

Developing a National Model for Principal Preparation through Service Leadership

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This paper describes the redesign process for a Principal Preparation Program (PPP) that is grounded in strong service-learning elements and evidence-based outcomes. The PPP design team developed the Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation (SLF4LP) which blends research-based service learning and servant leadership principles (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Greenleaf, 1990; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The PPP and its faculty have a rich tradition of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. To preserve this legacy, the redesign process maintained a positive culture of teamwork, partnership, and collaboration among candidates, colleagues, administrators, and external stakeholders. An overview of the value-added SLF4LP components will be provided and the impact of each component will be discussed.

This paper describes the redesign process for a Principal Preparation Program (PPP) that is grounded in strong service-learning activities, servant leadership practices, and evidence-based outcomes. The PPP incorporates the practices and principles of service-learning and servant leadership. This leadership preparation program builds “servant leadership capacity” through a leadership development model that starts with authentic service opportunities in local schools. PPP candidates complete Service Leadership Projects (SLPs), and serve and support *real* improvement efforts, as they collaborate with their school partners. This article will provide an overview of the service-learning and servant leadership program components, as well as the Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation (SLF4LP). In addition, the authors will describe the value-added design components and share program evaluation data from their experiences of implementing this innovative preparation program.

The PPP design team developed the Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation (SLF4LP) which blends research-based service learning and servant leadership principles (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Greenleaf, 1990; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The PPP and its faculty have a rich tradition of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. To preserve this legacy, the redesign process maintained a positive culture of teamwork, partnership, and collaboration among candidates, colleagues, administrators, and external school district stakeholders. An overview of the value-added SLF4LP program components will be provided and the impact of each component will be discussed.

The Problem

The PPP professors faced several challenges and expectations during the development and redesign process. Various external stakeholders had expectations that had to be met. These expectations included: (a) to redesign and implement the PPP *with* school district partners, (b) to provide rigorous leadership preparation to ensure school leader success upon graduation, (c) to develop a strong principal pipeline from recruitment, to screening, to admissions, to preparation, to induction, and (d) to align the redesigned PPP to national and state standards (for both leadership practitioner standards and leadership preparation program standards).

Program Design and Program Evaluation Questions

The aforementioned expectations from external stakeholders led PPP professors to ask both program design questions and program evaluation questions. The program design questions included: (a) Could we design a PPP that is a true partnership *with* our school districts? (b) Could we design a PPP that ensures the success of each graduate as they transition into school leadership positions? (c) Could we design a PPP that provides a strong principal pipeline for our region (from recruitment, to screening, to admissions, to preparation, to induction)? (d) Could we design a PPP that is aligned to national and state standards? The program evaluation questions included: (a) How are we going to evaluate our partnerships with school districts? (b) How are we going to evaluate the success of each graduate as they transition into leadership positions? (c) How are we going to evaluate the strength of the principal pipeline in our region? (d) How are we going to evaluate our alignment with national and state standards?

Program Overview and the Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation

This PPP enhances principal preparation through the Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation (SLF4LP), which embeds authentic field-based experiences, rich clinical experiences, and purposeful mentoring and coaching over a period of two years. The PPP is delivered in cohorts which are strategically located in partnering school districts in eastern North Carolina with PPP professors traveling to the field-based experience/clinical experience sites for teaching and coaching on a weekly basis.

The PPP professors are committed to preparing and supporting the current and future school leaders in its region, so the leaders can, in turn, transform the schools and communities where they serve. PPP professors believe transformational leadership starts with serving others, and therefore, the PPP leadership training starts with service opportunities within schools and school districts. With a significant service learning component, the current PPP is nationally accredited by National Board of Professors of Educational Administration (NPBEA) formerly known as Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC) and authorized by the state's department of public instruction. Seven (7) of the Master of School Administration (MSA) courses are approved with a national service learning course designation. This service learning component requires MSA candidates to immerse themselves in problems of practice from the very beginning of their program. Each course's learning objectives require candidates to go back to their principal and ask, "How can I help? How can I serve?" The PPP candidates benefit from this authentic learning and schools receive valuable assistance with their transformation efforts: A win-win!

The PPP encourages and supports candidates to serve as problem-solvers, communicators, innovators, collaborators, and change agents in their respective schools and school districts. A supportive school and district setting is essential for PPP candidates as they immerse themselves in these service learning experiences.

Over the last several years, PPP professors have learned a great deal about the positive impact of service learning on both the leadership development of its candidates and the schools throughout the region. From these experiences, PPP professors developed the SLF4LP. The SLF4LP provides candidates with opportunities to work with principals and other appropriate personnel on: (a) data collection, (b) data analysis, (c) needs identification, (d) problem-solving, (e) comprehensive planning, (f) action plan implementation, and (g) evaluation.

The PPP candidates discover the power of "service" and practice the transformational skills of leading through serving and serving through leading (Noel & Earwicker, 2014). The PPP components are the result of (a) meaningful, ongoing discussions with public school partners (i.e. superintendents, central office leaders, principals, assistant principals, agency leaders, higher education faculty, PPP candidates, PPP graduates, and community college faculty); (b) a thorough review of other PPPs throughout the nation; and (c) the infusion of best leadership preparation practices within a 21st century learning framework.

The PPP professors provide aspiring leaders the training and support they need along their leadership path to become highly qualified instructional leaders with a strong service ethic, who can work effectively with diverse rural school communities. This PPP utilizes research-based service learning curriculum (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Greenleaf, 1990; Henderson & Mapp, 2002) and leadership theory (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Manna, 2015) and embedded assessments to coach candidates to be effective rural school principals.

This PPP is also conceptually grounded in the university's motto *Servire* or "to serve." The university has a long-standing history of service to the region and to the state. In addition, the PPP and its faculty have a rich tradition of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. To preserve this legacy, the PPP maintained a positive culture of teamwork, partnership, and collaboration among candidates, colleagues, administrators, and external stakeholders.

Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation—Overarching Values

The PPP was redesigned with strong servant leadership values. The following values support the mission of the PPP and lead to benefits for the PPP graduates and their respective schools.

Value 1—Service Learning. Every opportunity to serve is an opportunity to learn. The PPP is grounded in service-learning pedagogy. Cress (2005) describes service learning as a pedagogy wherein "students and their instructors are leaving the classroom and engaging with their communities in order to make learning come alive and to experience real-life connections between their education and everyday issues in their cities, towns, and states." (p. 7) Kaye (2010) emphasizes the importance of service learning and how it leads to reciprocal benefits for students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. In addition, Kaye (2010) highlights that service-learning makes the learning experience more active, relevant, motivating, empowering, collaborative, and engaging for all participants. The PPP provides candidates with these types of structured service-learning opportunities to enhance the candidates' learning experiences and to ensure purposeful collaboration with their schools and school districts. The PPP candidates also serve in an authentic setting which grounds each course's objectives within the SLF4LP (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Greenleaf, 1990; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sigmon, 1979). Contextual leadership preparation—working with real stakeholders to address real challenges—allows PPP candidates the rich "real world" experiences to refine their leadership skills.

Value 2—Candidate-Centered Learning. The PPP delivery model reflects learning by doing instead of learning by lecture only. The PPP professors realized that teaching something does not guarantee that the candidates learn it. The role of the faculty has shifted from teacher-centered to candidate-centered. Faculty see themselves more as leadership coaches to future principals (LaPointe, Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, 2007; Levine, 2005). The PPP classes include many practice and application opportunities via (a) dynamic lectures, (b) simulations, (c) case studies, (d) role play, (e) field experiences, and (f) cooperative learning.

Value 3—Irrefutable Evidence-Based and Project-Based Learning. The best indicator of what you will do—is what you have done. During each course, PPP candidates complete Service Leadership Projects (SLPs) that are aligned to the *North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Proficiency Indicators for Pre-service Principals* (May 2, 2013). These SLPs also provide clear and convincing evidence that each PPP candidate has worked in a school with school stakeholders to complete projects that address real issues. The PPP graduates can confidently share at job interviews what they have accomplished to promote (a) school improvement, (b) teacher empowerment and leadership, (c) instructional leadership, (d) community engagement, (e) organizational management, and (g) school culture and safety at their respective schools.

Value 4—Authentic Outcomes for Stakeholders. The impact of an effective school leader must be measured by more than students' test scores. An effective principal collaborates with stakeholders to set and meet high expectations for everyone in the school community. As PPP candidates complete each SLP, they must maintain an action plan with a record of their action steps. These action steps are evidence-based examples of their teamwork and collaboration with a

variety of community stakeholders (Copland, 2000). They must also capture the impact of their leadership by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Candidates learn the value of listening to stakeholders and gathering their language throughout the SLP process. The impact of the candidate's leadership can be found in the various stakeholders' comments about how the project was completed and their thoughts on the outcome. Candidates also develop a short digital story about their SLP work and highlight the outcomes for stakeholders. These digital stories are included on a website and are also used as artifacts in recruitment activities and program assessment activities.

Value 5—Service Leadership. Every interaction is an opportunity to lead (Greenleaf, 1990). The PPP candidates exhibit characteristics of servant leaders: (a) visionaries for school improvement, (b) effective listeners in their school community, (c) effective communicators, (d) empathic leaders, (e) leaders by example, and (f) leaders through service (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Value 6—Caring Relationships. Leading is intensely interpersonal (Barth, 2001). School leadership is about working with people; therefore, building caring and trusting relationships between faculty and PPP candidates is essential to ensure program success. In addition, principals, superintendents, and PPP faculty have developed a system in which PPP candidates—starting from the admissions process—are identified as potential leaders and enter the PPP with a written agreement signed by the candidate, their principal, and their superintendent committing to provide necessary support throughout the PPP. Halfway through the program, PPP candidates receive formal formative feedback on their leadership competencies from their principals and PPP faculty. This process is repeated at the end of the program with formal summative feedback on leadership competencies aligned to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (NCSSE, 2013).

Value 7—Ethical Behaviors. A leader is the moral compass of the school (Northouse, 2015). Ethical behaviors are essential for providing a school culture that has high expectations for student learning. The PPP uses case studies and “*What Do You Say?*” round-robin scenarios to address challenging issues in school administration.

Service Leadership Framework for Leadership Preparation--Key Components

The PPP's SLF4LP has seven key components to ensure the success of each candidate as they move from recruitment, to screening, to admissions, to preparation, and eventually transition into the field. The following sections provide a description of each key component and a summary of the program impact data related to each component.

SLF4LP Key Component 1—Selection by Design. The PPP has a proactive, intentional, and district-supported recruitment strategy that runs from the recruitment stage to the screening stage to the admissions stage. This research-based selection process is designed to ensure a strong principal pipeline for school district partners. The PPP's recruitment efforts begin with strong relationships with school superintendents and principals forged over decades of trust and service to the region. Faculty members and school district stakeholders schedule evening recruitment events and individual recruitment sessions to establish PPP cohort programs across the region. The PPP integrates these strategies into a comprehensive recruitment and admission plan in which public school partners are active participants in the recruitment and admission process. The PPP candidates are required to obtain a letter of recommendation or endorsement from the superintendent or his/her direct designee and a principal who agrees to actively coach the

candidate throughout the program. This letter of support is the foundation of a partnership to foster innovation and promote a culture of change that embraces continuous school improvement.

With this recommendation, the superintendent agrees to work with the PPP by: (1) endorsing their candidate can and will be involved in significant early field experiences within the school system as a part of the candidate's coursework, and (2) creating quality leadership experiences wherein the candidate is able to participate in service learning in his/her LEA.

PPP's Selection Criteria. The PPP's rigorous selection criteria are based on competencies that predict success as a school leader. The PPP's systemic screening and selection criteria establish professional learning communities that serve as strong models for improved communication, innovation, and collaboration throughout the program. The screening criteria for the PPP are based on a research-based selection process designed in 2008, which include a required signed letter of support, a written sample responding to leadership scenarios, and an interview. The PPP's selection criteria, embedded in the interviews and written scenarios, incorporate seven (7) key leadership areas synthesized from competencies that are predictive of success as a school leader (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Orr, 2005; Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe, & Orr, 2010; Mana, 2015; NPBEA, 2015; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Wallace Foundation, 2016) and are aligned to the 21 Leadership Competencies from the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (NCSSE).

The PPP uses the following Key Predictors of Leadership Potential (KPLP) during the screening process:

1. *Understands Self:* The candidate has an awareness of his/her strengths and weaknesses. The candidate is cognizant of these traits and understands how they can impact others positively and negatively (NCSSE: Emotional Intelligence).

2. *Commits to Strong Leadership through Service:* The candidate has an awareness that leadership starts with serving others. The candidate demonstrates evidence of "leadership through service" in their school, school district, and/or community (NCSSE: Customer Focus, Organizational Ability, Responsiveness, and Results Orientation).

3. *Promotes a Vision of High Expectations for All:* The candidate has an awareness of what teaching and learning should look like and sound like in a school. The candidate a commitment to high expectations for all (NCSSE: Global Perspective, Visionary).

4. *Develops Self and Others:* The candidate has a commitment to improving himself/herself. The candidate has a commitment to supporting the development of others. The candidate demonstrates a commitment to develop self and others (NCSSE: Delegation, Personal Ethics and Values, Personal Responsibility for Performance).

5. *Initiates Creative and Collaborative Problem Solving:* The candidate has a passion for helping others and improving schools. The candidate demonstrates a commitment to creative and collaborative problem-solving (NCSSE: Creative Thinking, Change Management, Environmental Awareness, Systems Thinking, Technology, and Time Management).

6. *Establishes Supportive Relationships Built on Trust and Mutual Respect:* The candidate values the importance of relationships built on trust and mutual respect. The candidate provides clear evidence of an established a network of support for their leadership training (NCSSE: Dialogue/Inquiry, Judgment, and Sensitivity).

7. *Communicates Ideas Clearly and with Optimism:* The candidate clearly communicates their thoughts, values, and beliefs to others. The candidate has a positive outlook when presented with a set of challenges and promotes a sense of possibility (NCSSE: Communication).

PPP Selection Criteria Impact Data. The PPP professors interview each candidate and give a score of 1, 2, or 3 for each of the key predictors. The highest score for a candidate is a 21. These scores are analyzed and discussed during the admission decision process. The PPP reviewers can see all the candidates’ scores and comments. The utilization of these criteria increases the quality of incoming candidates, strengthens cohort collaboration, and ensures program success for each candidate. Table 1 provides a snapshot of the overall average of each incoming PPP cohort on each key predictor and a total composite score.

Table 1
Incoming PPP Cohort Composite Score on Interview

Year	Key Predictors of Leadership Potential	Average Score
2016	Understands Self	2.67
	Commits to Strong Leadership through Service	2.80
	Promotes a Vision of High Expectations for All	2.67
	Develops Self and Others	2.54
	Initiates Creative and Collaborative Problem Solving	2.63
	Establishes Supportive Relationships Built on Trust and Mutual Respect	2.80
	Communicates Ideas Clearly and with Optimism	2.76
	Total Composite Score	18.83
2017	Understands Self	2.73
	Commits to Strong Leadership through Service	2.79
	Promotes a Vision of High Expectations for All	2.86
	Develops Self and Others	2.74
	Initiates Creative and Collaborative Problem Solving	2.76
	Establishes Supportive Relationships Built on Trust and Mutual Respect	2.81
	Communicates Ideas Clearly and with Optimism	2.76
	Total Composite Score	19.31

SLF4LP Key Component 2—Purposeful Partnership. The PPP was designed in collaboration with public school partners with a special emphasis in involving all area superintendents. The PPP professors engaged in two major initiatives in revising the PPP to intimately involve its public school partners. A team of two PPP faculty members conducted over

30 individual superintendent interviews. Information from these meetings was used in the revision and will be used in ongoing collaborative initiatives and program evaluations. To ensure ongoing public school input, superintendents, the cross-functional team, and other school and agency advisory committees will be utilized.

During this PPP redesign process, a 12-member Cross-Functional Team with representation from K12 public schools, higher education, and other state affiliated organizations provided strong links to the needs in their schools and school districts. The PPP Cross-Functional Team engaged in a set of activities focused on developing a clear vision for the program.

The following is an outline of the membership at the time of the PPP redesign: (a) Superintendent – 1, (b) Central office – 1, (c) Principal – 4, (d) Assistant Principal – 1, (e) Outside State Affiliated Agencies – 2, (f) Higher Education Faculty – 5.

The PPP professors and district leaders partner to provide on-site coaching for each candidate. There are clear expectations for and firm commitments from district school leaders who will oversee the clinical practice of candidates. The PPP mentors provide PPP interns with opportunities to complete required experiences outlined by the SLF4LP, and SLP Handbook, and may add their experiences and knowledge to assist the intern in successfully completing the internship.

In the PPP, the mentor and PPP faculty work more collaboratively and in greater depth to ensure the candidate is mentored appropriately throughout the internship. The PPP professors provide the school partners (i.e. district supervisors, site supervisors, principal mentors) with training in coaching and mentoring.

PPP Partnership Impact Data. The PPP has been delivered in cohorts of 15 to 18 candidates at local schools or school district meeting rooms. The PPP cohorts have been offered in the counties below:

- 2016 – 2018 County C, County J, County O, County NE, County L
- 2015 – 2017 County C, County J, County O
- 2014 – 2016 County C, County W1, County W2
- 2013 – 2015 County C, County W1, County W2
- 2012 – 2014 County C, County N, County W

Over the last 2 years, there were 67 PPP candidates from high need school districts in the service region. The following table summarizes the counties and the number of their PPP graduates. (see Table 2)

Table 2

Number of PPP Graduates in High Need School Districts

High Need School District	# of PPP graduates
County B1	2
County B2	1
County C1	1
County C2	4
County C3	1
County D1	1

County E1	1
County F1	1
County G1	4
County J1	1
County J2	3
County L1	5
County M1	5
County N1	3
County O1	9
County P1	17
County W1	7
County W2	1
Total	67

These PPP candidates have completed approximately 67,000 internship hours and over 469 Service Leadership Projects across these high need districts which represent an additional impact of 18,000 hours of service and leadership.

The PPP develops principals in distant rural geographical locations in the eastern region of an eastern state that have limited or no access to PPPs and thus create a pipeline of “home grown” effective school leaders.

It is important to note that 137 (65%) PPP graduates are currently working in a rural school district—classified as either (a) rural, remote; (b) rural, distant; or (c) rural, fringe. The PPP intends to support rural school districts by helping superintendents “grow their own” principal pipeline (Rawls, 2016).

Additional PPP Partnership Impact Data. The strong relationships with the PPP's regional partners have resulted in numerous learning exchanges that result in program adjustments and improvements. The PPP surveys its graduates to determine what worked well and what needs improvement. The PPP professors hold informational sessions throughout the region and these sessions provide an opportunity listen to prospective candidates, their school and district leaders, and other community stakeholders to learn more about specific challenges facing schools and school systems. The “plus/delta” survey that PPP interns and supervising principals complete each year is a helpful tool in determining how to strengthen its program so the PPP can serve its candidates and their stakeholders better.

The PPP has a long history of serving the school districts across the region which has led to strong relationships with school district leaders and community stakeholders. The PPP is represented at quarterly Regional Education Service Alliance (RESA) meetings across its service region (Northeast RESA, Southeast RESA, and Central Carolina RESA).

The PPP is enhanced by an established relationship and feedback loop with: (a) school district leaders, (b) a board of advisors, and (c) cross functional teams. School district leaders have been essential partners in the design of the PPP and have agreed to support candidates and provide them with authentic settings to complete their SLPs.

SLF4LP Key Component 3—Service Leadership Experiences Linked to Student Achievement. As an educational leader, PPP candidates learn to identify areas of need within their school and work with others to develop a course of action to address specific needs that will ultimately improve student achievement.

The SLF4LP (see Figure 1) provides the conceptual framework for the PPP. The framework links PPP Leadership Themes, with School Improvement at the center. A candidate’s first SLP will be on School Improvement by determining areas of need in their school. For each SLP, candidates (a) document the number of hours dedicated to this project, (b) determine quantitative and qualitative impact to the school’s culture, and (c) link the SLPs impact to student learning growth and achievement.

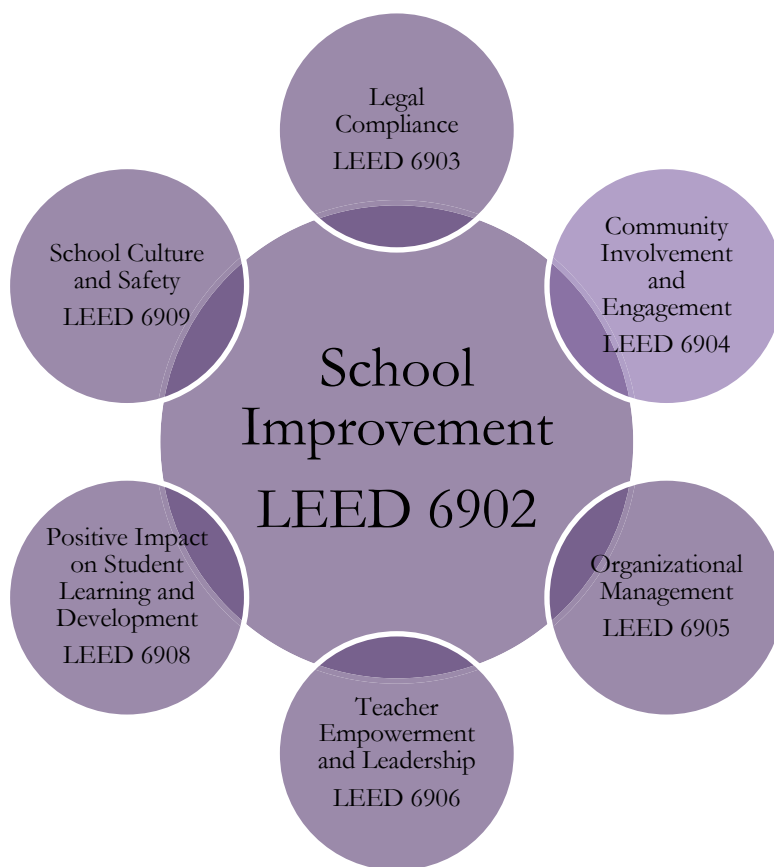


Figure 1. Service Leadership Preparation Framework (SLF4LP)

The PPP candidates complete seven SLPs in schools over a period of two years in addition to their internship. These SLPs have impacted and improved schools in the following leadership themes: (a) Positive Impact on Student Learning and Development, (b) Teacher Empowerment and Leadership, (c) Community Involvement and Engagement, (d) Legal Compliance, (e) Organizational Management, (f) School Culture and Safety, and (g) School Improvement.

The SLF4LP provides candidates with opportunities to work with principals and other appropriate personnel on (a) data collection, (b) data analysis, (c) needs identification, (d) problem-solving, (e) comprehensive planning, (f) action plan implementation, and (g) evaluation.

For example, candidates might work with their principal to determine that support for beginning teachers is a key area of concern. For their School Improvement SLP, students would research this area and determine a research-based plan for improvement. While working on the School Improvement SLP, students could also look at the other six leadership development areas and determine that (a) School Culture and Safety, (b) Legal Compliance, (c) Community Involvement and Engagement, and (d) Teacher Empowerment and Leadership issues could also be addressed. The key is to “step back” and examine the connections across these leadership development areas and determine how to best use them to support real school transformation.

To enhance the service leadership experience for candidates, the PPP is grounded in seven (7) value-added program elements:

1. *Understanding of Self.* As candidates participate in leadership simulations and field experiences, they are challenged to reflect on their strengths and weakness. The PPP candidates reflect on how to improve their current leadership practices, and they consider their (a) thinking habits, (b) speaking habits, and (c) serving habits as they support the work of others.

2. *Leadership via Immersion.* The best predictor of what you are going to do is what you have done, and the best predictor of how you are going to lead is how you have led! The PPP candidates are immersed in Service Leadership Projects that allow them an opportunity to serve their school and its stakeholders. They are encouraged to approach their current principal with a humble posture and ask how they can best serve and support the school. These SLPs run throughout the entire program which enhances their immersion in authentic leadership experiences. Students also receive ongoing coaching and feedback from PPP professors as they complete their SLPs, which ensure improved leadership performance.

3. *Purpose-Driven.* The PPP candidates learn about the transformational power of servant leadership and are challenged to consider viewing leadership through a servant leadership lens. Many candidates have an initial impression that servant leadership sounds weak and does not fit the leadership power narrative that they have experienced in their professional settings. However, candidates are encouraged to approach their current principal with a humble posture and ask how they can best serve and support the school. Students ask, “How can I help you?” and “What can I do to support you and your work?” This leadership posture provides a strong start and a clear purpose for their SLP, as candidates clearly seek a specific need to address in the school.

4. *Data-Directed.* Candidates learn the difference between being data-driven and being data-directed. Data-driven is a term that can represent how some leaders unapologetically make decisions based on a narrow set of data points. (i.e. test scores, assessment results, school’s performance grade from the state, etc.). In other words, data drives the organization—not the leader. Leaders fear the consequences of consistently low test scores and make reactionary decisions that often lead to an unhealthy and depersonalized school culture. Decisions are made based solely on a student’s test score, and over time, the culture focuses more on getting the scores up and less on the individual students and the whole child and the whole family. However, a data-driven approach includes the same data points mentioned above AND includes other quantitative data and qualitative data points to help the leader facilitate decision-making based on a more comprehensive data set. A leader who is purpose-driven (see above) and data-directed places a high value on personalized data sources (i.e. conversations with parents and students, open-ended survey questions from stakeholders, etc.). A purpose driven, data-directed approach to decision-

making leads to improved student learning conditions, improved teacher working conditions, and an overall healthier organization.

5. *Language of Leadership.* The PPP is grounded in the belief that you can become fluent in the Language of Leadership. As candidates complete their SLPs in the field, they listen to stakeholders and capture stakeholder language related to their SLP. Candidates examine the patterns of this stakeholder language and evaluate the implications of why stakeholders are saying these words. Candidates learn how to distinguish between Best Practice Language (BPL) and poor language from stakeholders. Candidates are also challenged to reflect on their own language patterns and to listen and capture the language of great leaders. Throughout the PPP, candidates (a) become more aware of their language patterns, (b) adopt stronger leadership language for themselves, and (c) become more fluent in the Language of Leadership.

6. *Leadership Practices Grounded in Research.* As PPP candidates complete their SLPs, they read research studies to find the best practices related to their specific project. For example, if the principal wants the candidate to initiate an SLP to increase parental involvement in the school, then the candidate compiles a research table on the studies, programs, and practices that have had a positive impact on improving parental involvement in other schools. The candidate shares these findings with stakeholders at the school and incorporates these practices as much as possible at the school. The candidates are also able to integrate this “research language” into their language of leadership.

7. *Irrefutable Evidence of Impact on Schools.* The SLP experiences for PPP candidates are compiled into individual leadership portfolios for each student. The SLPs focus on the areas of: (1) Positive Impact on Student Learning and Development, (2) Teacher Empowerment and Leadership, (3) Community Involvement and Engagement, (4) Organizational Management, (5) School Culture and Safety, (6) School Improvement. For each SLP, candidates (a) gather and analyze a comprehensive set of data points from their school, (b) set strategic priorities, (c) meet with the principal to determine their focused area of need, (d) gather stakeholder and researcher language, (e) generate an action plan—with action steps of their leadership activities, and (d) summarize the impact of their leadership with both quantitative and qualitative data.

As indicated in element six, to support their SLP experiences, candidates draw on the research and practices that provide the correlation between principal leadership and student achievement, which provide a rationale for schools to host candidates and their SLPs. Candidates explore the literature prepared to find the practice that provides results and the practice that promises but does not deliver. They find that the literature rebounds from the work of Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, and Goddard (2015), who hypothesized that student achievement would increase logically following improvement in principal leadership and reduction in teacher turnover. The researchers found that despite implementing programs to improve principal leadership and reduce teacher turnover, data indicated that there was no significant improvement in student achievement. Corcoran, Schwartz, and Weinstein (2012) provided mixed results linking student achievement to principal leadership. Their data indicate that principal leadership in low-performing schools improved English language arts scores but not math scores.

Despite the findings of Jacob et al. (2015) and Corcoran et al. (2012), other researchers have connected principal leadership with student achievement (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Edmonds, 1979; Glatthorn & Jailall, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Lezotte, 1991). Further, according to Rodriguez (2008), principal leadership lifted a high poverty school from Academically Low Performing to Academically Recognized in one year. Likewise, Pyo (2013) found that principals’ instructional leadership had a positive impact on high school students’

achievement in math. In a different but still positive view of principal leadership, McGuigan and Hoy (2008) concluded that principals who control variables to promote academic optimism among students and teachers lead schools that demonstrate higher student achievement. Most recently, in a study using 2015 PISA data focused on fifteen-year-old students, Wu, H., Gao, X., & Shen, J. (2018) found principals' instructional leadership positively related to student achievement.

Students. The SLP-rich curriculum is grounded in the literature that supports project-based learning that is linked to student achievement. The literature encompasses process, education levels, degrees of student/candidate achievement, and subject matter. Overall, the literature provides much in the way of defining and implementing project-based learning in virtually all levels of instruction (Bauer, 2014; Coffey, n.d.) Initially, David (2008) indicated that the literature provides much discussion on the difficulty of implementing project-based learning effectively but provides little in the way of support for its impact on student achievement. Since David's assertion, Duke, Halverson, and Strachan (2016) found that project-based learning has produced significant student achievement in elementary literacy skills and social studies, specifically improving high school social studies' AP scores. The work of Duke et al. (2016) also asserted that student achievement was significant for students in schools with high poverty, especially narrowing the poverty gap in literacy skills. Their results provide support for using project-based learning with students of low socioeconomic status who according to Weber et al., 2010, were the lowest performers on national standardized assessments and the most likely to drop out of high school. This glimpse into the literature reveals the sturdy foundation upon which the SLP-curriculum is anchored.

Candidates. In addition to the link to the host school's benefitting from candidates' SLPs, the literature provides robust testimony and support for the benefits that the candidates garner as they successfully complete their SLPs, which are an integral part of the framework. Stone, Grantham, Harmancioglu, and Ibrahim (2007) found that graduate and undergraduate business candidates who participated in community-based projects believed their projects better prepared them for their careers. In fact, several studies that examined different disciplines found positive benefits for candidates who participated: (a) physical therapy candidates who worked in communities with high poverty (Anderson, Taylor, & Gahimer, 2014); (b) agricultural candidates who worked together on a national poster contest (Bonczek, Snyder, & Ellis, 2007); (c) mental health workers who participated in pre-service social work in the community (Iachini & Wolfer, 2015), and (d) teachers in a learning-by-doing graduate course (Chen, 2017). In a certification program without previous significant studies, Jenkins and Sheehey (2009) found that graduate and undergraduate candidates pursuing special education teaching degrees learned best in courses that incorporated SLPs. In their study of graduate candidates focusing their service in community libraries across the state of North Carolina, Becnel and Moeller (2017) found support for candidates benefits of SLPs delivered innovatively on-line.

Seymour (2013) found support for how well candidates learned team-building skills. More general benefits but no less important were identified by Lowenthal and Sosland (2007), who found that alumni indicated that non-traditional instruction such as SLPs led to stronger academic performance and more successful careers.

Three studies provided support for the benefits of SLPs while candidates studied abroad. Hull, Kimmel, Rogertson, and Mortimer (2016) found that candidates who participated in projects while studying in China were engaged successfully with business, government, and non-government groups. Araujo, Arantes, Danza, Pinheiro, and Garbin (2016) found SLPs delivered in Brazil provided not only problem- and project-based learning but also "real-world" learning.

Rajdev (2011) found a similar result but added the importance of cultural awareness that candidates learned while participating in an SLP in India.

Baker and Murray (2011) found that an afterschool SLP benefitted the undergraduate teaching candidates seeking a special education degree. Grant, Malloy, Murphy, Foreman, and Robinson (2010) found that Information Systems graduates involved in SLPs arranged with a local business sharpened their skills.

PPP Link to Student Achievement Impact Data. The PPP candidates, mentors, and faculty participate in multiple forms of assessments throughout the program to assess: (a) the candidate as a leader, (b) the candidate's evidences and artifacts of their leadership performance, (c) the candidate's leadership competency, and (d) the candidate's impact on their individual schools. Candidates complete the *NCSSE Self-Assessment* (SBE, 2015) a pre-assessment of each candidate prior to starting the internship and then again as a post assessment of the internship. These assessments rate each candidate's practices within each of the NCSSE standards using a Likert scale from 0 to 4 and Not applicable where 0 indicates not applicable, 1-indicates little, 2-indicates some, 3-indicates good, and 4-indicates strong experiences with each of the 12 practices. In addition, the candidates, mentors, and PPP faculty will conduct a formative assessment and a summative assessment of the NCSSE Competencies during the internship. These sources of data are utilized to determine the candidates' leadership skills and dispositions.

Each PPP candidate completes 7 SLPs in schools over a period of two years in addition to their internship. These SLPs have impacted and improved schools in the following leadership themes (see Figure 1): (a) Positive Impact on Student Learning and Development, (b) Teacher Empowerment and Leadership, (c) Community Involvement and Engagement, (d) Legal Compliance, (e) Organizational Management, (f) School Culture and Safety, and (g) School Improvement.

The PPP candidates also submit evidences from their SLPs to show they meet the NC School Executives Pre-Service Candidate Rubric. The rubric outlines the criteria for Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Accomplished pre-service school leaders. Each PPP candidate must demonstrate irrefutable evidence for all the proficiency descriptors to meet the NC principal licensure guidelines. The SLP framework embedded in the PPP provides a clear process for meeting these licensure guidelines. Each SLP has specific proficiency descriptors assigned to it (see Appendix A). The PPP candidates complete each SLP and compile their evidence into an electronic portfolio. Once a student has successfully completed seven (7) SLPs and successfully presented evidence via electronic portfolio, they meet the state's principal licensure guidelines.

Additional samples of candidate data can be found in Appendix B. Appendix B is a sample of candidate rubric results for SLP 1.

SLF4LP Key Component 4—Alignment to High-Quality National and State Standard. Alignment to high-quality national and state standards for school leadership development is a vital component of the PPP. As previously mentioned, this PPP has been accredited by the National Board of Professors of Educational Administration (NPBEA) formerly known as ELCC, since 2001. The following link is to the national accreditation website that features this PPP: <http://www.ncate.org/tabid/165/Default.aspx>.

The PPP is also aligned with the NC Standards for School Executives and the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric (NCSEER) (see Table 3). The PPP candidates complete evidences (or SLPs) on seven themes: (1) Positive Impact on Student Learning and Development, (2) Teacher Empowerment and Leadership, (3) Community Involvement and

Engagement, (4) Organizational Management, (5) School Culture and Safety, (6) School Improvement, and (7) Legal Compliance.

Table 3

Alignment to NCSSE standards, ELCC standards, and NCSEER Preservice Standards

ELCC Standards	NCSSE Standards	NCSEER preservice
ELCC Standard 1	Standard 1. Strategic leadership	1a. School Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals 1b. Leading Change 1c. School Improvement Plan
ELCC Standard 2	Standard 2. Instructional Leadership Standard 4. Human Resource Leadership	2a. Focus on Learning and Teaching, Curriculum and Assessment 2b. Focus on Instructional Time 4a. Professional Development/Learning Communities 4b. Hiring, Placing and Mentoring of Staff 4c. Teacher and Staff Evaluation 5b. Conflict Management and Resolution 6a. Parent and Community Involvement and Outreach
ELCC Standard 3	Standard 3. Cultural Leadership Standard 5. Managerial Leadership	1d. Distributive Leadership 2b. Focus on Instructional Time 3a. Focus on Collaborative Work Environment 3b. School Culture and Identity 3d. Efficacy and Empowerment 5a. School Resources and Budget 5c. Systemic Communication 5d. School Expectations for Students and Staff
ELCC Standard 4	Standard 3. Cultural Leadership Standard 6. External Development	2a. Focus on learning and Teaching, Curriculum and Assessment 3a. Focus on Collaborative Work Environment 3b. School Culture and Identity 5b. Conflict Management and Resolution 5c. Systemic Communication 6a. Parent and Community Involvement and Outreach 7a. School Executive Micropolitical Leadership
ELCC Standard 5	Standard 3. Cultural Leadership Standard 6. External Development Standard 7. Micropolitical Leadership	2b. Focus on Instructional Time 3c Acknowledges Failures; Celebrates Accomplishments and Rewards 4c. Teacher and Staff Evaluation 5b. Conflict Management and Resolution 5d. School Expectations for Students and Staff 6b. Federal, State and District Mandates 7a. School Executive Micro-political Leadership

ELCC Standard 6	Standard 1. Strategic Leadership Standard 6. External Development	1b. Leading change 1c. School improvement plan 6b. Federal, State and District Mandates
ELCC Standard 7	Each NCSE Standard delineates practices of what one would see in an effective executive doing in each standard.	Each NCSEER delineates indicators that describe the practices that a PPP candidate should experience

PPP Alignment to Standards Impact Data. This PPP has been accredited by the National Board of Professors of Educational Administration (NPBEA) formerly known as Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), since 2001. The following link is to the national accreditation website that features this PPP: <http://www.ncate.org/tabid/165/Default.aspx>.

SLF4LP Key Component 5—Authentic Leadership Practice (Simulations, Field Experiences, and Internship). The PPP has a strong legacy of service and leadership to its region and state. It develops leaders who can engage their constituents and communities and serve as transformational leaders to improve the quality of education and quality of life in eastern North Carolina. The PPP is also centered on (a) the integration of Educational Leadership theory, (b) best practices, (c) practical applications, and (d) coaching through extensive field and clinical experiences. The PPP encompasses the following three phases (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010): (1) leadership development through simulation; (2) leadership development through problem-based learning in field experiences, and (3) leadership development through a supervised internship.

Phase 1. The first phase of the PPP identifies the candidate’s leadership skills and dispositions. Candidates immerse themselves in a simulation (NASSP, 2016) that will help them identify their leadership strengths and weaknesses and use these findings as a guide to leadership skill development throughout the candidate’s program of study.

Phase 2. The second phase of the PPP includes problem-based learning through SLPs and extensive field experiences that require candidates to work with (a) principals, (b) other administrators, (c) school improvement teams, (d) teachers, (e) staff, and (f) other members of the school community to resolve (or provide recommendations to resolve) problems of practice that support teaching and learning. The field experiences are framed by a service learning model that requires PPP candidates to immerse themselves into problems of practice at the very beginning of their program. Candidates complete seven SLPs in addition to field experiences. During the first year, PPP faculty travel once a week to a SACS approved rural location in the northeastern portion of the state to meet with PPP candidates and provide professional development in leadership. Candidates are required to complete field experiences and project-based learning through SLPs that tie into leadership theory at their schools. The PPP faculty and PPP candidates meet weekly to discuss projects and the field experiences. These coaching sessions help candidates learn the roles and responsibilities of an effective school leader.

Phase 3. The final phase of the PPP requires candidates to complete a year-long internship experience. When PPP candidates work in schools addressing daily administration issues, they engage in authentic experiences to bridge the gap between leadership theory and practice (Cunningham, 2007). This statement is especially true for principal interns who may not have had experiences with diverse populations that are present in rural school settings (Figueiredo-Brown, Ringler, & James, 2015). The PPP requires a year-long, clinical experience (1000 hours) in an authentic setting during the second year of the degree. Interns are expected to (a) examine the overall school vision, (b) become immersed in the school’s improvement process, and (c) make a significant contribution to this vision and process as they refine their leadership skills (Risen, & Tripses, 2008). Upon successful completion of the PPP, interns will be prepared to assume a school leadership position. While it is understood that the scope and sequence of experiences included in the role of a principal is expansive, the ability of an intern to develop skills in the running of a safe and orderly school and curriculum development relative to pertinent test data is paramount. Interns will be required to provide evidences of required experiences deemed central to a successful, effective internship experience.

The clinical internship experiences provide on-the-job training and opportunities for PPP interns to develop and refine leadership skills as they provide a service to a school and are coached by a licensed and practicing principal. The mentor must agree in writing to accept on-site responsibility for the supervision of the intern. Mentors receive guidance and comprehensive information through (a) a mentor manual, (b) a monthly meeting with PPP faculty, and (c) emails (Gray, 2007). Mentors also complete a formative and summative assessment on the intern’s performance and provide the assessment results to the PPP advisor.

Alignment to Standards and Best Practices. The PPP prepares graduates to demonstrate five key practices (see Table 4) identified in the national research by the Wallace Foundation studies (2016). A special emphasis is placed on Instructional Leadership to provide support to schools that encourages reform and sustains meaningful change (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The PPP also helps candidates practice instructional leadership by teaching them how to create collaborative structures within the school to facilitate high time on task and include peer feedback and sharing of ideas and strategies throughout the learning community (SBE Department of Public Instruction, 2015).

Table 4
PPP’s Alignment with Wallace, NCEES Standards, and SLPs

Key Practice (The Wallace Foundation, 2016)	NC School Executive Evaluation Standards (SBE Department of Public Instruction, 2015)	PPP SLP themes
1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards	IIa. The school’s identity, in part, is derived from the vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals of the school, the processes used to establish these attributes, and the ways they are embodied in the life of the school community	6. School improvement
2. Creating a climate hospitable to education	IIa. The school’s identity, in part, is derived from the vision, mission,	1. Positive impact on student learning and

in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail	values, beliefs and goals of the school, the processes used to establish these attributes, and the ways they are embodied in the life of the school community	development
3. Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their parts in realizing the school vision	Iia. The school's identity, in part, is derived from the vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals of the school, the processes used to establish these attributes, and the ways they are embodied in the life of the school community	2. Teacher empowerment and leadership
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost	Iib. The principal/assistant principal articulates a vision, and implementation strategies, for improvements and changes which result in improved achievement for all students	1. Positive impact on student learning and development 5. School culture and safety
5. Managing people, data and process to foster school improvement	Iib. The principal/assistant principal articulates a vision, and implementation strategies, for improvements and changes which result in improved achievement for all students	3. Community involvement and engagement 4. Organizational management

PPP Authentic Practice Impact Data. The internship experience is assessed by four requirements (1) active engagement in seminar activities and other enrichment activities, (2) observations by the PPP faculty and the principal mentor; (3) completion of a webfolio (including summative activity) which documents professional growth; and (4) completion of an oral examination based on the webfolio evidences. See Table 5 for a description of the alignment of the internship assessment and the NCSSE School Executive Rubric

Table 5
Assessment of Internship at Proficiency Level

Expected Performance		The evidence demonstrates that the candidate has performed at the expected level for a PPP intern.	
Seminar Activities and Enrichment	Observation	Webfolio	Oral Examination
The candidate has attended most of the scheduled seminars, been prepared to present an artifact aligned with the designated NCSE Standard, demonstrated learning and reflection, participated in the discussions following presentations of artifacts by peers, and used the sharing of information and reflections to increase own learning.	The candidate has been engaged in administrative activity at the school site, interacted with the PPP faculty to provide journals that demonstrated learning was occurring, and been evaluated in a generally positive manner by the principal mentor (orally and in writing).	The candidate has created a webfolio that included the information listed in the PPP Internship Manual-- included artifacts that show learning related to each NCSSE Standard, included summative activity that demonstrated learning across the performance indicators, and has included a journal that documents 1,000 hours of direct administrative experience.	The candidate was able to respond to questions in a manner that supports the learning documented in the webfolio, was able to articulate an appropriate educational philosophy, was able to discuss the importance of vision in a school and relate it to the internship experience, was able to discuss skills that were developed during the internship, was able to demonstrate an understanding of current issues in education, was able to discuss ways in which research, theory, and knowledge impact schools and their leaders, and was able to describe ways in which technology impacts schools. At the conclusion of the examination, the candidate has provided evidence that he/she had performed at the expected level for a PPP intern and is a qualified candidate for a position as a school administrator.

In addition to the clinical experience assessments listed above, candidates will submit evidences from their SLPs to show they meet the NC School Executives Pre-Service Candidate Rubric (The rubric outlines the criteria for **Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Accomplished** pre-service school leaders. Each PPP candidate must demonstrate irrefutable evidence for all of the **proficiency** descriptors to meet the NC principal licensure guidelines. The SLP framework embedded in the PPP will provide a clear process for meeting these licensure guidelines. Each SLP has specific proficiency descriptors assigned to it (see Appendix 1). The PPP candidates complete each SLP and compile their evidence into an electronic portfolio. Once a student has successfully completed seven (7) SLPs and successfully presented evidence via electronic portfolio, they will meet the NC principal licensure guidelines.

Conclusion

Over the last several years, PPP professors have learned a great deal about the positive impact of service learning on both the leadership development of its candidates and the schools throughout the region. From these experiences, PPP professors developed the SLF4LP. The SLF4LP provides candidates with opportunities to work with principals and other appropriate personnel on: (a) data collection, (b) data analysis, (c) needs identification, (d) problem-solving, (e) comprehensive planning, (f) action plan implementation, and (g) evaluation.

The PPP is a true partnership with regional school districts that continues to grow. The PPP graduates are demonstrating success as they transition into school leadership positions. The PPP is a strong principal pipeline that provides qualified candidates for our region from recruitment to induction. Finally, the PPP is aligned to national and state standards.

As PPP professors continue to evaluate the program components, they are working with school districts to gather and monitor the quantity and quality of the program's graduates. As national and state standards change, they will continue to align the PPP with those standards.

The PPP candidates discover the power of “service” and practice the transformational skills of leading through serving and serving through leading (Noel & Earwicker, 2014). The PPP components are the result of meaningful and ongoing discussions with public school partners (i.e. (a) superintendents, (b) central office leaders, (c) principals, (d) assistant principals, (e) agency leaders, (f) higher education faculty, (g) PPP candidates, (h) PPP graduates, and (i) community college faculty), a thorough review of other PPPs throughout the nation, and the infusion of best leadership preparation practices within a 21st century learning framework.

The PPP incorporates the practices and principles of service-learning and servant leadership. This leadership preparation program builds “servant leadership capacity” through a leadership development model that starts with authentic service opportunities in local schools. The PPP candidates complete Service Leadership Projects (SLPs) and serve and support *real* improvement efforts, as they collaborate with their school partners. Finally, the PPP professors provide aspiring leaders the training and support they need along their leadership path to become highly qualified instructional leaders, with a strong service ethic, who can work effectively with diverse rural school communities.

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Appendix A

Sample Assessment of SLP at Proficiency Level.

DPI Evidence 1: Positive Impact on Student Learning and Development SLP

Candidates must meet the descriptors of the elements addressed in the evidence: *DPI: 1b1; 2a1; 2a2; 2a3; 2b1; 2b2; 4a2; 4c1* by completing the Evidence box next to each descriptor

Project Name:

DPI pre-service descriptors	Service Leadership Project Evidence (what you did)
1b1. Works with others to systematically consider new and better ways of leading for improved student achievement for all students and engages stakeholders in the change process.	
2a1. Works with others to systematically focus on the alignment of learning, teaching, curriculum, instruction, and assessment to maximize student learning.	
2a2. Helps organize targeted opportunities for teachers to learn how to teach subjects well with engaging lessons.	
2a3. Utilizes multiple sources of data, including the Teacher Working Conditions Survey, for the improvement of instruction	
2b1. Adheres to legal requirements for planning and instructional time	
2b2. Reviews scheduling processes and protocols that maximize staff input and address diverse student learning needs	
4a2. Routinely participates in professional development focused on improving instructional programs and practices	
4c1. Works with others to provide formal feedback to teachers concerning the effectiveness of their classroom instruction and ways to improve their instructional practice	

Appendix B

Sample Candidate Assessment Data for SLP 1 (Positive Impact on Student Learning and Development)

Rubric Criteria	Spring 2016			Spring 2017		
	Candidates evaluated	Average for Group (Raw)	Met/Not Met Requirements (%)	Candidates evaluated	Average for Group (Raw)	Met/Not Met Requirements (%)
2a1. Works with others to systematically focus on the alignment of learning, teaching, curriculum, instruction, and assessment to maximize student learning (ELCC 2.2)	54	3.11/4.00	100% Met	40	3.38/4.00	100% Met
2a2. Helps organize targeted opportunities for teachers to learn how to teach subjects well with engaging lessons (ELCC 2.4)	54	3.13/4.00	100% Met	40	3.38/4.00	100% Met
2a3. Utilizes multiple sources of data, including the Teacher Working Conditions Survey, for the improvement of instruction (ELCC 4.1)	54	3.07/4.00	100% Met	40	3.38/4.00	100% Met
2b1. Adheres to legal requirements for planning and instructional time (ELCC 3.5)	54	3.04/4.00	100% Met	40	3.38/4.00	100% Met
2b2. Reviews scheduling processes and protocols that maximize staff input and address diverse student learning needs (ELCC 2.1)	54	3.04/4.00	100% Met	40	3.38/4.00	100% Met
4a2. Routinely participates in professional development focused on improving instructional programs and practices (ELCC 2.2)	54	3.11/4.00	100% Met	40	3.38/4.00	100% Met
4c1. Works with others to provide formal feedback to teachers concerning the effectiveness of their classroom instruction and ways to improve their instructional practice (ELCC 2.3)	54	3.07/4.00	100% Met	40	3.38/4.00	100% Met

A score of Meet Requirements ranges between 3 and 4. To meet requirements students must score at least a 3 (proficient) in each rubric criterion.