

## HOW NOT TO PREPARE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

*Instead of focusing on how principals should be trained, an contrarian view is offered, grounded upon theoretical perspectives of experiential learning, and in particular, upon the theory of andragogy. A brief parable of the DoNoHarm School of Medicine is used as a descriptive analog for many principal preparation programs in America. The conclusion describes The Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy (GLGSA), which is funded through a U.S. Department of Education Leadership Development grant, as an innovative principal preparation program that exemplifies many of the principles of experiential learning and andragogy.*

In this article we take a somewhat unconventional approach to the topic of preparing principals. Rather than focusing on how principals should be trained, we begin by offering an contrarian view—how not to prepare principals. It is our position that to advance the quality and effectiveness of professional expertise, one must do so upon an empirically grounded foundation that illuminates both ineffective as well as effective practice. When program leaders fail to critically reflect upon existing and past practice, imagining what might work in the future is at best speculative and at worst, folly.

However, we readily acknowledge that the field of principal preparation has made continuous and important advances over the past three decades, and there have been a growing number of preparation programs across the country with creative and enlightened approaches to the cultivation of principals. In fact, we conclude the article with such an example, the Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy, one of approximately 100 innovative principal preparation programs in America funded by the United States Department of Education's Leadership Development Program over the past decade. Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done before such pockets of innovation become the norm rather than the exception.

We set the stage with a short parable of the mythical DoNoHarm School of Medicine that provides a provocative analog to what is currently the "state of the art" among many programs that prepare school principals.

### **The DoNoHarm School of Medicine**

The DoNoHarm School of Medicine prides itself on the high numbers of MDs produced in any given year. Impressively, 98% of the students who are admitted into the school receive their MD degrees after completing the required 90 semester units of coursework. School officials freely admit that almost anyone who meets minimum entrance criteria is admitted and,

by completing the specified program of classes, subsequently receives a license to practice medicine. But, when questioned by skeptics, school officials respond that, “Even though not all of our students will become doctors, at the end of the program they will have much broader perspectives on how to deal with illnesses. At the very least, they can use the graduate course units as leverage with their current employers to grant salary increases.”

As it has throughout its 120-year history, the DoNoHarm School of Medicine adheres to the time-honored traditions of teacher-centered instruction and courses that focus on discrete aspects of medicine. For example, students learn about such things as human anatomy, surgery, diseases, psychiatry, and pathology through a set of independent courses designed to illuminate content-specific knowledge. Since most of the professors earned their advanced degrees in one knowledge domain or another, it makes sense that they focus their courses on the topics and content areas they know best. The idea of an integrated/interconnected body of knowledge sounds good in theory, but is just too impractical to implement—for one thing it would require professors to step out of their zones of expertise and comfort.

Since the MD program is designed to provide students with a medical degree after 48 months of coursework, there is little time available to provide long-term, hands-on, practical, or job-embedded experiences. However, the DoNoHarm program provides several opportunities for students to learn about medicine by watching surgeries from operating room theaters, participating in online simulations, examining detailed photographs and drawings of the human body, reviewing trade journal articles and text book chapters, completing a set of independent projects related to the various domains of medical practice, and creating a portfolio system for organizing their work. The DoNoHarm brochure describes the program as, “The next best thing to being there.”

In the DoNoHarm program, students receive their MDs on the basis of their grade point averages and completion of required course requirements rather than on their ability to effectively perform the functions of the job. In fact, in most courses, grades are based upon student test scores and completion of written papers and assignments. Measurable outcomes of student competencies (where they exist) are shallow and imprecise. Most often, they represent learning activities rather than demonstrations of professional skills. Sometimes they bear a scant relationship to professional standards and program-wide student learning goals (again, where they exist).

Once graduated, students are free to seek gainful employment via the open market (e.g., if they can convince an interview panel, they are likely to land a job practicing medicine). Hospital administrators often maintain that, “What they didn’t learn in med school, they will learn on the job.” In fact, some administrators have been heard to remark that, “As far as we’re concerned, med schools are a joke and a necessary hoop that students must jump through. We teach them what they really need to know to practice medicine as they do the real work.”

When DoNoHarm graduates occasionally make mistakes on the job (e.g., confusing the treatment of patients, improper diagnoses, etc.), program faculty members respond to questions regarding the rigor and quality of the program with such comments as, “Well, it’s up to the hospitals to hire competent doctors. If they do a lousy job of screening and selecting applicants, that’s on them, not on us,” and “Our job is to certify minimum competence. If we raised the bar too much nobody would enroll in our school... they would go to one of those for-profit diploma mills across town.”

One quickly reaches three conclusions about The DoNoHarm School of Medicine and its program theory. First, it subscribes to the theory that knowing about things is more important than knowing how to do things. Second, it adheres to the timeworn notion that the acquisition of knowledge is best accomplished through a hierarchical distribution of information from professors to students. And, third, its core mission is based on the premise that the experience of attaining professional certification supersedes the importance of acquiring professional competence.

We have no doubt that a thoughtful person would have little interest in seeking the services of a doctor who graduated from the DoNoHarm School of Medicine. Now, squint your eyes for a moment and imagine the preceding description of the DoNoHarm School of Medicine as the DoNoHarm School of Education. Likewise, change the reference points in the narrative from medicine to school administration. The unsettling reality is that one doesn’t have to stretch too far to imagine such a scenario. In fact, one doesn’t need to imagine much at all, given the presence of principal preparation programs across the nation that align quite well with the DoNoHarm model (Fry, O’Neal, & Bottoms, 2006; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Levine, 2005). This is both a troubling and dangerous phenomenon in our field that places schools, teachers, and children at great risk through the perpetuation of outmoded and ineffective certification practices and traditions. It is further perpetuated by the too-often-held public perception that administering a school is little more complex than teaching and simply requires that one have taught for a designated period of time and have completed the appropriate administrative coursework.

### **Moving Ahead By Unlearning Bad Practices**

Taking a closer look, one finds that the fields of medicine and PreK–12 education have much in common; they are complex endeavors that strive to improve the human condition, steeped upon decades of empirical research but grounded in problems of practice. In addition, they are fields of study characterized by an amalgamation of hard scientific principles and artistic qualities. In both fields, assessments of professional competence and quality are rendered through quantitative and qualitative means framed around a complex tapestry of scientific rationality, heuristic judgment, practical wisdom, and intuition. Most important, they are fields

of professional practice where student success (or failure) ultimately plays out on the job, not in the halls of academe.

So, if our admittedly critical portrayal of the typical educational administration credential program is even partially accurate, there is ample cause for concern. However, it is often true that as people and their organizations develop and activate new and enlightened theories of action and professional practices, they must also unlearn ineffective philosophies and practices that currently exist. That is, they must stop doing things that don't work. Mezirow (1991) refers to this phenomenon in his theory of transformational learning, in which disorienting dilemmas challenge one to question longstanding assumptions and practices, thereby engendering new perspectives. For many adults, the process of unlearning can be both difficult and stressful. It's hard to let go of ingrained patterns of thought and behavior. But the process of adopting deep and durable change requires the courage to exchange comfort for temporary disequilibrium and safety for calculated risk.

Of course, the question is, how does one go about unlearning? Conceptually, one begins with an open mind and a willingness to question reality, personal values, time-honored traditions and deeply held assumptions about what works in schools, definitions of good leadership, and how people and organizations learn. Second, one seeks out and analyzes multiple sources of data about his/her organization and important organizational performance outcomes, with a particular focus on identifying performance deficits and gaps. Third, one searches for empirically supported information about what works and what doesn't work within the profession at large. Fourth, over time one then applies new ideas, knowledge, or skills to real-world situations until they become routine, thereby replacing old and outmoded practices. Through this process, gaps between organizational goals, purposes, processes, and outcomes are revealed, followed by the development and implementation of corrective action plans and ultimately, new models of delivery.

### **What to Stop Doing: Eight Essential Steps Toward Program Reform**

A growing body of independent and highly credible research confirms the vital roles of the school principal and the school superintendent in promoting durable growth in student achievement (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). There is little doubt that great schools and school districts require great leaders as well as great teachers. Therefore, it is essential that principal preparation programs redouble and refocus their efforts at producing school leaders who possess a range of leadership, instructional, and management abilities necessary to foster the development of great schools (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). As we will explain, the DoNoHarm model of administrator preparation is incapable of facilitating the development

of great schools or populating schools with outstanding leaders on a consistent or widespread basis.

We argue that knowing what to stop doing must be part of any effort to implement meaningful reform in the preparation of principals. The ability to fully comprehend the characteristics and implications of professional practice is developed through retrospective and prospective reflection (e.g., looking backward and forward). Bad practices must be recognized and understood before better practices can be implemented meaningfully. This requires a comparative analysis of existing practices, related performance outcomes, and empirically supported examples of best practices. And, as is often the case, critical reflections of failure can stimulate the development of successful practice (Kelley & Littman, 2001).

Below we offer eight recommendations for what principal preparation programs must stop doing and the supporting rationale for each. In constructing each supporting rationale we drew from the broad base of literature on adult learning and professional and human development.

We maintain that principal preparation programs should:

- 1) Stop emphasizing a subject-specific curriculum in which theory-driven courses and teaching methods place instructional foci on the knowledge base rather than the application of knowledge and its relevance to the real world of school leadership.

Rationale:

If real-world problems, issues and events that faced school leaders came in neat and discrete packages, subject-specific teaching would make good sense. But the real world rarely works that way. Instead, administrators are commonly faced with messy and complex problems that require knowledge and skills that cut across disciplinary boundaries (Davis & Davis, 2003). For example, to effectively manage a racially motivated conflict among students, a principal must understand the legal, interpersonal, cultural, political, leadership, public relations, and organizational dimensions of the problem and how they intersect. Ability in one domain of practice or another is not sufficient to effectively address such problems.

Arguably, when used to advance basic research, theory reigns supreme—as it should. In principal preparation programs, however, theory is only as valuable as its ability to inform practice. Consequently, when preparing prospective principals, problems should come first—theory is then introduced to inform the solution (Hallinger & Bridges, 1997). Solving real-world educational problems requires the confluence of many knowledge domains, leadership skills, and dispositions. Knowledge must be presented in an integrated fashion that replicates the rhythms and turbulence of life in public schools. Fenwick (2003) refers to this idea as possessing an ecological perspective.

Moreover, the introduction of important theories and concepts by themselves does not provide ample reason to learn them. Adults are most

often motivated to learn when the object(s) to be learned is of practical value to them personally or professionally. Most adults best learn new concepts and skills when they can see how the theories that support them work in practice (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

- 2) Stop promoting a faculty-as-experts model of pedagogy (e.g., sage on the stage) that fails to use expert practitioners or align theory with practice, and stop implementing learning activities where the instructor directs and controls the learning content, environment, and processes (e.g., treating students as “empty vessels” that require “filling”).

Rationale:

When faculty members act as the sole purveyors of knowledge, and when they present knowledge in the abstract rather than applied to concrete experiences, they subvert an individual’s control over his/her learning. The learner becomes dependent upon the “master” for his/her intellectual growth. However, adults have a more developed sense of self-control and efficacy than do children. These are useful attributes in a professional certification program because they can engender a more inclusive distribution of teaching and learning among instructors and students. Over time, as confidence and competence builds, the efficacious adult learner weans himself/herself away from dependency upon the professor for new learning and as a primary source of knowledge (Knowles, et al., 2005; Pink, 2009).

- 3) Stop placing an emphasis on the mastery of academic content knowledge with little consideration for the value of student experiences as sources of knowledge, insight, and motivation.

Rationale:

Adults have accumulated a vast reservoir of unique life experiences that shapes their behaviors, choices, world-views, self-concepts, values, beliefs, skills, needs, and aspirations. To ignore the importance of experience is to ignore the grist from which transformational learning arises (Mezirow, 1991). Importantly, experience-driven discourse among adults enriches and contextualizes learning activities, and gives them relevance and meaning. Most adults define themselves by the experiences they have had (Fenwick, 2003; Lawrence & Nohria, 2002).

- 4) Stop depending upon knowledge-driven measures of student learning that do not align with standards-based performance outcomes.

Rationale:

In professional training programs, the acquisition of knowledge is best measured through student demonstrations of standards-based performance criteria. What students do and how well they perform is a much better predictor of future leadership success than the number of graduate courses taken or a cumulative grade point average (Shipman, Topps, &

Murphy, 1998). The proof is always in the pudding when it comes to assessing the authentic abilities of practitioners.

Don't stop issuing grades. But, place more emphasis on a student's demonstrated skills rather than demonstrated knowledge. Problem-based learning activities and an on-the-job practicum are the best strategies for developing and assessing professional skills (Hallinger & Bridges, 1997).

- 5) Stop relying upon piecemeal, episodic, and project-based practicum experiences that separate the candidate from deep and comprehensive job-embedded learning.

Rationale:

Research on the most effective principal preparation programs clearly shows that in-depth field experiences and, if possible, a full-time apprenticeship with mentoring, accelerate and deepen the preparation of future administrators (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Preparation programs that are able to blend coursework with intensive field experiences provide rich opportunities to bring real problems of leadership into focus with theory and research. Experiencing leadership in the context of a school or district setting further elevates the importance of the human aspects of leadership that include learning how to work as a team player and how to build productive collaborations and partnerships (Fenwick, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lawrence & Nohria, 2002).

- 6) Stop rigidly adhering to a fixed set of lesson plans and learning activities that do not allow for the organic development of knowledge, ideas, and questions or for the differentiated and developmental needs of students.

Rationale:

Adults learn best when allowed to move from one developmental stage to the next at a pace tailored to their own interests, levels of skill, and within relevant real-world contexts. For many adults, the sequencing and timing of learning activities is especially important. Adhering to an inflexible "packaged" schedule of learning activities fails to capitalize on serendipitous opportunities that are ripe for individual inquiry and exploration. In addition, a great deal is lost when professors fail to integrate into course activities real-life problems and issues such as state budget woes, layoff notices, school safety threats, etc., as they occur. In a highly interactive and dynamic learning environment, a self-actualized community of adult learners are motivated by events and ideas that have practical meaning and will collectively seek out new knowledge and opportunities for personal and group development (Knowles, et al., 2005; Lawrence & Nohria, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978).

- 7) Stop emphasizing the development of technical skills without a proportional balance of human and conceptual skills.

Rationale:

School leadership is a social endeavor that depends upon the nature and quality of human interactions and relationships. In fact, the inability to establish and maintain positive and productive relationships with stakeholders is the single most frequent reason why principals lose their jobs (Davis, 1998). Similarly, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) found that the most effective leaders are those who possess high levels of emotional and social intelligence. A failure to master the technical aspects of school leadership, although not unimportant, is generally less important to a leader's job stability and success than a failure to build strong relationships.

Importantly, the qualities of a leader's cognitive and problem solving abilities have been correlated with leadership effectiveness, expertise, resilience, and adaptive abilities (Leithwood, 1995). In addition, Martin (2007) maintained that effective leaders are integrative thinkers who

have the predisposition and the capacity to hold in their heads two opposing ideas at once. And then, without panicking or simply settling for one alternative or the other, they're able to creatively resolve the tension between those two ideas by generating a new one that contains elements of the others but is superior to both (pp. 2–3).

As integrative thinkers, effective leaders are able to function at high levels of cognitive complexity and with well-developed heuristic capacities (Davis & Davis, 2003; Mumford, Friedrich, Caughron, & Byrne, 2007).

Finally, Mezirow (1991) underscored the particular importance of socio-cultural awareness, critical self-reflection, coupled with social discourse, in the development of metacognition and transformative learning in adults (e.g., human skills).

- 8) Stop the preoccupation with individual rather than team performance in leadership development.

Rationale:

It takes a team to lead an effective school. No one person can do it alone. The notion that great leadership is a solitary endeavor depending entirely upon those gifted few who possess heroic properties is obsolete. Stanford management scholars Jeff Pfeffer and Robert Sutton (2006) found that "the best groups perform better than the best individuals," and that "decision quality is enhanced under most conditions when there are multiple, independent inputs" (pp. 198–99). The concept of singular heroic leadership simply doesn't work in most public schools today. Why then, do principal preparation programs continue to cultivate this theory? Why do professors continue to grade students on the basis of their individual accomplishments rather than on the collective accomplishments of teams? Why aren't principal preparation programs designed to assess leadership competence primarily on the basis of teamwork and on the basis of an individual's ability to lead and work productively in teams?

Discontinue the practice of cultivating Lone Rangers. Focus, instead, on cultivating leaders who can facilitate teams and engender an organizational culture of collaboration and shared decision-making (Higgins, Young, Weiner, & Wlodarczyk, 2010).

### **Moving Ahead: Using Andragogy as a Framework for Learning Better Practices**

Most practitioners would agree that pinpointing what doesn't work and what to stop doing is much easier said than done. However, the problem does not rest with a lack of theory or empirically supported literature, but with intransigent perspectives about how adults learn and the factors that motivate adult learners (Pink, 2009). Scholars have studied and illuminated the principles of adult learning for decades, but for a myriad of reasons (e.g., tradition, lack of awareness, sclerotic policies, fear of change, fiscal constraints) programs that prepare school principals have been notoriously tepid about using them.

In this section, we describe a theory of adult learning referred to as andragogy that we believe provides a useful theoretical framework to guide the preparation of school principals. Ironically, the tools and methods often used to train school principals today are vestiges of a bygone era of adult development in which the application of scientific principles of efficiency, authority, management control, and organizational productivity guided the growth of an emerging industrial economy.

Despite the emergence of flattened hierarchies, learning organizations, and distributive leadership practices in 21st Century public schools, the old ways of training principals persist. Even today, the typical educational administration program adheres to the principles of pedagogy (rather than andragogy) characterized by professor-centered vs. student-centered instruction, discrete and abstract academic subjects vs. thematically integrated knowledge, theory-driven vs. problem-driven instruction, and groups of individual learners vs. cohorts of professional learning communities (Hale & Moorman, 2003; McCarthy, 2002).

However, research in leadership and adult learning has made great strides over the years and provides several important principles about leadership development and, by extension, organizational effectiveness.

Over the past century, the tenets of adult learning theory were advanced through Lindeman's (1926) theory of how adults learn from experience, Thorndike's (1928) theory of learning ability in adults, and by Knowles's (1970) elucidation of the theory of andragogy. The term andragogy, first coined in 1833 by German elementary school teacher Alexander Kapp, stands in contrast to the principle of pedagogy in which the naïve child is taught subject content by more learned adults who direct and control learning processes (Knowles, et al., 2005). This new line of inquiry revealed that adult learners require a different instructional approach

that relies more on self-directed learning, real-world problem solving, and life-centered experiences.

Knowles, et al. (2005) provided a widely recognized model of andragogy that consists of six assumptions about the development of adult learners. We believe it is essential that programs adapt these principles to the complex task of preparing school principals.

- 1) **Knowing Why.** Adults need to know why something should be learned before attempting to learn it.
- 2) **Self-actualized self-concept.** Adults need to feel responsible for their own lives, decisions, and learning. They do not learn as well when learning is imposed upon them by others.
- 3) **Accumulated life experiences.** Adult learners possess a vast reservoir of life experiences that shapes their motivations, perspectives, needs, abilities, and styles. Adults define themselves by the experiences they have had.
- 4) **Readiness to learn.** Adults learn best when moving from one developmental stage to the next and within real-world contexts. The timing of learning activities is especially important.
- 5) **Orientation to learning.** Adults learn best when learning activities are problem-based and geared toward the development of practical skills.
- 6) **Internal motivation.** Although adults are responsive to certain types of external reinforcements, the most potent motivators are internal (e.g., desire to improve, to learn, to grow, etc.). (p.64–68)

### **A Case Study of Andragogy in Action: The Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy**

In the preceding sections we have illuminated archaic and ineffective practices and policies commonly used by principal preparation programs in the United States. Moreover, we argued that such practices and policies should be discontinued while providing an empirical rationale for our recommendations. We have also provided an empirically based foundation for how programs that prepare educational leaders should proceed. In the final section of this article, we focus on the flip side of the DoNo-Harm approach by presenting a case study of an innovative principal preparation program, The Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy (GLG-SA) that was explicitly designed around the principles of andragogy and experiential learning theory.

The Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy at California State Polytechnic University Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona) was developed in collaboration with the Pomona Unified School District (PUSD) to accomplish three primary goals, a) prepare thirty new school administrators with the leadership skills to turn around underperforming PUSD schools, b) as-

sess the implementation of an innovative principal preparation program consisting of a full-time mentored administrative apprenticeship; an integrative, problem-based curriculum; a cohort based learning community, and c) the dissemination of research based upon program outcomes.

The PUSD is Cal Poly Pomona's neighboring school district, an important source of post K–12 students, and one of the University's most important service partners. The district is located in the city of Pomona, California, with a population of approximately 165,000. The PUSD enrolls approximately 30,000 students in 43 schools. Eighty-two percent of the students are Hispanic, 6% are African American, 42% are English learners, and over 81% are eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program.

The PUSD is faced with the challenges of high poverty, persistent achievement gaps, growing numbers of English language learners, underperforming special needs students, mis-assigned teachers, and meeting state and federal academic performance criteria. The district is in need of a new generation of educational leaders who can address these challenges assertively and effectively.

The GLGSA features a) rigorous selection process, b) full-time, mentored, administrative apprenticeship, c) thematically integrated, problem-based, instruction, d) cohort-based learning community, e) curriculum based upon the goals and needs of the PUSD and aligned with professional standards, f) on-the-job executive coaching, g) visitations to exemplary schools in the Inland Empire region, and h) close collaboration between university faculty members and school district administrators in all phases of program development and oversight.

A key goal of the GLGSA is to promote a dynamic cohort-based learning community in which each student, and the instructor, investigates and promotes collaborative learning and problem solving and where each student's learning trajectory becomes increasingly self-actualized and autonomous from dependency upon the instructor.

The curriculum is structured around the following components:

- 1) A weekly seminar that integrates theory and practice through the analysis of real-world problems faced by school leaders, their alignment with key theories and concepts in education, and strategies that can be used to resolve them.
- 2) Content modules that teach key administrative and technical skills needed to effectively promote and support powerful teaching and learning in the PUSD.
- 3) A fieldwork practicum based upon the California professional standards of educational leadership and the PUSD developed leadership standards.
- 4) A full-time apprenticeship under the direction of a trained principal-mentor that exposes candidates to the day-to-day challenges and activi-

ties of school leadership, ensures learning experiences that address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions desired by the district in its leadership rubric, and culminates in a school change initiative designed to address an area of need within the school's instructional program.

- 5) Group visitations to one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school in the greater Los Angeles region that have successfully turned around student achievement scores.
- 6) A full year of follow-up executive coaching once the candidate is employed in a PUSD administrative position.

The GLGSA operates under a theory of action in which leadership is best developed through authentic workplace experiences that promote intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning, and that approach learning as problem solving. The GLGSA curriculum consists of key levers—framed around theories of adult learning—that work in concert to progressively develop leadership competence. The problem-based curriculum integrates separate domains of knowledge in the field of school administration and presents them in a format based on state and school district administrative performance standards, yet specifically designed to address the leadership needs of the PUSD. The full-time administrative apprenticeship under the guidance of an experienced, successful, and trained mentor principal provides authentic, hands-on learning activities that effectively bridge the worlds of theory and practice. Moreover, the program carefully attends to the formative needs of each GLGSA student through an extensive use of pre and post assessments in critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, and emotional intelligence. And finally, program planning, operations, and oversight were designed to be highly collaborative and mutually accountable endeavors between school district leaders and GLGSA faculty.

Feedback from the first cohort of GLGSA graduates revealed levels of personal satisfaction, administrative competence, and perceptions of professional efficacy that exceeded those reported by graduates of Cal Poly's traditional administrative credentialing program. The long-term impact of the program on student learning has yet to be determined.

Other programs like the GLGSA are beginning to emerge across the country. Most notable are the New York City Leadership Academy, the Delta State University school leadership program, and the non-profit New Leaders for New Schools principal preparation program. Programs like these exemplify the theories of adult learning and challenge longstanding and deeply rooted pedagogical practices that are no longer sufficient to prepare school principals for 21st Century schools.

### **Concluding Comment**

Knowing what not to do in the process of preparing school principals is no mystery. In fact, the roadmap to well-designed preparation

programs has been available and well known for years. Nevertheless, too many programs persist on adhering to antiquated policies and practices such as those implemented at the DoNoHarm School of Medicine that rely more on theories of pedagogy than theories of andragogy and problem-based approaches to learning (Fry, et al., 2006). Granted, some will reasonably argue that such things as mentored apprenticeships are costly and that a thematically integrated curriculum subordinates content knowledge for problem-solving ability. It is our position, however, that weak practice is weak practice, regardless of the costs. It is also our position that more enlightened and effective methods of preparing practice-ready principals are not only possible, but are emerging with increasing frequency in programs across the country (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Finally, although we do not envision a rapid corrective response within the profession to our expose of ineffective practices, we do hope to stimulate a vigorous discourse that challenges the status quo.

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