

Routinely Preparing Principals to Lead Systemic Improvement

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Background: UIC Ed.D. Program in Urban Education Leadership

In 2003 began work on the question:

What would it take for a higher education institution routinely to prepare principals who lead urban schools to significantly improved student learning outcomes?

Background: UIC Ed.D. Program in Urban Education Leadership

- Chicago Public Schools (CPS) pays each full-year residency salary
- Traditional master's certification program replaced by Ed.D.
- Students selectively admitted into annual cohorts of 12-20 students
- Illinois P-12 leadership endorsement after first 18 months
- Full-time leadership coaches, practitioner faculty at UIC, provide coaching throughout the residency and 3 years post-licensure

Statement of the Problem

No higher education program was routinely producing principals who led schools to student performance outcomes that were not predicted by SES indicators.

- Principal preparation programs were not learning systemically from outstanding school leaders producing “outlier” results.
- No program was known to be using ambitious measures of program effectiveness that would inform continuous improvement, including:
 - % of graduates becoming principals and % exceeding average retention rates
 - Impact on student learning and academic progress

What changes did we learn from?

- Improving selective admissions criteria and process
- Integrating coursework more fully with full-year residency
- Requiring demonstration of leading collaborative cycles of inquiry in post-residency period
- Replacing traditional qualifying exam/dissertation sequence with job-embedded juried-review analyses of leadership performance and capstone case study of leader's own performance at building school organizational capacity

What Improvement Measures Did We Use?

- % students not counseled out of program
- % UIC candidates passing rigorous CPS eligibility exam
- % students in each cohort with timely completion of EdD
- % residency completers securing assistant principal and principal positions and retaining their positions over time
- Impact of UIC school leaders compared to IL and CPS:
 - Student attendance, freshman-on-track, grad rates, standardized exams
 - School organization measures (climate and culture)
 - CPS School Quality Ratings measures (SQRP)

Background: CUEL

- Collegueship of expertise
 - Academic Faculty
 - Leadership Coaches/Clinical Faculty
 - Program Administrators
 - Practicing Principals and System Leaders
 - Researchers (Me!)
- Researcher supporting continuous improvement work of the Center using continuous improvement methods

What is the problem?

- Are we achieving routinely for high-need schools?
- What counts as a high-need school in a school district with a an overall low-income rate of 85% and where 85% of the students are Black or Latinx?
- Theory of action: If we can better specify what counts as a “high-need” school, we can get better traction on the problem of how to achieve “routinely” for these schools.

What changes did we test?

- How to identify “high-need” schools
 - Excluded low-income rates and race/ethnicity
 - Excluded performance data
 - Validated our approach using the school district’s accountability status
- Used readily available indicators in the public domain: Mobility, Chronic Truancy, Homeless Students
- Research literature informed our interpretation

What did we learn?

- Answer to the “routinely” question for high-need schools is “no” based on:
 - Data about the schools our leaders serve
 - Self-reported self-efficacy beliefs
 - Capstone case studies of leadership experiences, for example, “What Just Happened?”
 - Retention of our leaders in high-need schools
- ***School Transience*** is a significant feature of high-need schools in Chicago

What did we learn?

- Conceptual tool development for our problem: ***School Need Types*** and ***School Need Features***
 - *Diversity among high-need schools*
- Identification is just the starting point
- Learning more about leadership practices in ***effective transient schools*** will move us more closely to answers to the “routinely” question

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