Leadership Coaching and Mentoring: A Research-Based Model for Stronger Partnerships

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Abstract This conceptual article proposes a research-based model for leadership preparation programs to more effectively prepare, support, and sustain new school leaders in the field and profession. This study offers a new construct, which combines the concepts of early field experiences, experiential learning, leadership-focused coaching, and mentoring support, with university faculty and school district leaders and mentors working collaboratively to support novice leaders. University faculty would provide leadership-focused coaching while prospective leaders are completing coursework and later once they are placed in school leadership positions. Further, school districts would provide mentoring support by experienced instructional leaders.

Keywords Leadership preparation; University-school partnerships; Leadership field experience; Leadership-focused coaching; Leadership mentoring

Introduction

This article proposes a research-based model for leadership preparation programs to more effectively prepare, support, and sustain new school leaders in the field and profession (Gray, 2016). The model supports early field experiences and more opportunities for experiential learning in leadership roles while pursuing coursework,

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which would most likely be a Master's of Education in educational leadership. Students would have more time and opportunity to discern if their interest in leadership is authentic, practical, and realistic. University faculty would provide aspiring leaders with Leadership-Focused Coaching, a concept introduced in this article, while they are completing coursework and the principal practicum (Gray, 2016; 2017; 2018). Further, school districts would offer mentoring support and experienced leaders as mentors for novice instructional leaders via a continuous partnership with university faculty.

Trends in the literature

Over the last two decades there has been a shift in principal preparation programs from a theory-to-practice approach to a knowledge-to-practice approach (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Cunningham, 2007; Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; Daresh, 2004). In other words, educational leadership programs are trying to provide prospective leaders with more opportunities for real-world and practical experience in schools and districts (Cunningham, 2007; Geer, Anast-May, & Gurley, 2014). As a part of this reform, educational leadership faculty would integrate more opportunities for students to have early field experiences and authentic leadership practice in schools (Geer et al, 2014; Gray, 2017; Wallace Foundation, 2016). Gregory Geer, Linda Anast-May, and Keith Gurley (2014) emphasize the importance of university faculty and experienced practitioners, in this case instructional leaders, working collaboratively to support future and novice school leaders in the school setting (SREB, 2001; Wallace Foundation, 2016). This leadership preparation model integrates leadership-focused coaching and mentoring with early field experiences as a solution to this concern (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2008; Gray, 2018; Lochmiller, 2014; Schleicher, 2012).

More recently, there has been a trend to prepare future leaders as instructional leaders, as opposed to administrators, which has been the case in the past (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Geer et al., 2014; Gray, 2018; New Leaders, 2012; Schleicher, 2012; SREB, 2001; Wallace Foundation, 2016). "Efforts to provide field-based practicum experiences do not consistently provide candidates with a sustained, hands-on internship … with the real demands of school leadership under the supervision of a well-qualified mentor" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 6). To build the leadership capacity of these prospective instructional leaders, they need to be strategically placed with well-matched mentors and have an opportunity to experience a variety of leadership skills in the real world (Brown-Ferrigno, 2007; Geer et al. 2014; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Schleicher, 2012).

According to the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (SELI), the following characteristics are found in exemplary leadership development programs: a curriculum and philosophy that emphasizes instructional leadership; the connection of theory and practice through experiential learning; university faculty and practitioners in the field; formalized mentoring and support from experts in the field; supervised and structured practicum experiences; and a specific, rigorous, and selective recruitment process in partnership with local school districts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Schleicher, 2012; UCEA & New Leaders, 2016). There is an immense need

for highly effective instructional leaders, which must be met by principal preparation programs (Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010, p. 6). This study offers a theoretical framework and conceptual model for addressing this need.

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Theoretical framework

Using Ernest Boyer's (1990) scholarship of integration as a model, this study offers a new construct that combines the concepts of early field experiences, experiential learning, leadership-focused coaching, and mentoring support with university faculty and school district leaders and mentors working collaboratively to support novice leaders (Hill, 2011). The theoretical framework is also based upon on adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998) and the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the form of communities of practice. It also considers organizational change theory (Lewin, 1951) as it relates to ongoing change present in school environments and instructional leaders as change agents. Finally, the framework includes continuous school improvement within the complex organizations known as schools (Orton & Weick, 1990).

Boyer's scholarship of integration model

Boyer (1990) separates the work of the professoriate into four overlapping functions: the scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship of integration allows researchers to make "connections across disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context illuminating data in a revealing way" (p. 18). In other words, this model allows scholars to find connections in the literature and develop overlapping interpretation of such connections. The "scholarship of integration also means interpretation, fitting one's own research – or the research of others – into larger intellectual patterns" (Boyer, 1990, p. 19). The researcher looks for possible ways to interpret what has already been discovered in another way to gain a deeper understanding (Boyer, 1990). Boyer found the term "scholarship" to be restrictive and proposed the term "creative scholarly work" in its place (Hill, 2011, p. 6).

This study relies upon the scholarship of integration, an approach that allows scholars to "give meaning to isolated facts, putting them in perspective" for others (Boyer, 1990, p. 18). Peter Hill (2011) describes Boyer's scholarship of integration as a way of making connections across various "fields of inquiry" (p. 6) to determine "intellectual patterns" (p. 6) in research. This approach to analyzing research asks about the significance and importance of the findings, answering the "so what" question (Boyer, 1990; Hill, 2011). Boyer asserts that this type of questioning can lead scholars to greater knowledge and even wisdom (Boyer, 1990; Hill, 2011). "As the boundaries of human knowledge are being dramatically reshaped, the academy surely must give increased attention to the scholarship of integration" (Boyer, 1990, p. 21).

Boyer supports the need for research to be conducted across disciplines, so that research is not confined to one discipline and, therefore, limited (Hill, 2011). This study uses this approach to consider other theories, namely adult learning theory, the theory of situated learning (communities of practice), organizational change theory, and the continuous school improvement model (see Figure 1). As has been common over the last few decades, much of the theory in the field of education was

originally addressed, or even introduced, in the business literature (e.g., organizational change theory). In many professions, an internship or practicum experience is required prior to the completion of coursework, which is now the norm in teacher and leader preparation programs. Finally, in this study, other research is also analyzed to include these overarching areas: early field experience, experiential learning, leadership coaching, and the mentoring support of new leaders (see Figure 2).

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Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Adult Learning Theory	Theory of Situated Learning
Scholarship of Integration	
Organizational Change Theory	Continuous School Improvement Model

Figure 2. Conceptual diagram

- Early Field Experiences & Experiential Learning (Coursework)
- Leadership-Focused Coaching (Practicum)
- Mentoring Support (University & District Partnerships)
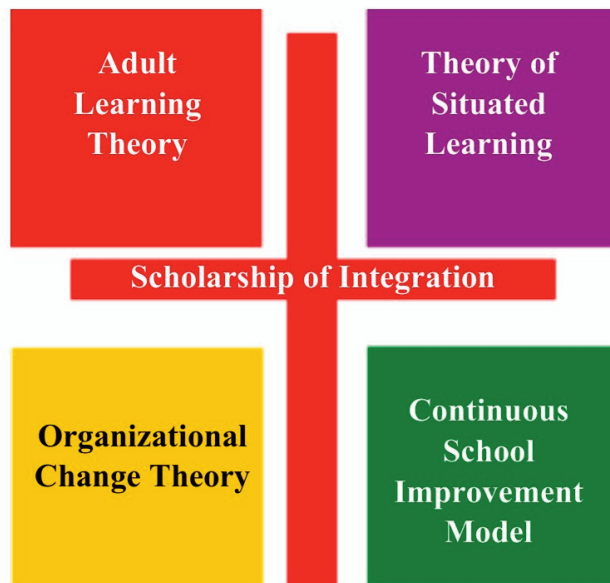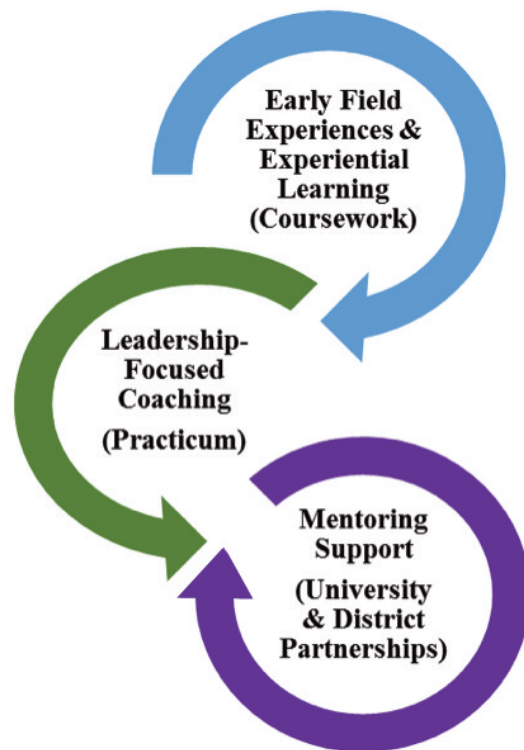
Adult learning theory

Malcolm Knowles (1980, 1984) first introduced the concept of andragogy, or adult learning theory. Adult learning theory characterizes adult learners as "autonomous,

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motivated, and ready to embrace growth-oriented experiential based learning" (Richardson, 2015, p. 2071). For aspiring leaders, course-learning tasks should allow students to be self-directed, open to feedback from peers, and self-reflective (Knowles, 1984; Richardson, 2015). Those who tend to take the initiative, rather than a passive role, and actively engage in their learning are more likely to succeed as future instructional leaders (Richardson, 2015). So, it is important to offer leadership students opportunities for participation in course discussions and reflective writing assignments. Participation in discourse with others helps aspiring leaders to gage their thinking in contrast to that of their classmates and to determine other perspectives. "Therefore preparation programs should provide opportunities for aspiring leaders to retrieve, reflect, and infuse their experience into their learning, and provide context, variability, and personalization for learning success" (Richardson, 2015, p. 2071).

Reflection should be embedded in course tasks so that aspiring leaders have the opportunity for more critical thinking about their past practical experience and the theoretical content of courses. They tend to become critical thinkers and more contemplative about the causes and effects of decisions made by leaders. Adult learners need to be actively engaged in the learning process, so they can make connections to prior knowledge, leadership experiences, and between theory (what is taught in courses) and practical reality (what is happening in schools) with continuous opportunities to reflect upon what they have observed, discovered, realized, contrasted, compared, and contextualized (Richardson, 2015).

As one might expect, future leaders may enter a preparation program with biases, which could affect their learning (Richardson, 2015). Aspiring leaders should be encouraged to critically scrutinize, reflect upon, and contemplate the implications of their philosophies and beliefs about learning, teaching, and leading prior to completing a preparation program and consider alternative viewpoints and perspectives (Richardson, 2015). Allowing time for discussion, even debates about current events or issues, can help prospective leaders to firm up their philosophy of leadership and education. In other words, instructors should be strategic in vertically planning the curriculum for all courses, so that fundamental skills, knowledge, and information about leadership are developed incrementally over the extent of the program (Richardson, 2015). When designing leadership preparation programs, it is critical to consider the characteristics of adult learners, based upon this theory.

The theory of situated learning and communities of practice

While analyzing how learning occurs, Jean Lave (1988) developed the theory of situated learning, which explains how knowledge is acquired. Lave (1998) asserts that learning takes place within the context of where it occurs; therefore, where it is situated. Building upon this theory, Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) conducted a study where they analyzed the learning experiences of novices in five very different professional settings, ranging from tailors to Yucatec midwives. Although working in distinctive fields, the members of the five groups shared a common experience of working under the guidance of experts and acquiring specific skills and knowledge as novices in their fields (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The participants in the groups evolved into communities of practice based upon their common experiences in learn-

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ing skills together. "One of the most important concepts in social or situated learning theory is the notion of a community of practice" (Hoadley, 2012, p. 287).

Communities of practice are comprised of "groups of people who share a concern, set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Over time, the members of the group become a community of practice as they bond and share values and information (Wenger et al., 2002). They gain personal satisfaction and knowledge as they share perspectives about common issues and develop solutions together (Wenger et al., 2002). As group members gain a sense of identity with one another and a shared set of beliefs and values, they evolve into a community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002). A community of practice, as an organizational model, connects its members through shared context and goals via collaborative dialogue about best practices and issues, as well as mutually beneficial solutions to such issues (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2005). In relation to this study, communities of practice will be considered within the cohorts of students, faculty, district mentors, and district leaders.

Organizational change theory

Organizational changes are defined as "departures from the status quo or from smooth trends" (Huber & Glick, 1995, p. 3). The theory of organizational change has evolved since its first mentions in organizational behavior and theory literature by Henry Gantt in 1908 and Hugo Münsterberg in 1913 (Ott, Parkes, & Simpson, 2003). Chris Argyris (1980), author of *Intervention Theory and Methods*, is credited with establishing the "fundamental tenets that undergird the organizational behavior perspective of change" (Ott et al., 2003, p. 442). Peter Senge (1990) emphasized the importance of organizational learning and change, as he detailed the fifth discipline "systems thinking" (Ott et al., 2003, p. 442). "Change requires the application of knowledge about motivation, group and intergroup dynamics, leadership, teamwork, empowerment, effects of the work environment on individuals at work, power, and influence" (Ott et al., 2003, p. 444). For the sake of this study, change theory will be considered regarding the inevitability of change in organizations, how university and school district partnerships can face this inevitability, and the effects of change on leadership preparation programs.

Continuous school improvement model

The concept of continuous improvement has been found in the business literature for decades, however, only in the context of schools over the last 15 years (Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010; Park, Hironaka, Carver, & Nordstrum, 2013). Continuous school improvement is defined as "the process cycle of school improvement with the major components of creating the vision, gathering data related to that vision, analyzing the data, planning the work of the school to align with the vision, implementing the strategies and action steps outlined in the plan, and gathering data to measure the impact of the intervention" (Coalition of Essential Schools, 2016, para. 1). The difference between traditional school improvement and the continuous school improvement model is the belief that schools should always work toward im-

provement and progress is ongoing and continuous (Cheney et al., 2010; Park et al., 2013). In this study, continuous improvement is viewed as a means for addressing gaps in the principal preparation programs and finding ways to build stronger partnerships between universities and local school districts.

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Conceptual framework

This conceptual article describes a model for early field experiences and experiential learning for educational leadership students, leadership-focused coaching from university faculty, and mentoring support from the school district (see Figure 2; Gray 2016; 2017; 2018). While participating in educational leadership graduate coursework, students would have more early field experiences and experiential learning embedded in all courses. The university faculty members would work collaboratively with school district partners to develop and design authentic, practical activities for students to complete within each educational leadership course. During the practicum semester, instructors would offer leadership-focused coaching within the context of the school setting and supervised by school leaders (Gray, 2016). The final part of the conceptual model involves mentoring support within the school district. Districts would select principal or district-level mentors for new instructional leaders. University instructors would support this by developing and providing ongoing mentoring workshops, professional development, and resources for such mentors (Gray, 2018). As a part of warranty agreements between state universities and local districts, the university professors would be available to work with struggling novice leaders as requested by the districts within the first two years in the field (Rakes, Gulledge, & Rakes, 2006).

Early field experiences/experiential learning

Students would be encouraged to shadow and work under the supervision of a variety of school-level and district leaders to gain more depth in their experiences in the field (Pounder & Crow, 2005). If students have opportunities for more practical experiences in the field, they will be more informed about their path to leadership with a more realistic perspective of the responsibilities and expectations (Figueiredo-Brown, Ringler, & James, 2015; New Leaders, 2012). Some researchers have highlighted the importance of experiential and practical learning in the field while students are enrolled in educational leadership courses (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Cheney et al., 2010; Cunningham, 2007; Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; Daresh, 2004; Geer et al., 2014).

Practicums and internships "provide authentic experiences to bridge the gap between theory and practice when students work in schools addressing daily school issues with the support of a school based supervisor" (Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015, p. 38). A New Leaders study (2012) emphasizes the need for a "practice-rich clinical component in an authentic leadership setting" (p. 6). School districts and universities should be working collaboratively to improve principal preparation programs so that graduates have the capacity to lead schools effectively and toward continuous improvement (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008). "Research suggests that effective professional development needs to be ongoing, embedded in practice, link to school

reform initiatives and problem-based" (Best, 2006, p. 15). Professional development for aspiring leaders should focus on building the skills they have not yet mastered (Best, 2006). In this model, it is asserted that experiential learning in the field would address this need for skill building and practice.

Lystra Richardson promotes "a redesign of traditional preparation programs with a practical, experiential curriculum designed to teach explicitly for transfer of skills, knowledge and strategies may improve the impact leaders have on learning in schools when they assume a leadership position" (2015, p. 2074). In the U.S. Department of Education (2004) report entitled *Innovative Pathways to School Leadership*, it is stated that leadership preparation programs need to be "more innovative and need to include intensively focused, authentic courses and lots of field work" (p. 4). While experiential learning has been considered to be a best practice, this study also offers leadership-focused coaching as a means for improving leadership preparation programs.

Leadership-focused coaching

In the same way in which student and novice teachers receive instructional support, coaching, and feedback, this study suggests a similar approach but one with a focus on instructional leadership skills and responsibilities (Gray, 2017). The inspiration for the leadership-focused coaching was the model established by Lucy West and Fritz Staub (2003) called content-focused coaching (CFC), which was designed specifically for coaching aspiring and novice mathematics teachers. Content-focused coaching is defined as a "professional development model designed to promote student learning and achievement by having a coach and a teacher work jointly in specific settings, guided by conceptual tools" (Staub, West, & Bickel, 2003, pp. 1–2). Content-focused coaches use specific tools and lesson planning methodology to support new teachers (West & Staub, 2003).

Mentors and novice teachers collaboratively develop and teach lessons, with the mentor modeling strategies and transferring more responsibilities to the novice teacher throughout the process (West & Staub, 2003). A key component of this coaching approach is the conference that takes place after a lesson has been taught. The protégé and mentor debrief about what was learned in the process, changes that could be made in the future, and general critical reflections. The mentor encourages the protégé to reflect upon previous thinking, what was learned, and how to grow from the experience (West & Staub, 2003).

The researcher promotes an approach to provide support for aspiring and novice school leaders, which is being called leadership-focused coaching (LFC) (Gray, 2016; 2017; 2018). The model differs greatly from the CFC model in that it offers coaching to aspiring and novice instructional leaders and integrates experiential learning and early field experiences. University faculty members, in partnership with local school districts, would provide leadership-focused coaching in the school setting with developing leaders. During the practicum experience, university professors would visit their students while conducting leadership-type activities and roles in the school environment. The leadership-focused coach, in this case the professor, provides suggestions for improvements, feedback for building upon strengths, and strategies for

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improving areas needing growth, while emphasizing relevant leadership theory and decision-making models. Rubrics and checklists could be developed and aligned to the state standards and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PESL), which were formerly known as the ISLLC Standards (NPBEA, 2015). A sample observation form was created and aligned to the PESL, as well as a sample practicum/internship plan (see Appendices A and B). The form could be used to gather baseline data, as well as formative and summative evaluations throughout a candidate's coursework.

Leadership-focused coaches would assist the novice in establishing goals, questioning current practices, and improving leadership skills throughout the leadership practicum semester (Lochmiller, 2014). "Leadership coaching has been suggested as one induction strategy that supports principals in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to be successful as instructional leaders" (Lochmiller, 2014, p. 60). When cultivating a culture of change among adult learners, coaches often face those hesitant to change and must overcome established norms in the form of time usage, scheduling, and protocols (West & Cameron, 2013). This study offers a model for facing these types of challenges for aspiring leaders.

An integral factor of leadership-focused coaching involves the development of instructional leadership knowledge and skills for aspiring principals, a trend for many years now in the United States and internationally (Schleicher, 2012). In the past, principals worked independently within the school setting, often lacking a connection to others in similar positions (Mitgang, 2008; Schleicher, 2012). Lee Mitgang (2008) offers the analogy of transitioning from a soloist, working in isolation, to a conductor, leading and motivating others. More recent trends have led to principals, novices and veterans, developing network opportunities and learning communities (Schleicher, 2012). "Effective leadership development programs often also include networking among participants, which can help to foster collaborative problem-solving and alleviate the sense of isolation that some school leaders feel" (Schleicher, 2012, p. 22).

Each educational leadership students would be strategically paired with an area principal or assistant principal during the practicum semester. At the beginning of the semester, interns, using a template aligned to both the state standards and NPBEA standards, would develop a plan of action for the types of leadership experiences, with feedback from the university faculty member and supervising school leader. Under each standard, there would be several examples of ways to demonstrate the mastery or experience toward mastery of specific leadership skills, so that the student, instructor, and leader could select tasks that are practical and feasible. By allowing options and some flexibility in the process, students are more likely to take ownership of their experiences.

Later, leadership coaches would provide professional development sessions for mentor principals and leaders in the local districts. Again, the matching of mentor leaders and protégés should be strategic and collaborative to promote successful mentoring relationships that could be sustained over time. Finally, there are benefits to the combination of feedback and leadership-focused coaching for novice leaders (Bickman, Goldring, De Andrade, Breda, & Goff, 2012). They would receive feedback from the leadership-focused coach (university faculty) and school-level mentor

(principal or assistant principal), allowing for a variety of perspectives, resources, and information (Bickman et al., 2012).

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In summary, the leadership-focused coach would be responsible for:

- Modeling best, research-based leadership practices;
- Demonstrating effective decision-making processes and skills;
- Explaining the rationale for specific decision-making processes and skills;
- Working with the candidate to understand the PSEL, state, or district instruments, evaluation tools, or resources (See Appendix A);
- Planning activities collaboratively during the practicum/internship with input from the supervising principal (See Appendix B);
- Providing formative, constructive feedback during coursework and practicum; and
- Demonstrating how theory and practice connect in ongoing discussions with the aspiring leader (Gray, 2016; 2017; 2018).

Mentoring support

The final piece of the model is the district-provided mentoring support for new leaders, which takes place in the school setting and within communities of practice. Experienced school principals and assistant principals would be carefully selected to act as mentor leaders. University educational leadership faculty would collaborate with school district mentors, providing ongoing support and professional development about mentoring best practices (Best, 2006; Bickman et al., 2012; Cheney et al., 2010; UCEA & New Leaders, 2016). Lochmiller surmised principal induction and mentoring are critical to the success of leadership preparation programs (Gray, Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2007; Lochmiller, 2014).

There are many benefits to mentoring novices when in new positions, especially for the school districts and mentors. Providing support for new leaders via induction programs can be considered "an investment in retention, integration, and continual growth" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. x.). Mentoring new leaders once they are placed in schools affords four benefits to school districts, including "improve instructional performance, transfer the district policy, procedures, and educational philosophy, frame the professional learning journey, and promote norms of learning and collaboration" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. xii).

Additional benefits provided by mentoring support include reciprocal learning and growth for the protégé and mentor, and the mentor providing emotional security for the protégé (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Mentors can offer advice and support to new leaders based upon their experience in the field (Schleicher, 2012). Mentors can "empower and enhance practice … and unblock the ways to change by building self-esteem, self-confidence and a readiness to act as well as to engage in constructive interpersonal relations" (Fletcher, 2000, p. xii). The mentor shares knowledge, explains why things are done, and makes the implicit explicit to the protégé (Fletcher, 2000).

By supporting novices while developing and honing leadership skills, the mentors are able to scaffold their learning by focusing on the process rather than the outcome and provide much-needed support for the aspiring leaders (Díaz-Maggioli,

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2004). In learning-focused mentoring relationships, the protégés are more likely to "increase their efficacy as instructional problem-solvers and decision makers, engaging in collaborative exchanges regarding improving practice, [and] remain in the … profession" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1). One of the most important roles of collegial relationships between universities and school districts is the distinction of the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the preparation of future leaders (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008). The mentor should challenge the protégé to improve and grow, offer support to the protégé, and assist in developing a professional vision (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

Assumptions

In this model, it is assumed that some of the components proposed have been established in universities in partnership with local school districts. However, it is understood that all components have not been implemented, especially leadership-focused coaching, which is introduced in the framework. Most principal preparation programs have practicum and field-based experiences within the course requirements, but perhaps not as collaboratively designed as suggested here. Many of the warranty expectations for teacher preparation programs, which require new teachers to receive ongoing support by universities within their first two to three years of teaching, have also been applied to principal preparation programs (Reedy, 2017; Wallace Foundation, 2016). This model would offer the ongoing mentoring and Leadership-Focused Coaching needed by developing leaders (Gray, 2018).

While university faculty members are to provide this support, it must be requested by the partnering school districts (Gray 2016; 2017; 2018). In this model, this type of support is included in the mentoring support provided once candidates are hired in the field. For example, according to the Florida Statute school districts in Florida are required to provide a Level II School Principal Preparation Program (Florida Department of State, 2018) These district-driven programs are intended to effectively prepare and support developing school leaders with mentoring and coaching support. In this study's model, it is suggested that the local university be invited to share in this ongoing preparation by providing professional development and consulting, as needed and requested. The proposed framework seeks to strengthen existing school district and university partnership, thus offering improved, ongoing scaffolding for novice school leaders.

Implications for practice

The model proposed in this study is supported by research about leadership preparation, leadership-focused coaching, mentoring, and experiential learning. Trends for redesign and improvement have been discussed for the last decade, especially the major features of this model (Campbell & Gross, 2012; Cheney et al., 2010; New Leaders, 2011; Schleicher, 2012). The Urban Excellence Framework (UEF) (New Leaders, 2011) emphasizes the importance of redesigning and improving principal preparation programs. The UEF describes an approach to leader preparation that partners school districts and universities, focuses on selective processes for recruiting aspiring leaders, and provides a supportive network with mentoring, coach-

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ing, training, and networking opportunities for all participants (Campbell & Gross, 2012; Schleicher, 2012). Exemplary principal preparation programs should "feature close integration of course-work and fieldwork, using such techniques as case method, problem-based learning and journaling to encourage continuous reflection about the connections between theory and practice" (Mitgang, 2008, p. 6).

This type of authentic experience engages aspiring instructional leaders, university leadership-focused coaches (faculty), and school district mentor principals in the preparation and support of new school leaders (New Leaders, 2012), as suggested by the model of this study. Further, states in conjunction with universities and districts should work collaboratively to determine what aspects of the preparation programs need to be redesigned and improved, rather than placing blame on any one group of stakeholders (New Leaders, 2012). Andreas Schleicher (2012) summarized the recommendations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Schleicher, 2012) study, which included "prepare and develop school leaders using innovative approaches that address the broader roles of leaders … for high performance and continuous improvement …" (p. 22). This study intends to provide a model for the type of improvements needed for principal preparation programs.

Conclusion

"If there is a national imperative to improve our failing schools, then there is also a national imperative to strengthen the preparation of school leaders" (Mitgang, 2008, p. 10). The literature supports the critical need for improvement in preparation programs (Geer et al., 2014; Mitgang, 2008). The model shared in this article offers a theoretical and conceptual framework for improvement. Principal preparation programs should offer students a more realistic perspective of the schools in which they will lead by providing authentic field-based experiences during coursework (Mitgang, 2008).

Principals have shared their concerns of a disconnection between the theory taught in educational leadership programs and the practice of school leadership skills and responsibilities (Anast-May, Buckner, & Geer, 2010; Geer et al., 2014). Another option is to allow principals and their interns to develop a flexible structure that allows them to design a more meaningful experience for aspiring instructional leaders (Anast-May et al. 2010; Geer et al., 2014). Further, a need exists for stronger partnerships between university faculty and school leadership (Geer et al., 2014).

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(Name of University) (Course Prefix/#) Principalship Practicum Observation Form
Practicum Student _____ Time (Start) _____ (Stop) _____
School/District _____ Date _____ Observation # ____

#	Professional Standards for Educational Leaders Competency	Highly Effective	Effective	Developing	Novice	Needs Improvement	Not Observed
1	**Mission, Vision, and Core Values** Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
2	**Ethics and Professional Norms** Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
3	**Equity and Cultural Responsiveness** Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
4	**Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment** Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
5	**Community of Care and Support for Students** Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
6	**Professional Capacity of School Personnel** Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
7	**Professional Community for Teachers and Staff** Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
8	**Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community** Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
9	**Operations and Management** Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O
10	**School Improvement** Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.	5	4	3	2	1	N/O

(It is possible that all competencies will not be demonstrated during one observation.)

Comments (strengths or areas for improvement): _____

_____

Signature of Leadership-Focused Coach (University Instructor) _____

Signature of Practicum Student (Aspiring Leader) _____

Signature of Supervising Principal (School Leader) _____

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Appendix B – Sample Practicum/Internship Plan
(Name of University) (Course Prefix/#) (Semester/Year)

This is a planning document for the practicum candidate/intern to use to plan how each PSEL standard will be addressed. Each PSEL standard has a variety of activities from which to choose. The candidate is responsible for demonstrating how learning has occurred for each PSEL competency. This plan must be approved of and signed by the candidate, supervising principal, and University Leadership-Focused Coach.

Candidate's Name: _____

Standard 1

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 2

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 3

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 4

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 5

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 6

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 7

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 8

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 9

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Standard 10

    Performance Activity 1 _____

    Performance Activity 2 _____

Intern Signature: _____ Date: _____

By signing below, I agree to coach or provide support to the candidate for the completion of these activities.

Supervising Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

University Representative Signature: _____ Date: _____