

VIII. Seminar Faculty/Mentors

Expertise/Qualifications

The Iowa Principal Leadership Academy Program is centered around problem-based themes on each of the six [Iowa Standards for School Leaders](#). The faculty/mentors are selected to deliver content regarding standards. The faculty/mentors provide the expert knowledge base while cohort member's work on the specific ISSL Standard. Faculty members align the academy program by working closely with the cohort directors to ensue coherence of the content. The mentors maintain communication as they support the work of cohort members on each Standard. Because the mentors are all practicing professionals, they are significantly involved in PK-12 education, working directly with districts, and actively initiating, planning, monitoring, delivering, and evaluating current programs in their area of expertise. The Iowa Area Education Agencies provide assistance with specific searches for materials. Iowa Area Education Agencies are regional service agencies, which provide school improvement services, including professional development, for students, families, teachers, administrators and their communities.

The two collaborating area educational agencies have for many years sponsored the Northwest Iowa Principal Leadership Academy, which sponsors national leaders each year and is attended by administrators and school teams across Northwest Iowa. AEA 5 sponsored the Contemporary Leadership Program with other statewide AEAs. Begun in 1997, the goal is to “develop new leaders for the 21st century.” Both national and local leaders plan a series of learning experiences in contemporary leadership with monthly presentations. Activities include readings and discussion, small study groups, panel discussions, mentorship's, job shadowing and site visits. The academy employees such leaders as Dr. Susan Ledick, an expert on organizational planning. The AEAs also sponsor these aspiring leaders by awarding them program “scholarships” to defray expenses. Area-wide faculty and mentors also attend these planned sessions and find them to be worthy learning experiences.

In addition, area education agencies established long-term relationships with Mid-continent Regional Learning Laboratory and Dr. Robert Marzano among others. The primary focus was to develop the components of a standards-based curriculum and all the accompanying issues surrounding its implementation including: reporting out on student progress; diversity; differentiation of learning, at-risk students, gender issues and the like.

Each area education agency also sponsors additional experts to support professional development for faculty-mentors and district staff. For example, Dr. Mary Bigler (Literacy), Dr. Richard Strong (Instruction and Curriculum), Dr. Sharon Walpole (CIERA), Dr. Jerry Johns (Author of Basic Reading Inventory), Dr. Barbara Coloroso (Classroom Environment), Dr. Elena Bedrova (McREL, Author of Early Literacy Advisor and Instructional Strategies for Kindergarten Students in Literacy) and Dr. Diane Paynter (Literacy) all provided area- wide training. All area education agencies schedule expert practitioners and researchers in the field to provide new research and best practice in areas of school needs as defined by their Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. Dr. Robert Marzano has been contracted both by the Northwest Iowa Principal Leadership Academy and by the area education agencies to provide support in *Instructional Strategies That Work* -the results of the meta-analysis he conducted.

The faculty/mentors have strong ongoing access to professional development in research and best practice by experts in the field. Faculty/mentors attend statewide training, workshops, and association meetings and training on a regular basis. Faculty/mentors also have access to the technology needed to support the candidate's preparation in using technology personally and to better manage organizations. Several of the mentors are technology experts and will be available not only for the specific activities to be conducted with the standard but throughout the program. Each area educational agency has technology and media consultants who are hired experts in their field. Part of the job

description at any area education agency is to provide not only schools but also individuals with any and all support needed to improve their technology skills. They are also available to all faculty and mentors. Area education agencies are rich sources of technological knowledge for all of Iowa and have a strong network and equally strong support from the Iowa Department of Education. Each area education agency and all districts within the area are connected to the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). With both voice and sound video, faculty, mentors, the Cohort Directors, candidates, and the Advisory Board can schedule themselves to be connected for learning, sharing, and discussion any day or time throughout the year. It is a system unique to Iowa. Besides being connected within the area, they can also have access to support from any experts within Iowa. All faculty and mentors have quality computers and e-mail addresses, as will all candidates. A listserv is maintained to exchange information with all faculty, mentors and cohort members. Printing, copying, and other classroom or activity needs will be completed at the area education agencies to meet the needs for the faculty, mentors and candidates. Each faculty and mentor is actively involved in continuous learning, which is directly connected to his or her assigned standard.

Candidates will all be expected to meet the new Iowa Evaluator Licensure rules and regulations. This training has two components, Data-Driven Leadership (DDL) and Iowa Leadership Standards Assessments for initial certification.

The faculty/mentors of the Iowa Principal Leadership Academy are currently licensed or retired administrators and/or education professionals with expertise to provide the knowledge, skills and dispositions for one or more of the ISSL Standards. Many have earned doctorates. Each faculty member provides the knowledge base, which includes theory, research, and best practice, through seminars and other seminar work, and will also be supported by expert practicing principal mentors. Each candidate will have access to multiple mentors/faculty as they address the problem-based activities on each of the ISSL Standards. Candidates will be encouraged to use a practicing principal or another administrator willing and able to support them in addressing the planned activities within each ISSL Standard.

There are strong reasons for having practicing principals as mentors. Currently, most Iowa principal preparatory programs suggest or require using a mentor(s) throughout the program that serves the candidate in an advisory capacity. These mentors are supplied by fellow cohort members and are usually the principal, superintendent, and/or curriculum consultant in their districts or someone they know well in the field. In looking at the usual models for mentors, the IPLA Advisory Board had strong reservations about its ability to provide the support needed for the cohort members regarding ISSL Standards; the primary reservation being that many practicing professionals would neither have the expertise nor a current knowledge base. Certainly acting principals would be able to help the candidates in some areas, primarily the management of operations and creating an environment for learning, but these same principals when surveyed in the spring of 2002 candidly admitted to glaring deficiencies in the areas of instructional leadership, understanding and using data to drive decision-making on student learning and in development of comprehensive school improvement planning (See Appendix A for complete responses of area principals). In fact, only 8 of the 137 considered instructional leadership as an important task and even fewer suggested that instructional leadership training was needed to improve their personal performance. They further stated that their principal training programs had not provided them with the skills needed for instructional leadership or indeed put a strong emphasis on instructional leadership and improvement of student achievement – the basic requirements for improvement of all student learning.

The Advisory Board conducted a review of the literature and what innovative programs were doing to support their aspiring principals on the standards they had set. In Minnesota's Leadership for Educational Administration Development (LEAD) program, a study was requested to investigate the report of the opinions of the participants in the Administrative Mentoring Program sponsored by the Minnesota LEAD Administrators' Academy. The primary data were interview responses provided by

the six pairs of administrators who were mentors and protégés at suburban, rural, and inner-city schools (Monsour, 1998). When asked, “What mentoring activities were considered to be most beneficial to the protégé?” The response was that it was “developing a friendship with and profiting from the personal power and influence of the mentor.” In addition, these protégés stated mentors were key to networking, emotional support and validation, sharing resources and materials, site visits, and guidance. Note that the mentors were not considered important in providing support in knowledge or skills, or dispositions other than “guidance.” What the protégés seemed to want the most was personal support in developing a power base along with validation and emotional support. These, of course, are beneficial, but these will not provide candidates with the requirements for meeting the ISSL Standards.

Of greater interest was the work of John C. Daresh and Marsha A. Playko in innovative principal preparation programs and the work of Milsteine, Bobroff, and Restine (1991; Murphy, 1992) who found that “many, clinical experiences, especially internships, are perceived to be one of the weakest components of administrative preparation.” This initial research led the Advisory Board to resolve to find the qualities most important for mentors and then determine how best to find them. The literature review revealed that McKerrow (1998) asserted that too much emphasis has been placed on efficiency and expediency in internships, without a convincing demonstration of effectiveness. If the goal of an internship is to engage interns in ways that enable them to lead, then mentoring can play a significant role. Mentor selection, though, is too often based more on convenience than on consideration of effectiveness. Specific criteria for selection needs to be established – criteria which incorporates contemporary leadership standards and expectations. Volunteering to be a mentor should not be sufficient grounds for selection. According to Walker and Stott (1994), “If mentors are selected for reasons other than their ability to communicate knowledge and experience, or their professional skills and competence, there is a risk of encouraging and reinforcing practices that may be less than effective.” According to Cohn and Sweeney (1992), “Even successful administrators may not have the skills to make them successful at mentoring.” Additional selection criteria may encompass personal attributes, professional reputations, professional experience, and/or academic preparation (Milstein, Bobroff, and Restine, 1991). Mentors must demonstrate good oral and written skills, acceptance to alternative solutions to problems, decisiveness, clarity of vision, and well-developed interpersonal skills (Daresh and Playko, 1990).

The literature provided the knowledge base needed for the Board to proceed, yet did not directly provide the answers for a process that would both ensure that the vision, mission, and goals of the proposed leadership training program would be fulfilled so that the candidates could effectively meet the ISSL Standards and at the same time provide the faculty and the mentors needed to ensure the program goals’ effectiveness. The Advisory Board was entirely convinced by the data and the literature that candidates would need both expert faculty and expert mentors. It then decided that the faculty would need to play both roles and mentors would provide additional support. Multiple faculty members would be needed to effectively deliver the comprehensive knowledge, skills, and dispositions contained in each of the ISSL Standards and mentors support the theory. The faculty of the Iowa Leadership Training Academy was carefully selected for both their expertise in the required standard including professional experience, professional reputations, academic preparation, personal attributes, and willingness to serve. In addition, the faculty had to be enthusiastic believers and dedicated professionals who strongly understood that it was possible and necessary to improve the current principal training programs. The faculty clearly demonstrated this by agreeing to deliver the content for the standard selected for them by the Advisory Board for a stipend.