor profession and business schools were institutions of modest reputation viewed as intellectually suspect step-cousins to economics departments. As the centrality of management grew in the post-War economy, executive quality increased and business schools responded to competitive forces. Businesses were forced to discipline their hiring by a new reliance on the bottom line, and business schools became increasingly selective and focused on teaching critical economic, accounting, and quantitative content in a useful and relevant fashion.

Today, America’s executive workforce is admired across the globe and business schools are among the nation’s most prestigious educational units. This all transpired without formal licensing; neither business schools nor America are any the worse off because Bill Gates or Michael Dell never obtained an MBA. The world of educational leadership is ripe for a similar revolution. Our schools can no longer make do with a once-adequate leadership pipeline that today turns away talent, delivers questionable preparation, stifles entrepreneurial energy, and isolates educational leaders.

As Ron Brownstein noted, “If improving the schools is a national priority, the nation needs to systematically funnel more of its most talented people toward the challenge.”<sup>92</sup> That is true, and we must offer them a more professional road to those challenges as well.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) estimates that more than 40 percent of K-8 principals will retire during the first decade of the 21st century.

<sup>2</sup> Stover, Del, "Looking for Leaders," *American School Board Journal*, 189, no. 12 (December 2002): 38. Houston also wryly observed, "There are really just four problems with the current leadership system: the job is impossible, the expectations are inappropriate, the training is inadequate, and the pipeline is inverted." Paul Houston, "Superintendents for the 21st Century: It's Not Just a Job, It's a Calling," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82, no. 6, June, 2001, p. 428-433.

<sup>3</sup> Public Agenda, "Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership," *Public Agenda*, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Beth Greenberg, "Schools Coping with Lack of Administrators," *Boston Globe*, November 17, 2002, B11; or National Conference of State Legislatures News, "Critical Shortage of Principals Forecast for Colorado Schools," January 23, 2002, <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2002/pr020123.htm>. In 1998, the Education Research Service reported that about half of the districts it surveyed had an inadequate number of qualified candidates applying for open positions. Educational Research Service, "Is There a Shortage of Qualified Candidates for Openings in the Principalship? An Exploratory Study," *Educational Research Service*, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Bauck, James M., "Characteristics of the Effective Middle School Principal," *NASSP Bulletin*, vol. 71, p. 90-92, 1987; Fowler, Jr., William J., "What are the Characteristics of Principals Viewed as Effective by Teachers?," ERIC ED 347 675, 1991; Haller, Emil J., Brian O. Bent and James H. McNamara, "Does Graduate Training in Educational Administration Improve America's Schools?," *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1997, p. 222-227. Haller and his colleagues noted in 1997, in a statement that is equally true today, "The efficacy of graduate training in educational administration is relatively unstudied. It is even more surprising that earnest calls to increase certification requirements and modify delivery systems are not accompanied by equally earnest calls to carefully assess the costs and benefits of doing so." Some studies have linked principal behavior to student outcomes, but these have not been able to determine whether preparation or licensure contributed to principal effectiveness. For reviews of studies linking principals to outcomes see Hallinger, Philip and Ronald H. Heck, "Exploring the Principal's Contribution to School Effectiveness: 1980-1995," *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1998, p.157-191; or Gonzalez, Margarita, Naftaly S. Glasman and Lynette D. Glasman, "Daring to Link Principal Preparation Programs to Student Achievement in Schools," *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2002, p. 265-283.

<sup>6</sup> This criterion is not intended to be codified as statutory language or to bar candidates from applying for positions but to provide hiring authorities with clear direction and to enable districts and schools to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions about who to hire.

<sup>7</sup> Elmore, Richard F., "Building a New Structure for School Leadership," *Albert Shanker Institute*, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Models of flexible and differentiated compensation abound outside of education, but they are also increasingly being piloted and refined in the world of traditional public schooling. See Hassel, Bryan, "Better Pay for Better Teaching: Making Teacher Compensation Pay Off in the Age of Accountability," *Progressive Policy Institute*, 2002, <http://www.ppionline.org>; or Anthony Milanowski, "The Varieties of Knowledge and Skill-based Pay Design: A Comparison of Seven New Pay Systems for K-12 Teachers," *Consortium for Policy Research in Education*, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> As the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, a pillar of the education establishment, has conceded, "The data on leaders of educational change...indicate that the characteristics of these individuals mirror those of leaders who have changed other organizations." Mendez-Morse, Sylvia, "Characteristics of Leaders of Change," *Southwest Educational Development Laboratory*, 1992, <http://www.sedl.org/change/leadership/character.html>.

<sup>10</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey 1999-2000, "Public School Principal Survey," U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>11</sup> "Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership," *Public Agenda*, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Hess, Frederick, "Reform, Resistance, Retreat? The Predictable Politics of Accountability in Virginia," *Brookings Papers on Education Policy* 2002, ed. Diane Ravitch, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> For a classic exposition on the difference between leadership and management, see Kotter, John P., "What Leaders Really Do," *Harvard Business Review*, p. 85-96, December 2001.

<sup>14</sup> MacGregor Burns, James, *Leadership*, Harper & Row, p. 2, 1978.

<sup>15</sup> London, Simon, "The Geezer with Lessons for Geeks," *London Financial Times*, September 17, p. 14, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Sergiovanni, Thomas, *Leadership for the Schoolhouse*, Jossey-Bass, p. xiv., 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Garr, Doug, *IBM Redux: Lou Gerstner & the Business Turnaround of the Decade*, HarperBusiness, p. 24, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Useem, Michael, "Making Your Mark," *The Industry Standard*, October 9, 2000, <http://www.thestandard.com>.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Hughes and Richard Haney have noted, "No profession in the United States values education and professional development more highly than the military or puts more of its resources there." Hughes, Robert C. and Richard Haney, "Professional Military Education: A Serious Enterprise for Leaders," in *The Principal Challenge*, eds. Tucker, Marc S. and Judy B. Coddling, Jossey-Bass, p. 123, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> In other specialties, especially those involving sophisticated technology, the four months of specialized preparation can stretch to 18 months.

<sup>22</sup> These patterns were evident in studies conducted as far back as the 1920s, and remained in studies conducted in 1968 and

1978. Sykes, Gary and Richard F. Elmore, "Making Schools Manageable: Policy and Administration for Tomorrow's Schools," in *The Politics of Reforming School Administration*, eds. Robert L. Crowson and Jane Hannaway, New York: Falmer Press, p. 78, 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Crowson, Robert L. and Jane Hannaway, "Introduction and Overview: The Politics of Reforming School Administration," in *The Politics of Reforming School Administration*, eds. Robert L. Crowson and Jane Hannaway, Falmer Press, 1989.

<sup>24</sup> Cooper, Bruce S. and William L. Boyd, "The Evolution of Training for School Administrators," in *Approaches to Administrative Training in Education*, eds. J. Murphy and P. Hallinger, SUNY Press, 1987; AACTE, *American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Report*, 1988; Peterson, Kent D. and Chester E. Finn, Jr. "Principals, Superintendents, and the Administrator's Art," *The Public Interest*, Spring 1985, p. 42-62.

<sup>25</sup> See Heck, Ronald H., Katherine J. Larsen, and George A. Marcoulides, "Instructional Leadership and School Achievement: Validation of a Causal Model," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 26, no. 2, p. 94-125, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, coherence is not the norm when education thinkers try to explain what "instructional leadership" actually is. Neither educators nor scholars have quite settled on just what this means, what it entails, or how to know whether someone is providing it. For an excellent overview, see Hill, Peter W., "What Principals Need to Know About Teaching and Learning," in *The Principal Challenge*, eds. Marc S. Tucker and Judy B. Coddling, Jossey-Bass, 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Young, Michelle D. and George J. Petersen, "The National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation: An Introduction," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2, p. 130-136, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> The groups included the American Association of School Administrators, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

<sup>29</sup> The states that use the ISLLC standards are: Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, DC, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

<sup>30</sup> Even Thomas Sergiovanni, a widely quoted professor of educational leadership and a leading proponent of licensure, concedes, "What makes a good principal in one setting doesn't in another." Quoted in Keller, Bess, "Principal Matters," *Education Week*, November, 11, 1998, <http://www.edweek.com>.

<sup>31</sup> Rothschild, William E., "Where Are the Leaders?," *Financial Executive*, 18, no. 5, p. 26, July 2002. For an education-specific discussion of this issue, see Hausman, Charles S., Gary M. Crow and David J. Sperry, "Portrait of the 'Ideal Principal': Context and Self," *NASSP Bulletin*, vol. 84, no. 617, p. 5-14, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, the required courses for licensure at Ohio State, the 3rd ranked educational administration program in 2002, included: politics and political leadership in American education, business administration of schools, legal aspects of school administration, educational facility planning, staff personnel administration, school finance, and so on. At the Wharton School, one of the nation's top-rated business schools, the core curriculum included courses in: financial accounting and in managerial accounting, governmental and legal environment of business, management of people at work, managerial economics, foundations of leadership and teamwork, decision models and uncertainty, operations management, and management communication. Not only is there significant overlap between the two sets of courses—with some education-specific gaps that could be readily addressed—but the business school courses are more oriented towards team-building and cultural leadership than are the education program's courses.

<sup>33</sup> Tucker, Marc S. and Judy B. Coddling, "Preparing Principals in the Age of Accountability," in *The Principal Challenge*, eds. Marc S. Tucker and Judy B. Coddling, Jossey-Bass, p. 5, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Pounder, Diana G. and Randall J. Merrill, "Job Desirability of the High School Principalship: A Job Choice Theory Perspective," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 37, no. 1, p. 27-57, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Tirozzi, Gerald, "The Artistry of Leadership: The Evolving Role of the Secondary School Principal," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82, p. 437, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> McCarthy, Martha, "Challenges Facing Educational Leadership Programs: Our Future is Now," *Newsletter of the Teaching in Educational Administration Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association*, 8, no. 1, p. 1, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Grogan, Margaret and Richard Andrews, "Defining Preparation and Professional Development for the Future," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 38 no. 2, p. 323, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Tucker, Marc S. and Judy B. Coddling, "Preparing Principals in the Age of Accountability," in *The Principal Challenge*, eds. Marc S. Tucker and Judy B. Coddling, Jossey-Bass, p. 13, 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Petzko, Vicki N., Donald C. Clark, Jerry W. Valentine, Donald G. Hackmann, John R. Nori, and Stephen E. Lucas, "Leaders and Leadership in Middle Level Schools," *NASSP Bulletin*, 86, no. 631, p. 3-15, June 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Guthrie, James W. and Ted Sanders, "Who Will Lead the Public Schools?" *The New York Times*, 4A, p. 46, January 7, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> A few examples from the 2002 U.S. *News and World Report* rankings of graduate programs can help to illustrate the point. Penn State University's 43rd ranked business school accepted 24.5 percent of applicants and admitted students had a mean GMAT score of 624. Meanwhile, the university's school of education, which housed the nation's 8th ranked educational administration program, accepted 49.1 percent of its *doctoral* applicants and the admitted students had a mean verbal GRE score of 475. Ohio State University's 24th ranked business school accepted 28.9 percent of applicants and admitted students had a mean GMAT score of 645, while the OSU education school, home to the nation's 3rd ranked administration program, accepted 54.9 percent of doctoral applicants (and 74.3 percent of M.Ed. applicants) and admitted students had a mean verbal GRE score of 476. The 10th ranked University of Michigan-Ann Arbor business school accepted 19.6 percent of MBA applicants while the education school (with the 9th ranked administration program) accepted 70 percent of M.Ed. applicants. The 24th ranked Michigan State University business school accepted 22.3 percent of applicants while the education school (with the 13th ranked administration program) accepted 65.3 percent of M.Ed. applicants.

<sup>42</sup> In fact, the vast majority of principals have not earned a masters degree. In 1999-2000, just 10.2 percent of principals held

a doctorate or other terminal professional degree. National Center for Education Statistics, *Schools and Staffing Survey 1999-2000*, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>43</sup> David Erlandson has observed in Texas, "Many who take the principal preparation courses do not have the aptitude to be effective principals or do not have that as a career goal...They see it simply in terms of a pay raise or an advancement they cannot afford to turn down." Erlandson, David, "Report Calls for Better Principal Preparation to Improve Quality of Education in Texas," *Principals for the Schools of Texas: A Seamless Web of Professional Development*, Sid W. Richardson Foundation, May 1997.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, a quick survey some of the titles prominently advertised in Corwin Press's fall 2002 educational administration catalogue illustrates the problem. Widely used in administrative training are books with titles like "Leading for Diversity: How School Leaders Promote Positive Interethnic Relations" by five authors, "Confident Communication: Speaking Tips for Educators" by Douglas Parker, "Caring Enough to Lead: Schools and the Sacred Trust" by Leonard Pellicer, "Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders," by Randall Lindsey and two coauthors, "Reframing the Path to School Leadership: A Guide for Teachers and Principals" by Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal, and "Leadership and the Force of Love: Six Keys to Motivating with Love" by John Hoyle. These volumes range from the pedantic application of hoary managerial wisdom to ideological direction, without ever making the case as to how or why conventional management wisdom and analysis is not appropriate for schooling.

<sup>45</sup> One of the funnier examples of the tendency to indulge in psychobabble was provided by Ira Bogotch, a Florida Atlantic University professor who is a founder of the American Educational Research Association's special interest group on educational administration. Asked to discuss the challenges in the field, Dr. Bogotch explained that his efforts to create a "learning to learn" environment included studying leadership in a "university classroom context that has been re-conceptualized as leadership praxis in order to study the messy interactions and cognitive dissonance in learning." See "A Conversation with Ira Bogotch," *Newsletter of the Teaching in Educational Administration Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association* 8, no. 1, 2001, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Figures provided courtesy of the Broad Foundation, KIPP, and New Leaders for New Schools.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, in 2002, Teach for America had 14,000 applicants for 1,700 slots; the New York City Teaching Fellows program had more 15,112 applicants for just 1,200 slots; the DC Teaching Fellows Program had 1,325 applicants for 100 slots; and the Chicago Academy program had more than 300 applicants for 32 slots. Figures provided courtesy of Teach for America and the New Teacher Project. Chicago Academy figures taken from Olszewski, Lori, "Chicago Expanding Program to Attract New Teachers," *Chicago Tribune*, November 19, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> McCarthy, Martha, "Challenges Facing Educational Leadership Programs: Our Future Is Now," *Newsletter of the Teaching in Educational Administration Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association* 8, no. 1, p. 1, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *Schools and Staffing Survey 1999-2000*, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>50</sup> For instance, in 2002-03 the University of Maryland charges \$305 per credit hour; Rutgers University charges \$338 per hour; and the University of Virginia charges about \$288 per hour.

<sup>51</sup> In 1999-2000, 14,714 such degrees were awarded in the United States. National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, Chapter 3: Table 258, 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Veteran education reporter Jay Matthews noted this possibility in 2001: "The growing demand for improved school performance seems to require more political and administrative skills than many long-time educators possess." Jay Matthews, "Chief Academic Officers," *The School Administrator*, p.12-17, June 2001.

<sup>53</sup> Crowson, Robert L., "Managerial Ethics in Educational Administration: The Rational Choice Approach," *Urban Education* 23 no. 4, p. 412, 1989.

<sup>54</sup> Mendez-Morse, Sylvia, "Characteristics of Leaders of Change," *Southwest Educational Development Laboratory*, p. 2, 1992, <http://www.sedl.org/change/leadership/character.html>.

<sup>55</sup> For instance, a 2001 survey of federal employees (who work in civil service positions that are configured much like those of school administrators) found that 59 percent said a secure paycheck was a more important reason for taking their job than was doing something worthwhile, 65 percent said job security was more important than helping the public, and 66 percent said job security was more important than pride in their organization. Paul C. Light, "To Restore and Renew: Now Is the Time to Rebuild the Federal Public Service," *Government Executive*, The Brookings Institution, November 2001, <http://www.brookings.edu/dybdocroot/views/articles/light/PaulLightMagazine.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> "A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why," *Public Agenda*, 2000, p. 20.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Joyce, Amy, "The People Holding the Pink Slips Feel Pain, Too," *The Washington Post*, H7, October 6, 2002.

<sup>58</sup> Brownstein, Ronald, "Ailing School Systems Prescribed an Injection of Leadership," *The Los Angeles Times*, A10, June 24, 2002.

<sup>59</sup> The scholarly work on education leadership reveals a bent towards the vague and the ideological. For instance, the 2001 book *The Emerging Principals*, defines a competent school administrator as someone who, "serves as a role model, accepts responsibility for school operations, considers the impact of one's administrative practices on others, treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect, protects the rights and confidentiality of students and staff, demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community ... will demonstrate integrity and exercise ethical behavior, and applies laws and procedures fairly, wisely, and considerately." While pleasant (and nearly all-encompassing), these standards are not very different from those that govern leadership in any organization—except those frequent occasions where the authors assert their normative preferences or drift into vague formulations (i.e. "demonstrate integrity...applies laws and procedures fairly") where it becomes only too easy to cloak ideology in the garb of professionalism. Such guidelines hardly provide clear-cut criteria for preemptively deciding who might or might not make good school leaders. Skrla, Linda, David A. Erlandson, Eileen M. Reed, & Alfred P. Wilson, "The Emerging Principals," *Eye on Education*, 2001.

<sup>60</sup> Murphy, Joseph, "Reculturing the Profession of Educational Leadership: New Blueprints," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 38, no. 2, p. 180, 2002. While the title of this piece misleadingly suggests a "new" approach to leadership, what it actually represents is an effort to repackaging the conventional doctrines in more prescriptive form.

<sup>61</sup> Even committed defenders of public education and schools of education are increasingly acknowledging the ideological tilt that characterizes the faculty in schools of education. See, for instance, Lasley II, Thomas J., William L. Bainbridge, and Barnett Berry, "Improving Teacher Quality: Ideological Perspectives and Policy Prescriptions," *The Educational Forum* 67, no. 1, 2002, <http://www.kdp.org/>. For a more ideologically charged catalogue of the charges against schools of education, see Kozloff, Martin A., "Ed Schools in Crisis," *University of North Carolina at Wilmington*, October 2002, <http://people.uncw.edu/kozloffm/edcrisis.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Devotees of licensure point to the standards devised by the ISLLC and suggest that they can serve to restrain ideology. However, such sophistry has it exactly backwards—the ISLLC standards promise to worsen existing biases because they are rooted in no systematic evidence, represent vague ideals rather than specific prescriptions for practice, and therefore foster ideological gatekeeping in the guise of standards.

<sup>63</sup> Heifetz, Ronald A. and Donald L. Laurie, "The Work of Leadership," *Harvard Business Review*, p. 131-140, December 2001.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> "Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership," *Public Agenda*, 2001.

<sup>66</sup> Petzko, Vicki N., Donald C. Clark, Jerry W. Valentine, Donald G. Hackmann, John R. Nori, and Stephen E. Lucas, "Leaders and Leadership in Middle Level Schools," *NASSP Bulletin*, 86, no. 631, p. 3-15, June 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Glasman, Naftaly, James Cibulka, and Dianne Ashby, "Program Self-Evaluation for Continuous Improvement," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2, p. 262, 2002.

<sup>68</sup> David Erlandson observed, "Too often when a principal has been on the job for a number of years...it is assumed that the principal no longer needs professional development..." Erlandson, David, "Report Calls for Better Principal Preparation to Improve Quality of Education in Texas," *Principals for the Schools of Texas: A Seamless Web of Professional Development*, Sid W. Richardson Foundation, May 1997.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Houston, executive director of American Association of School Administrators, has observed that today's superintendents are not just responsible for "buildings, buses, books, budgets, and bonds" but for the "processes...like connection, communication, collaboration, community building, child advocacy, and curricular choices." Houston, Paul, "Superintendents for the 21st Century: It's Not Just a Job, It's a Calling," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82, no. 6, p. 428-433, 2001, <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/khou0102.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> In full, the standards read: 1] "facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community;" 2] "advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;" 3] "ensuring the management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;" 4] "collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;" 5] "acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner;" 6] "understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context." Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, "Standards for School Leaders," *Council of Chief State School Officers*, 1996, <http://www.ccsso.org>.

<sup>71</sup> First administered in 1998, the test has since been adopted by Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, and Arkansas, and is currently under review in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia.

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.ccsso.org/isllc.html>.

<sup>73</sup> Beem, Kate, "Testing Superintendents," *School Administrator*, February 2002, <http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/>.

<sup>74</sup> *The School Leadership Series Tests at a Glance*, Educational Testing Service, <ftp://ftp.ets.org/pub/tandl/SLSTAAG.pdf>, p. 14. As even Martha McCarthy, chancellor professor of educational leadership at Indiana University and a staunch defender of educational administration programs and licensure, has noted, "It is difficult to envision that responding to a set of vignettes—no matter how skillfully crafted—can confirm that administrative licensure candidates exhibit the desired skills, knowledge, and values for effective school leaders." McCarthy, Martha, "Challenges Facing Educational Leadership Programs: Our Future is Now," *Newsletter of the Teaching in Educational Administration Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association* 8, no. 1, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> There is no national standard passing score for the SLLA, as each state sets its own passing score. A telling detail is that even the most demanding state scores are well below the average performance range of 169 to 181.

<sup>76</sup> For a discussion of how this has played out in the case of teacher preparation, see Sandra Vergari and Frederick M. Hess, "A Vigilant Sentry?: The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education," *Education Next*, 2, no. 3, p. 48-57, 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Khurana, Rakesh, "Searching for a Corporate Savior: The Irrational Quest for Charismatic CEOs," *Princeton University Press*, 2002. The hope that an extraordinary leader will personally transform a foundering organization by relying upon the management team that had previously failed to produce results has been dismissed by Jim Collins in *Good to Great* (HarperBusiness, 2001) as the "genius with a thousand helpers" model (pp. 45-48).

<sup>78</sup> Through June 2001, 28 nontraditional superintendents had led American school districts in recent decades. Of those, ten were former military officers and four were attorneys. The rest had worked in a variety of private and public sector capacities. See *School Administrator*, 2001, "Roster of Nontraditional Superintendents," sidebar in Mathews, Jay, "Nontraditional Thinking in the Central Office," *School Administrator* 58, no. 6, p. 6-11, June 2001, [http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2001\\_06/mathews1\\_side.htm](http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2001_06/mathews1_side.htm).

<sup>79</sup> Khurana, Rakesh, "The Curse of the Superstar CEO," *Harvard Business Review*, p. 60-66, September 2001.

<sup>80</sup> For a brief but insightful discussion of the need to approach hiring in a disciplined manner, see Krinsky, Ira W., "The Alternative Candidate," *American School Board Journal* 180, p. 36-37, 1993.

<sup>81</sup> This criterion is not intended to be codified as statutory language or to bar candidates from applying for positions but to provide hiring authorities with clear direction and to enable districts and schools to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions about who to hire.

<sup>82</sup> Council of Great City Schools, "Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure and Salary," *Urban Indicator*, October 2001, [www.cgcs.org/reports/supers2001.pdf](http://www.cgcs.org/reports/supers2001.pdf). Williams, Alicia, "How Are Salaries of Secondary School Principals and Assistant Principals Stacking Up?," *NewsLeader*, vol. 28, p. 9, National Association of Secondary School Principals, May 2001.

<sup>83</sup> Kent Peterson, professor of education at the University of Wisconsin has observed, "Most quality certification programs wish to have a unique perspective, [but] more and more states are requiring adherence to a set of state [licensure] standards." Peterson, Kent, "The Professional Development of Principals: Innovations and Opportunities," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 38 no. 2, p. 216, 2002.

<sup>84</sup> Hurwitz, Sol, "The Super Bowl," *The New York Times*, August 4, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

<sup>85</sup> Cox, Edward P. and Bobby G. Malone, "Making the Right Choice," *American School Board Journal* 188, no. 7, 2001, p. 40-41.

<sup>86</sup> The Houston Independent School District's annual "Business Services" report provides an outstanding example of how performance in these areas can be systematically measured and benchmarked.

<sup>87</sup> For discussion of "balanced scorecards" and how they're used, see Kaplan, Robert S. and David P. Norton, "Linking the Balanced Scorecard to Strategy," *California Management Review* 39, no. 1, 1996. For a more practical take, see the bimonthly "Balanced Scorecard Report," created by the Balanced Scorecard Collaborative and published by the Harvard Business School. Groups such as the Balanced Scorecard Institute provide training and guidance for public sector organizations.

<sup>88</sup> See Hertling, Elizabeth, "Performance Contracts for Administrators," *ERIC Digest* 127, June 1999, for more extensive discussion.

<sup>89</sup> Most programs were funded or sponsored, at least in part, by the various state departments of education, while the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation had funded technology leadership academies in at least 18 states. Education Commission of the States, "ECS StateNotes: State Leadership Academies," ECS, May 2001.

<sup>90</sup> There is a wealth of research examining various approaches to training and induction. See, Eiter, Mark, "Best Practices in Leadership Development: Lessons from the Best Business Schools and Corporate Universities," in *The Principal Challenge*, eds. Marc S. Tucker and Judy B. Coddling, Jossey-Bass, 2002. Sykes, Gary, with Cheryl King and Jeannie Patrick, "Models for Preparation for the Professions: Implications for Educational Leadership," in *The Principal Challenge*, eds. Marc S. Tucker and Judy B. Coddling, Jossey-Bass, 2002. A number of useful models for professional development are discussed in the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management's "Policy Brief: Effective Leaders for Today's Schools: Synthesis of a Policy Forum on Educational Leadership," OERI, 1999.

<sup>91</sup> Harris, Tonya, "How Urban Schools Are Solving the Principal Shortage," *Principal* 81, no. 1, p. 10-13, September 2001.

<sup>92</sup> Brownstein, Ronald, "Ailing School Systems Prescribed an Injection of Leadership," *The Los Angeles Times*, p. A10, June 24, 2002.

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