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Notes from the Editors

This year marks the 30th publication of the California Association of Professors of Educational Administration's Journal, *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development*. The CAPEA journal pursues the publication of articles in four focal areas, including leadership preparation, diversity and social justice, technology, and research and advocacy. After a blind and rigorous review process, the editors accepted a set of very strong contributions. A special thank you and congratulations are extended to all of the authors who contributed manuscripts to this volume.

As leadership programs across the country recognize the value of performance assessments as a way to certify school leaders, we posit that certification may not always result in qualification. Especially in the area of social justice leadership, performance assessments may be necessary but not sufficient. Programs need to strengthen their efforts to prepare social justice leaders. In *Tipping the Balance: Social Justice Leaders Allying with Marginalized Youth to Increase Student Voice and Activism*, the authors report on the "Alumni Teach-In" model as a form of critical resistance, knowledge sharing, and modeling that gives space for public discussion about social justice in relation to local or national issues. The article *Language Development Policies and Practices Impacting the College and Career Readiness of Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) in Secondary Schools* describes how opportunities for English learner students to succeed and thrive are not evenly distributed due to conflicting language development policies at district and site levels, and thus highlights the need for social justice leadership.

Leadership Preparation Programs' Initial Responses to the California Administrator Performance Assessment reports on a university's efforts to address the new California Administrator Performance Assessment (CalAPA). These efforts included gathering responses from other programs, as well as a close examination and alignment of their current program to CalAPA requirements. The article *Student Perceptions of an Accelerated Online Master's in Education Administration Program Through the Lens of Social Presence* reports on a mixed-methods study about the experiences of students in an online course. The findings of this study note the importance of *instructor presence* for all students enrolled

in online courses, particularly for Latinx students, who represent one-third of all online students. In *Exploring the Leadership Practices of Elementary School Principals Through a Distributed Leadership Framework: A Case Study*, the author reports on an ethnographic case study exploring the distributed leadership practices of two principals. The paper calls for a deeper examination and analysis of leadership practices in order to create educational systems that are responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

This journal would not have been possible without the efforts of numerous people. The editors wish to thank the Editorial Review Board members for their generous time commitments in reviewing and critiquing submissions. The professionalism and commitment of the Editorial Review Board make it possible for us to continue to offer the journal to the members of the California Association of Professors of Educational Administration and to the larger educational community. In addition, we would like to thank the members of the CAPEA Executive Committee and Board for their constant encouragement and support. Lastly, this journal would not exist without the support of ICPEL and ICPEL Publications, especially Brad Bizzell, who has been an invaluable member of our team.

To all readers, we hope that the journal provides an opportunity to expand your insights into the field of school leadership and reflect on your own practice. We furthermore hope that this reflection brings you to a deeper commitment to our crucial work for our nation's youth and children.

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Tipping the Balance: Social Justice Leaders Allying with Marginalized Youth to Increase Student Voice and Activism

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Abstract

Social justice school leaders can amplify the voices and activism of marginalized students by shifting from hierarchical relationships to working as allies. An ally is commonly defined as a person who is associated with another or others for some common cause or purpose. By transferring Kendall's (2013) concept of "allyship" from racial privilege to leadership, this paper applies this theory through three dimensions: developing a radar, breaking ranks and creating space for student voice, and making intentional strategic moves. Ultimately, the school leaders highlighted in this study are tipping the balance to disrupt hierarchical relationships between leaders and students, in service of marginalized students.

Keywords: social justice leadership, student activism, student voice, marginalized students, transformational leadership

In typical schools, students have hierarchical relationships with the formal leaders. This dynamic suppresses student voice in decision-making and other aspects of schooling (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001; Howard, 2001; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992; Weinstein, 2002). Schools are organized in ways that privilege adult and leader voices over student voices in matters that have real consequences for students (Valenzuela, 1999). Students rarely get a say in disciplinary policy decisions, for instance, or in determining how they are allowed to speak up in support of causes that serve their interests. When student voice is allowed, leaders often focus on elected student leaders or an elite group of high-performing students, rather than marginalized youth. In contrast, this paper focuses on leaders who support the voice and activism of those students who are most disempowered, and how they can authentically support students when they have hierarchical authority over them. In other words, we examine how leaders, in the interest of social justice, can become allies to their most marginalized students.

An ally is commonly defined as a person who is associated with another or others for some common cause or purpose. In her book *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race*, Kendall (2013) differentiates between allies, advocates, coalitions, and connections within cross-privilege relationships. She writes that creating authentic relationships across privilege requires a willingness to keep channels of communication open about power and privilege differences and involves “the risk of losing social and cultural capital” (Kendall, 2013, p. 176). With a focus on racial privilege, Kendall (2013) identifies key behaviors that create the potential to develop authentic relationships across privilege, including:

- “Allies work continuously to develop an understanding of the personal and institutional experiences of the people with whom they are allying themselves” (p. 180).
- “Allies choose to ally themselves publicly and privately with members of target groups and respond to their needs. This may mean breaking assumed allegiances with those who have the same privileges” (p. 180).
- “Allies know that in the most empowered and genuine ally relationships, the persons with privilege initiate the change toward personal, institutional and societal justice... sharing the power, doing the dance...” (p. 183).

In this paper, we argue that Kendall's (2013) concept of allyship across privilege can be transferred beyond racial privilege to other privileges—such as hierarchical authority. This paper applies the above key behaviors of Kendall's (2013) theories of allyship across privilege to the relationship between alumni of the University of California, Berkeley, Principal Leadership Institute (PLI), who are working as equity-centered leaders, and their most marginalized students.

Alumni contributions in this paper were taken from their participation in an Alumni Teach-In held by the PLI at UC Berkeley in January 2018. Teach-ins started in 1965 at the University of Michigan, when faculty chose to join students in their protest against the Vietnam War by holding a 12-hour public debate and dialogue about the issues.¹ In this spirit, the PLI uses Alumni Teach-In events as a form of critical resistance, knowledge sharing, and modeling that gives space for public discussion about social justice school leadership in relation to local or national issues. This Alumni Teach-In was held in solidarity with the second annual Women's March.²

So as to provide context, the following is a short description of each alumnus who participated in the January 2018 Teach-In.³ Jill is a white female principal of a large urban high school. Fernando is a Latino male principal of a medium-sized urban middle school. Helen is a white female elementary teacher leader in an urban district. John is a white male assistant principal at a high school in a suburb where the growing diversity of the student population is alarming to many longstanding community members. Finally, Marcus is a mixed-race African American male assistant principal at a high school located in a suburb approximately 25 miles from UC Berkeley where there is no activist culture. This intentional composition of school leaders, representing a variety of educational contexts and backgrounds, was assembled in order to provide multiple perspectives about how social justice leaders can choose to ally with students to make space for student voice and activism.

¹ For more information about the first teach-in at the University of Michigan, see http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/exhibits/show/exhibit/the_teach_ins/first_teach_in.

² You can read more about the Women's March and its mission at <https://www.womensmarch.com/mission/>.

³ All names and locations have been anonymized in this paper.

Developing a Radar

Kendall (2013) writes that,

Allies work continuously to develop an understanding of the personal and institutional experiences of the people with whom they are allying themselves. If the ally is a member of a privileged group, it is essential that she or he also strives for clarity about the impact of privileges on her or his life. (p. 180)

At the PLI Alumni Teach-In, participants described the development of a personal radar that connects national and local issues to their students, as well as their knowledge of historical and current systemic oppression. For example, Fernando described the need to prepare support for his students prior to the final verdict for Darren Wilson, the police officer who killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, because he recognized the parallels between that situation and the experiences of many students at his school, stating,

My admin and counseling team started to brainstorm, how do we create a space for kids to process? ... [Our students are] 70% Black and [Latino], which is in [strong] juxtaposition with the city demographics. So, it was really important for us to think about creating a space that's safe for them and talk about ways that they can be safe in the community when trying to just express their feelings of frustration and anger. (personal communication, January 20, 2018)

Fernando's ability to recognize the impact that repeated instances of police violence have on his most marginalized students allowed him to respond proactively to his students' needs.

Helen gave a contrasting example during the pre-presidential election period of 2016, when the Southern Poverty Law Center published a report called *The Trump Effect*⁴ that talked about how the language of the campaign was having an impact on school campuses. Specifically, she recounted how she read the report and "like a good white liberal, I thought, 'I'm so glad that I'm not teaching in a place where this is happening'" (personal communication, January 20, 2018). Her blinders were on until she discussed the article with her colleagues. The principal made her aware of some examples of the Trump Effect at her elementary school, which compelled Helen to reach out to parents of color at her school. Through

⁴ You can read the full report at <https://www.splcenter.org/20161128/trump-effect-impact-2016-presidential-election-our-nations-schools>.

this process, Helen learned that “students were threatening each other with statements such as, ‘you’re going to get deported’ or ‘I’m going to have you deported’ or ‘you were born in a Taco Bell’” (personal communication, January 20, 2018). Connecting with her colleagues and listening opened Helen’s eyes and compelled her to action.

Another critical component to developing a radar is identifying, acknowledging, and building a relationship with student leaders who might be compelled to action in each situation, especially at the high school level. Jill described how she and her team supported student activism in response to Trump’s announcement to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program by being “in very close communication with our student leaders, because that is the way to know what’s really happening in the student body” (personal communication, January 20, 2018). She then acknowledged her own social position and how it affects her work as a leader, stating,

As a white educator and leader, one of the things that I’m always thinking about is how to amplify the voice of our students of color, and I can’t amplify their voice if I don’t know what are the concerns that are close to their hearts. We knew that the Chicano Latino United Voices club was planning an action... and so we started to meet with the leaders of that club and talk about what that could look like. (personal communication, January 20, 2018)

Fernando, Helen, and Jill provide examples of how leaders can approach allyship with students, especially students from marginalized groups. By recognizing their privileges, in Kendall’s (2013) words, they can work “continuously to develop an understanding of the personal and institutional experiences of the people with whom they are allying themselves” (p. 180). Social justice leaders have a unique opportunity to disrupt the systems of hierarchy that were designed to not empower student voice by creating alliances between administrators and students. Developing a radar around social issues that really matter to marginalized students and choosing to take action in support of those students is a critical step in strengthening the ally relationship between students and leaders.

Breaking Ranks and Creating Space for Student Voice

A second key behavior that Kendall (2013) identifies involves breaking from traditional roles that are often defined by the power structure. Specifically,

Allies choose to ally themselves publicly and privately with members of target groups and respond to their needs. This may mean breaking assumed allegiances with those who have the same privileges... It is important not to underestimate the consequences of breaking these agreements and to break them in ways that will be most useful to the person or group with whom you are aligning yourself. (Kendall, 2013 p. 180)

One response typical school leaders have to student activism is the compulsion to “remain neutral” (Hess & McEvoy, 2015). This neutral stance is particularly prevalent in conservative contexts where student activism is less common. John’s school is an example of such a context. John’s principal took this path during the 2016 presidential election, and it impacted him as an assistant principal who is committed to social justice because he recognized that it was suppressing the voices of marginalized students. With growing tensions between Trump supporters and dissenters in the student body and on staff, John spent more and more time “fielding phone calls from conservative parents asking, ‘what are you doing to protect my kid?’” (personal communication, January 20, 2018). The morning after the presidential election, a massive “Make America Great Again” sign was hung in the quad overnight. That’s when John decided that he had to break ranks from his principal and could not be neutral anymore—he took the sign down before many students arrived at school. The next day, when a student walkout led by a small contingent of students of color was imminent (an unprecedented act in this school context), the principal told the administrative team that someone needed to escort the students. John saw this as an opportunity and gladly volunteered. John describes a profound personal lesson he took away from this experience:

Go to the kids. Don’t focus on control and safety. Don’t try to dictate to kids what they can do. Talk to the kids. Pull in the kids. Hear what they want to do, hear their plans, and listen as opposed to just saying, “No, you can’t do that.” (personal communication, January 20, 2018)

As social justice leaders, creating an authentic response to student activism goes beyond standing with our students during a protest to ensure

their safety. Alumni expressed that in order to respond in a truly socially just way, they needed to use their leadership positions to make school-wide structural changes that would create more spaces for student voice to be heard and for future action to be taken. For example, John’s utilization of the detention space as an opportunity for a facilitated student discussion is just one example of how leaders can be transformative in their practice in order to model for students the power and potential of speaking out for what they believe in. As John describes, “we had a mass voluntary detention where we went to the kids and said, look, this is the price of civil disobedience. We opened the gym, and they all came” (personal communication, January 20, 2018). The students who voluntarily showed up for their detention had the opportunity to participate in the walkout and also engage in a powerful dialogue with their teachers, administrators, and peers. Instead of blindly adhering to the district policy, which states, “if you walk out of school, you get a detention,” John chose to use that policy to create a space to amplify student voice and encourage dialogue among student protesters and those who may have shared an alternate viewpoint (personal communication, January 20, 2018).

Responding in this way comes with risks and challenges. Various stakeholders pressure administrators to react in ways that align with district policies and minimize disruption of school activities (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). Despite this pressure, these social justice leaders were willing to take risks, often breaking ranks with their district office or site administrators in order to respond authentically to student activism. One way that leaders provided an authentic response to student activism was by creating safe spaces for students to talk about difficult issues. At Marcus’s school, also located in a conservative community, the administrators organized a peace assembly, where they invited the media, school district officials, and community members to be present and to hear marginalized students express how they felt about a recent incident of discriminatory graffiti in a school bathroom. Instead of inviting a guest speaker or having another adult dominate the space, student voice was at the center. As Marcus describes, the administrators giving

...the microphone to the kids to speak about their racial frustrations, the prejudice they experience, ultimately how they see school and more importantly how the administration fails sometimes to recognize the supports that we need to have in place. (personal communication, January 20, 2018)

This courageous act of listening and truly hearing student voice in a public setting is one example of an authentic response to student activism.

When administrators like Marcus choose to ally with their students in this way, an additional consideration is how to ensure that the teachers, who are on the frontlines in their classrooms with students all day, are fully prepared to continue these difficult conversations with students. Social justice leaders cannot assume that teachers have the experience, training, and skills necessary to participate in conversations about politics, race, and equity. Marcus realized that some of his teachers were uncomfortable leading students in discussions about race-related issues. Rather than letting teachers off the hook, or offering to have the conversations for them, he decided to increase his presence in their classrooms through informal walkthroughs, and to work side by side with his teachers to help them become more comfortable with these critical discussions. In this way, Marcus modeled for teachers and students that these issues are important and that it was okay to let students take the lead. He describes,

It is about what you do on the interior, in your classrooms, and if you show up and are present. And again, you don't have to take the mic and be the leader. You don't have to be on the stage. Be the guy on the side and just be present. (personal communication, January 20, 2018)

These alumni provide clear illustrations of how social justice leaders can use their positions of authority to break ranks and make space for student voice through the implementation of policies and school activities, and by supporting teachers to engage with students on difficult topics. As Fernando said, "...whether it's in the flatlands, in the hills, in the cities, or the burbs, we need to create spaces for kids to maintain hope" (personal communication, January 20, 2018). In each case, it is clear that the leaders intentionally planned for the potential "consequences of breaking agreements," and did so in ways that would be most supportive to the marginalized students.

Making Intentional Strategic Moves

A third key behavior for allies involves the strategy the person with more power and privilege uses to support those with less. Kendall (2013) writes:

Allies know that in the most empowered and genuine ally relationships, the persons with privilege initiate the change toward

personal, institutional and societal justice and equality... Sharing the power of decision making about what will happen is essential. Assess who will be at least risk when stepping into a situation to initiate and move forward... Together with the people who aren't privileged, we choreograph who makes which moves and when they will be made. (p. 183)

Catalyzing a coalition of adults to support student activism, and ensure its success, was a theme echoed by many of the alumni. As discussed by Kendall (2013), it is essential that educational leaders, as persons of privilege, share the power of decision-making. Helen, an elementary teacher leader, tapped into the network of educators with whom she had built relationships during her tenure as an officer with the teachers' union in an effort to coordinate a response to the recent anti-immigrant sentiment that was becoming a prevalent local and national narrative. Her approach assumed that district leadership would be skeptical about their capacity to implement a district-wide action on top of their already overwhelming responsibilities. With this in mind, Helen began to mobilize the various groups she had previously worked with and solicited their assistance and resources. Helen's "choreography" included aligning with the Teachers of Color network, a collective of teachers focused on creating social justice curricula, and creating posters with the theme "We All Belong." The posters, which included a butterfly motif by a local artist of color, Faviana Rodriguez, were printed in Arabic, English, and Spanish. Together, Helen and her team created accompanying lesson plans, based on the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance curriculum. When approached, the district was resistant and skeptical about how to distribute the materials. However, because of the preparations made by Helen and her coalition of adults, all concerns were addressed, and the posters and curriculum were distributed to every teacher.

The Southern Poverty Law Center learned of their work and dispatched a reporter and photographer to document the efforts. They also invited Helen to speak at their fall fundraising event to share her experiences with their funders. Rather than attend the event, Helen suggested that her co-facilitator, a teacher of color, present to the group. Ultimately, the teacher, along with one of her students, shared with the gathering the challenges they faced in their community because of their racial identity. While Helen was the initiator of the action, she chose to move out of the center and give the spotlight to a teacher of color and

student of color. This deliberate act of allyship by Helen provides an example of how leaders can use their privilege to ally with marginalized adults and students.

In an effort to “[share] the power of decision making about what will happen... and... choreograph who makes which moves and when they will be made” as described by Kendall (2013, p. 183), social justice leaders can align themselves with their students in ways that minimize risk to the students while still amplifying their voices and supporting their cause. When the students at Jill’s school, which has a strong history of social activism, were planning a school-wide walkout, she and her leadership team met with the student leaders to help them conceptualize their protest plan in a way that would have maximum impact while also keeping students safe. According to Jill,

...we talked over a week about what the action could look like, and their idea morphed away from a walkout to figuring out to get the students and teachers to hold hands around the school. We were really happy about that... not because it made things simpler for us, but because it was a new approach that provided symbolism that was so much more powerful and representative of their message. (personal communication, January 20, 2018)

Being an ally also means supporting teachers who are struggling with students that make triggering remarks toward marginalized groups. A teacher told Jill that she was in the process of changing the curriculum of her course “because this kid just can’t stop saying really offensive things” (personal communication, January 20, 2018). Jill then described how the administrators have to be the ones to model dialogue across difference by confronting white students on behalf of teachers. In her words:

Yesterday, we had another conversation with this student who keeps saying deeply offensive stuff. We’ve had to give him some really clear boundaries about what you can and can’t say—not to abridge his First Amendment rights, but to reset the expectation around what civil discourse in the classroom looks like. Because if you continue to say very offensive things about immigrant students, you’re not making a safe environment for yourself or for them. (personal communication, January 20, 2018)

In this instance, remaining silent or neutral was not an option for Jill. It was important for her teachers and students to witness her use her position

as a school leader to reset expectations around student safety in support of marginalized populations.

These examples demonstrate how leaders can use their professional knowledge, network, and positionality to amplify the voices of marginalized students and adults. The “choreography of moves” and “assessment of risk” described by Kendall (2013, p. 183) required the leaders to establish and maintain trusting relationships during periods of unrest; it also required both strategy and preparation for the emotional labor involved.

Conclusion

In each of these three dimensions of allyship—developing a radar, breaking ranks, and making intentional strategic moves—the school leaders tipped the balance to disrupt the hierarchical relationships between themselves and their students, in service of marginalized students. The work of developing a radar, breaking ranks, creating space for student voice, and making intentional strategic moves is complex. It requires leaders to repeatedly ask questions such as: *How does my race affect the situation? How can I remove barriers? How do I move out of the center? Where are the opportunities for change? What makes the biggest impact? What are the consequences for each group? Who is taking the risk?*

By choosing to be an ally to marginalized students, social justice school leaders can transform their schools to be more democratic institutions of hope. Leaders can leverage their power and authority to create more equitable conditions for their most voiceless students. This, in turn, will serve to empower students of color and will allow them to become active participants in the democratic process. As Kendall (2013) states, “allies promote a sense of inclusiveness and justice... helping to create an environment that is hospitable for all” (p. 183). Similarly, the alumni leaders of UC Berkeley’s Principal Leadership Institute provide models illustrating how social justice-oriented school leaders can create more inclusive schools that empower the voices of marginalized youth.

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Language Development Policies and Practices Impacting the College and Career Readiness of Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Programs and policies related to the education of long-term English learners (LTELs) at the secondary level are often based on the belief that fluency in English is the primary, if not the sole, requirement for academic success and college and career readiness. This case study investigates whether LTEL students are accessing Linked Learning/California Partnership Academy pathways to achieve the goals of the Common Core State Standards of college and career readiness. Results indicate that conflicting language development policies at the district and site level impede access to programs that offer college and career readiness skills.

Keywords: long-term English language learners, English language proficiency policies, student engagement, college and career readiness, equity and access, Linked Learning/California Partnership Academy

Educational leaders' knowledge of their clients is the foundational starting point in making educational decisions that ensure equity and access for all students, especially for long-term English learners (LTELs) at the middle and high school level. Understanding who LTELs are, where they go to school, and whether they are accessing college preparation programs for college and career readiness is the focus of this research. The largest and fastest growing K-12 student population group in the United States is the Latino-origin student (McFarland et al., 2017). California reported the highest percentage of English language learners (ELLs) among its public school students, at 22.4% (McFarland et al., 2017; Sugarman & Lee, 2017). According to data collected by the California Department of Education for the 2015-2016 school year, Spanish was the most commonly spoken home language of ELLs, making up 85% of the state's ELL student population (California Department of Education, 2016). Additionally, California defines LTELs as those students who have been in school for six or more years and who are not progressing toward English proficiency. Of the 22% of the California student population who are ELLs, 63% are LTELs (Olsen, 2010; Sugarman & Lee, 2017) and are in grades 6-12 in secondary school.

LTELs in secondary schools have the added dimension of ethnic and lingual diversity, which presents challenges in accessing college and career academy programs due to language acquisition needs. The primary aim of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is to ensure that all students are college and career ready by the end of secondary school. However, LTELs are not able to access programs that build upon the 21st-century skills of college and career readiness due to conflicting language policies and practices. This case study investigates whether LTELs are accessing Linked Learning/California Partnership Academy (LL/CPA) pathways to achieve the CCSS goals of being college and career ready students prepared to advance to a postsecondary college experience.

The initial stages of implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) created a shift from the punitive accountability mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to a devolution process that put states in charge of creating and managing the new federal accountability mandates. The ESSA represents a new paradigm shift from federal to local control, which provides flexibility in developing local accountability measures, thus resulting in the decentralization of accountability of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to the state and local levels with regard to educational decision-making. Political culture impacts how

programs are designed to meet the outcomes of the CCSS and the underlying foundation of the CCSS are the college and career readiness anchor standards, which align curriculum with college and career goals (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). The college and career readiness anchor standards define the general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations for students in preparation for college and the workforce. There is much discussion and deliberation among educators and research scholars concerning what constitutes college and/or career readiness and how it can be measured in order to monitor student progress toward meeting its goals. The stated aim of the CCSS is to define the knowledge and skills students should acquire in order to graduate from high school ready to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses that do not require remediation (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010; Conley, 2005, 2007, 2010) and in workforce training programs. However, career readiness pertains to the knowledge, skills, and learning strategies necessary to begin studies in a career pathway, which differs from work readiness and job training in the workplace (Lombardi, Conley, Seburn, & Downs, 2012).

The overarching inquiry of this study is to determine whether LTELs are accessing LL/CPA pathways to achieve the CCSS goals of being college and career ready. The purpose of this study was to examine the differences, if any, in student engagement, achievement, and access to college and career readiness standards between LTELs participating in an LL/CPA certified pathway and LTELs not participating in an LL/CPA certified pathway within the same high school. This study also measured factors of student achievement and engagement in the academies, as these are foundational components that make up the structure of a career academy. Measuring student engagement is the key to improving student achievement, especially for those classified as at-risk, meaning at high risk for dropping out of school (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006).

Background

Drawing from the opportunity to learn (OTL) theory, Callahan (2005) found that ELL students were “tracked” (p. 5) into lower academic classes based on linguistic abilities. ELLs enter U.S. schools with two tasks to complete: learn English and learn academic subject content. When ELL students at the secondary level have limited opportunities and are placed

in low-track courses, this frequently results in exposure to less rigorous content and fewer learning opportunities. Olsen (2010) indicated that LTELs who are “stuck” in the English Language Development (ELD) ghetto have less opportunity to be engaged in school and their academic progression is significantly reduced (p.18). Stanton-Salazar (1997) inferred a connection between social capital theory, student engagement, and peer connectedness, which enables ELL students to establish social networks that in turn foster the growth of human capital.

As educational institutions seek programs that meet the threshold of providing college and career readiness for all students, programs like LL/CPA have been touted as meeting and even exceeding these aims (California Center for College and Career Readiness, 2012a). Secondary programs of study need more opportunities for students to match what they are learning to their aspirations, interests, and ambitions. This aim, as Olsen (2010) and later Conley (2014) state, is particularly important for high school LTELs who need to acquire college and career readiness skills in a program of study in which their interests, aspirations, and engagement are integrated into their learning. Career academies are designed to integrate core content courses with career/technical courses centered on a particular industry sector. This integration of core and career/technical-themed courses provides students with opportunities to refine their career readiness skills as they participate in work-based learning.

U.S. educational policy with respect to ELL students has become more rigid, viewing these children solely from a deficit perspective and increasingly demanding that English alone be used in their education (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). Title III of the ESEA holds state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools accountable for increases in English proficiency and core academic content knowledge of Limited English Proficient (LEP) children by requiring that they demonstrate improvements in the English proficiency of LEP children each fiscal year and adequate yearly progress for LEP children, including immigrant children and youth (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

All ELL students are administered the reclassification assessment, and the results are assessed to determine if the ELL student has met the reclassification criteria to be considered a Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) student. However, LTELs that have not met the reclassification criteria are placed into ELD courses to learn English language skills. For these courses, ELL students are pulled out of regular classrooms and given one-on-one or small group designated instruction in

English, which is usually unrelated to the content area instruction they receive while in their mainstream classrooms. School districts use various approaches when implementing Title III at the secondary level, one of which is blocking or doubling up on ELD courses. In such a setting, ELL students take up to two ELD classes in lieu of one English class. This emphasizes the paradox of practice for LTELs who are placed in intervention classes due to underperformance on state benchmarks.

A study by Thomas and Collier (1997) found that English as a second language (ESL) taught via content-area instruction (social studies, math, science, etc.) is associated with higher long-term educational attainment than ESL pull-out programs. However, the prevailing method of providing ELD courses is predominately using the pull-out strategy rather than programs that teach English via content-area instruction (Thomas & Collier, 1997, p. 32). The result is, as researchers such as Menken and Kleyn (2010) and Umansky and Reardon (2014) have shown, that many ELL students remain in ESL programs on a semi-permanent basis—as LTELs.

Mendoza (2016) argues that ELL students are not accessing core academic courses or electives such as LL/CPA pathways due to the competing language development policies and related program compliance mandates. At the same time, English language acquisition itself is treated as a “gatekeeping process for access to college preparatory content” (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009, p. 2392), so that if students are not reclassified, their access to rigorous curricula is restricted (Kanno & Gromley, 2015). Due to the competing mandate of implementing Title III policies, LTELs are not accessing core academic courses or electives that provide engaging and relevant preparation for college and career readiness.

It is noteworthy to highlight the programmatic conflicts of implementing a mandated program like the Title III policies based on a restrictive strategy of offering pull-out ELD courses to ELL students that have not been reclassified as English proficient. However, for LTELs at the middle and high school level, the lack of access to courses that provide college and career readiness is a significant barrier in meeting graduation requirements and college admission criteria. As I engage readers in the forthcoming discussion, I stress that the often-unintended outcome of only recognizing one avenue for language development is the further stratification of an already marginalized adolescent population. In 2011, the California Department of Education (CDE) released *A Blueprint for*

Great Schools, which describes the need for increased personalization of instruction and engagement of students through career-themed LL/CPA pathways. State Superintendent Tom Torlakson announced at the Annual Educating for Careers Conference on March 3, 2014, that the Common Core would include the new Smarter Balanced Assessments. These include standards for career-ready practice, which align with college and career readiness for postsecondary education and career training, i.e., workforce training that goes beyond academic skills in order to address California’s longstanding goal of preparing college and career ready students capable of competing in a global economy.

Career academies have existed for more than 30 years and have been implemented in more than 1,500 high schools across the country. Students are placed in cohorts that participate in the same grade level and career-themed course of study. Teachers in these programs support the development of student peer-to-peer networks and teacher–student relationships that enhance student learning. Career academies provide an integrated instructional approach by combining core content academic courses with an occupation-related career emphasis.

The Linked Learning initiative aims to give all students access to the experiences and conditions they need to grow as learners and to be prepared for college, career, and civic life. To achieve this goal, the Linked Learning initiative brings together rigorous academics, a challenging theme-based or career-based curriculum (e.g., health professions, technology, and global studies), and opportunities to apply learning through real-world experiences. The Linked Learning approach blurs the distinction between Career Technical Education (CTE) and college preparation by creating a pathway toward a single goal: preparation to succeed in college and careers (California Center for College and Career Readiness, 2012b, 2012c; Saunders, 2013). According to the James Irvine Foundation, Linked Learning is a high school reform effort that includes cross-disciplinary instruction, career-themed experiences and content, and opportunities for solving real-life problems as strategies to increase student motivation, engagement, and learning. Linked Learning strategies transform the traditional high school experience by bringing together strong academics, a demanding technical education, and real-world experiences to help students gain an advantage in high school, postsecondary education, and careers (Gonzalez, 2017).

Linked Learning is delivered through a wide variety of structures or programs known as pathways. These pathways may be shaped by

existing CPA school structures and local partnerships, which support the skills and backgrounds of instructional staff. Pathways vary in their themes or career focus; their organization of coursework; how much time students spend on and off campus; their relationships with two- and four-year colleges; and their partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and industries. Pathways align with careers or majors and may be delivered in academies, magnet schools, occupational training centers, small themed high schools, or small learning communities within large high schools (Saunders, 2013).

Methods

The Researcher's Positionality

I was involved with the Linked Learning College and Career Pathway program as a district manager overseeing the development and implementation of the Linked Learning initiative. This role allowed me to gain insights on how to assist site teams with the implementation of the Linked Learning approach. As part of the continuous improvement cycle, pathway programs were evaluated against criteria established by the Scientific Research Institute (SRI) to determine the effectiveness of the programs (Guha et al., 2014). This SRI evaluation confirmed that ELL students were not enrolled in pathway programs at the same rate as other subgroups.

This collective case study focused on four sub-cases comprised of three lead teachers, two counselors, six LTELs in LL/CPA pathways, and five LTELs not participating in LL/CPA pathways. The participants for this study met the criteria for participation, which included being identified as the lead teachers of the pathways, counselors assigned to the pathways, and students in one of the three Linked Learning pathways. The student sample consisted of LTELs that were identified in the student information system (Power School) as enrolled in the Engineering, Multimedia, and Law Academies. However, another sample of LTELs was also tagged as being enrolled in the academies but not taking any CTE courses associated with the pathways. This study used a control and experimental group to compare research results. The 11 students participating in this study provided a sample large enough to analyze whether LTELs were accessing LL/CPA pathways. All students were offered the option of being interviewed in English or Spanish.

The research methodology applied to this study was a case study using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative measures to conduct an in-depth inquiry of the Linked Learning approach and identify factors that either enhance or impede LTELs in accessing college and career readiness programs to prepare them for post-secondary education. The mixed-method quantitative portion was used to describe trends in the data or the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2009).

The variables used in the study were the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) pass rates; grade point averages; California English Language Development Test (CELDT) rates; credits earned toward graduation within the Engineering, Multimedia, and Law Academy; and the non-academy LTELs group. Table 1 illustrates the data indicators for the two sub-cases of students that participated in the study. At the same time, the inquiry of whether college and career academies provide ELL students access to college and career readiness programs was explored using qualitative interviews with LTELs in the Engineering, Multimedia, and Law Academies and non-academy LTELs at the same high school. Quantitative and qualitative data were combined to better understand this research problem and identify the issues ELL students encounter in achieving the CCSS goals of being college and career ready.

This article begins by presenting a framework for analyzing ELL student access to the Linked Learning college and career pathways and what impediments ELL students face in fully participating in these pathways. The data was collected at a high school in the East Bay in California, one of six comprehensive high schools in the school district serving a low-income and racially diverse student body that is reflective of the larger community. The high school community of 1,581 students is richly diverse. Student enrollment includes 11% receiving special education, 47% qualifying for English learner support, and 92.2% qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals (California Department of Education, 2014). At the time of this study, the student population was approximately 82.8% Latino. Some of the Latino students at this high school are immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central and South America. The majority of the Latino students are second- and third-generation immigrants.

The interview questions developed were adapted from Appleton and Christenson's (2004) Student Engagement Instrument (SEI), which measures students' beliefs of cognitive and psychological engagement from the perspective of the student. For this study, 10 interview questions

were developed to address students' level of cognitive engagement (perceived relevance to school) and psychological engagement (perceived connection to others and school).

Table 1
ELD 1-4 and ELD 5-RFEP Participants

ELD 1-4 Student Data Indicators				
	CAHSEE ELA/ CAHSEE MATH	GPA 9-12 weight	CELDT score/level	Credits earn toward graduation
Student A	Not passed/Passed	3.2	1-Beginner	217/225
Student B	Not passed/Not passed	2.4	1-Beginner	205/225
Student C	Not passed/Passed	2.1	1-Beginner	195/225
Student D	Not passed/Not Passed	1.8	4-Early Advanced	200/225
Student C	Not passed/Passed	3.3	1-Beginner	190/225
ELD 5- Reclassified Student Data Indicators				
Student A	Not passed/Not passed	1.6	RFEP	180/225
Student B	Not passed/Not passed	1.08	3-Intermediate	177/225
Student C	Not passed/Not passed	2.6	4-Early Advanced	235/225

Student D	Passed/Passed	3.6	RFEP	210/225
Student E	Passed/Passed	3.1	RFEP	217/225
Student F	Passed/Passed	1.8	5-Advanced	220/225

For the purposes of this study, HyperRESEARCH (Researchware, Inc., 2012) was used to perform the following tasks: (a) coding of text paragraphs, in which segments of text were assigned multiple codes, and (b) retrieval of coded materials (text, graphics, audio, and video segments), which enabled me, as the sole researcher, to organize all similarly coded material together. Fundamental to the data analysis was Boeije’s (2002) constant comparative method (CCM). The HyperRESEARCH software program allows for various reports to be constructed. One such report is the frequency report that can be filtered by cases, names, and codes. The report builder module in HyperRESEARCH was used to generate the frequency responses of the sub-case members against the same groups of codes selected in corroboration to answer each interview question. The various report builders were organized by case, code, frequency, and sources in order to gather data to address the research questions concerning what factors affect LTELs’ access to LL/CPA pathways, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Frequency Table of Significant Codes from Each Sub-Case

Codes	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Teachers/counselors				
College-going culture	2.4	.84	0.00	5.00
College and career readiness	1.6	.59	1.00	2.00
Networking	1.6	2.07	0.00	5.00
Differentiate support	1.2	.84	0.00	2.00

Student engagement	1.2	1.09	0.00	3.00
Intervention support	1.2	1.10	0.00	2.00
RFEP students				
College and career ready	3.0	1.11	1.00	4.00
Academy teachers support	2.0	0.64	1.00	3.00
College-going culture	1.8	1.17	1.00	4.00
Student engagement	1.2	.75	0.00	2.00
ELD 1-4 students				
Barriers to pathways	3.0	4.3	0.00	6.00
Barriers to passing CAHSEE	3.0	3.6	0.00	5.00
Lack of college admissions	2.0	2.9	0.00	4.00
Peer support	1.5	2.1	0.00	3.00

Using the framework of CCM, the triangulation of all the data sources of the sub-case interview questions based on the student engagement instrument (SEI), student and adult responses aligned to the codes, and quantitative variable data supported the trustworthiness of the analysis, thus providing a balanced and authentic representation of the data. This study used the mixed-methods sequential exploratory strategy for this research design with strong qualitative data collection and analysis that was guided by the following research questions:

- (1) What factors affect LTELs in accessing college and career readiness programs?;
- (2) How does a Linked Learning pathway provide access to college and career readiness for ELL students?; and

- (3) Do Linked Learning pathways provide engagement, support, and a sense of belonging for ELL students, and if so, in what ways?

Findings

This researcher used a combination of predetermined and emerging codes that were derived from the interview questions to provide data to answer the research questions. The data codes were organized by the sub-case groups' responses to the interview questions that illustrated general statements in response to the research question. Finally, after narrowing down the codes and responses to each question, sub-case themes emerged from the responses. Using HyperRESEARCH software, five key themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) student recruitment, (b) student engagement, (c) college and career readiness, (d) support services, and (e) student network development. These five key themes were triangulated to determine the perceptions, actions, beliefs, and behaviors of the participants in the sub-cases. The perceptions, actions, and beliefs behind the students' behavior focused on their perception of being college and career ready. In Table 3, a summary of the differences between the ELL student sub-cases illustrates the disparity in language-minority students' access to programs that provide college and career readiness relative to other students.

The English Language Development Level 5 (advanced) and Reclassified Fluency English Proficient (ELD5-RFEP) students provided various codes that emerged from each interview question. The following codes were created from the interview questions that assisted in establishing themes, which emerged from the participants' responses to the interview questions, as illustrated in Table 2, the frequency table of codes for the three sub-cases: (a) college-going culture; (b) college and career readiness; (c) teacher support; and (d) student engagement. Similar codes emerged from both the teachers and RFEP students. However, the ELD 1-4 students did not match codes with either the teachers or the RFEP students; instead, their predominant codes reflected the barriers they encountered. The codes that related to college and career readiness were (a) barriers to the pathways; (b) barriers to passing the CAHSEE; and (c) lack of college admission information. During the interviews with the ELL 1-4 students, the following statements were shared:

- feelings of being marginalized and disenfranchised at high school
- lack of access to the pathway due to conflicts with ELD classes and not having enough room in their schedule to participate in academies
- difficulty passing the CAHSEE
- lack of awareness of the graduation requirements for “a-g” admissions within the University of California/California State University system.

The findings summarized in Table 3 below pertain to the following research questions: (a) What factors affect LTELs in accessing college and career readiness programs?; (b) How do Linked Learning pathways provide access to college and career readiness for ELL students; and (c) Do Linked Learning pathways provide engagement, support, and a sense of belonging for ELL students, and if so, in what ways?

Table 3
Summary of Differences for Pathway and Non-Pathway LTEL Students

Key Indicators	ELD 5 and Reclassified	ELD 1-4
Student recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eligible to be recruited into the academy programs ✓ Aware of the Linked Learning academies ✓ Students were seen as ambassadors of the academies and participated in promotion activities to recruit rising students into the academies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Not recruited to participate in the academies due to language barriers and schedule conflicts with ELD classes ✓ Rarely take academy classes, as the academic language is “too hard” ✓ Had no knowledge about Linked Learning academies

Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students that participated in the CPA academies indicated that they felt supported and engaged as participants in the academies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ They were prohibited from participation because they were not recruited
College and Career Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Academy lead teachers designed activities and projects that provided college and career readiness opportunities for students. Examples of these activities consisted of college tours to expose students to college campuses and campus life. ✓ The sense of being “ready” was corroborated by the teachers, who sought to teach the students how to self-regulate and be proactive in pursuing college and career readiness opportunities ✓ Career Academy students are taught to evaluate their transcripts with the expectation they will go to college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ELL counselor makes arbitrary decisions concerning how college and career readiness is provided. He cites conflicts with student class schedules due to the required ELD language acquisition classes that ELL students need to take ✓ The ELL counselor advocates for ELL students to get their certificate of completion, which counts for community college ✓ Provided minimal exposure to college and career readiness ✓ Students shared that they were not aware of what college and career readiness meant nor had exposure to colleges ✓ Students did not know how to evaluate their high school transcripts for high school graduation progress nor had any knowledge of what “a-g” admission requirements were.

Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Academy teachers intervened quickly when academy students showed signs of struggle. They formed teams that involved other guidance counselors, a college and career counselor, and sometimes parents to design a plan to address the student's needs ✓ Scaffolding academic language strategy used often by the academy teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The ELL counselors concurred that the language barriers of ELD 1-4 students that do not speak English and teachers that do not speak Spanish are a constant barrier for ELD 1-4 students in accessing academies ✓ Another obstacle is the need to take some bilingual classes, which are not offered in the academy
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The findings highlight how educational inconsistency within a sample of ELL students within the same high school impacts LTELs in becoming college and career ready. Overall, the ELD5-RFEP students did receive support and access to all components of college-going culture in the three academies to become college and career ready. However, the ELD 1-4 students were denied access to the Linked Learning/CPA pathways and, therefore, did not have access to programs to help them become college and career ready.

Discussion

This study measured the perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, and skills of two sets of LTELs with regard to college and career readiness. What became apparent was that the ELL students were sub-divided into classifications that determined their eligibility for participation based on their limited English language. Since ELD 5-RFEP students were in the pathways, they received services and gained valuable skills related to college and career readiness due to the college-going culture of the pathway programs. When institutional decisions or policies exclude students from participating in programs based on the students' language skills, the results are devastating

to students and discriminatory in practice. Educational programs are designed to close the academic achievement gap, and special consideration needs to be extended to marginalized ESL student populations that are often overlooked or not considered for participation.

In this case study, there is substantial evidence that arbitrary decisions about how language policies are implemented at the district and site levels impact the ability of ELD 1-4 students to participate in pathways. Based on teacher interviews, they perceived that ELD level 1, 2, and 3 students rarely took academy classes because the academic language was too hard. However, these same students took CTE elective classes that were offered in the academy to graduate but did not participate in the pathway program. This distinction was made by the career counselor who stated that all students take CTE classes to meet the graduation requirements for elective credits. Due to this exclusion, ELD 1-4 students shared that they felt disenfranchised by the school and did not have the knowledge and skills to pursue post-secondary options.

ELD 5-RFEP students perceived that they were college and career ready because of the constant reinforcement by academy teachers and the college and career counselor that the students were college ready. Academy students were able to demonstrate their analytical skills in self-evaluating their high school transcripts to assess their graduation progress. However, the paradox for these students is that their perception of being college and career ready is not totally realistic. As an example, the findings illustrate that 73% of the student samples would not graduate if the CAHSEE were still required for graduation. Another example is the academy student who stated he was college ready because he was already taking a course at a community college. However, the course was a remediation course needed for high school graduation.

For the ELD 1-4 students, the CAHSEE poses a significant barrier, as 100% of the students would not be eligible to graduate from high school if the exam were to be reinstated. Another constant barrier for ELL students is the mandate of Title III that requires school districts to offer language development classes until the student has met the various criteria for reclassification and has become English proficient.

This study identified conflicting practices for LTELs who are scheduled to take multiple ELD courses to develop their English proficiency and lack access to LL/CPA pathways (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). Further research is needed to explore how learning institutions can provide LTEL students at the secondary level

the academic rigor and relevant skills necessary for college and career readiness while also meeting the criteria for English language reclassification. In addition, conducting a Title III policy audit of the school site and district is recommended to ensure that the practices being implemented provide access to programs of study that offer college and career readiness to secondary LTELs.

Educational leaders have an opportunity and the responsibility to make educational decisions that positively impact all students, regardless of English language abilities. Decisions can involve ELD 1-4 students in pre-academy models that enhance participation and engagement in pathways while developing English language skills. LTEL involvement in pathways will help provide them with access to college and career readiness.

It is recommended that LL/CPA courses explore the development of contextualized instruction in the core content and technical courses. Contextualized or interactive instruction emphasizes learning that is mediated through interaction with other ELL learners who are more competent readers and writers. The goals of interactive approaches include specific literacy skills and English language development strategies found in career pathways, as well as other literacy-related outcomes such as engagement in reading and writing and building social capital from peers (Genesee et al., 2005). Students should be permitted to integrate language acquisition skills and strategies in developing their English language competency in LL/CPA pathways regardless of ELD classification.

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Leader Preparation Programs' Initial Responses to the California Administrator Performance Assessment

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Abstract

In 2013, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) approved the implementation of a performance assessment for all preliminary services credential candidates. The result is what is now known as the California Administrator Performance Assessment (CalAPA). Consisting of three sub-assessments, prospective administrators will need to successfully complete and pass the CalAPA. In this article, we provide background information about the CalAPA, present an example of one university's response to this opportunity to increase the rigor of its program, and describe an introductory CalAPA two-day workshop. Additionally, we share the early perspectives of programs and their initial responses to the CalAPA.

Keywords: performance assessment, leadership development, California, university principal preparation, administration

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Introduction

The need for well-prepared, school-ready school leaders has never been greater. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) describe the significant impact a leader has on both teacher performance and student achievement. The majority of states have established certification programs that require candidates to complete an accredited leadership preparation program. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) requires candidates to possess five years of teaching (or school counseling, nursing, etc.) experience and complete a preparation program curriculum in order to be awarded the preliminary administrative services credential. This Tier 1 credential qualifies the individual to begin employment in a school administrator position. With employment, the leader is eligible to begin the Tier 2 clear credential process.

Faced with an increasing need for school leaders, coupled with significant numbers of low-performing schools across the state, the CTC established a multi-year plan to increase the rigor of Tier 1 credentialing. The central focus became what is now known as the California Administrator Performance Assessment (CalAPA). Consisting of three cycles, prospective administrators will need to pass this performance assessment as part of their Tier 1 credential. Candidates must demonstrate their competence in the following three areas: 1) analyzing data to inform school improvement; 2) facilitating collaborative professional learning to improve teaching and learning; and 3) coaching an individual teacher to improve teaching and learning.

The addition of the CalAPA is a sea change in the preparation of California's next generation of school leaders, and one which will necessarily impact the entire system. From candidates and the districts from which they come to university, district, and county offices of education that provide administrator preparation programs, each constituency is becoming increasingly aware of the CalAPA requirements and is under pressure to determine how to respond.

In this article, we summarize the background of the CalAPA and its genesis, provide an example of one university's response to this opportunity for increasing the rigor of its preparation program, and describe the introductory CalAPA two-day workshop. Additionally, we share the early perspectives of programs and their initial programmatic responses to the CalAPA prior to and following the two-day introductory workshop.

Background

We draw on the extensive work of Orr and Orphanos (2011), who suggest that there is evidence linking exemplary leadership preparation programs to leaders' knowledge of effective leadership, as well as their ability to apply that knowledge to their practice. A key term in this assertion is *exemplary*. Orr and Orphanos (2011) define exemplary program models as those that are based on seven elements to disseminate effective preparation practices (Table 1). Literature on preparation programs highlights the importance of increasing rigor to provide authentic preparation experiences to administrative candidates.

Table 1

Elements of Exemplary Leadership Preparation Programs

1. A well-defined theory of leadership for school improvement that frames and integrates the program features around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge
2. A coherent curriculum that addresses effective instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management and that aligns with state and professional standards
3. Active learning strategies that integrate theory and practice and stimulate reflection
4. Quality internships that provide intensive developmental opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner–mentor
5. Knowledgeable (about their subject matter) faculty
6. Social and professional support, including organizing students into cohorts that take common courses together in a prescribed sequence, formalized mentoring, and advising from expert principals
7. The use of standards-based assessments for candidate and program feedback and continuous improvement that are tied to the program vision and objectives

(Orr & Orphanos, 2011, p. 22)

Recruitment and Placement Practices

Orr, Silverberg, and LeTendre (2006) have found that in cases where innovative elements such as these were well implemented, the programs produced positive and notably greater outcomes when compared to programs where such elements were limited or absent. Part of what a program should accomplish through knowledge and practice is instilling the necessary confidence in aspiring leaders to lead a school site with purpose. A leader's purposefulness and confidence in their disposition are illustrated by a shift in their role and responsibilities as a principal. This shift signals a principal's moving away from simply managing regulatory or compliance tasks, and toward a focus on being an instructional leader who fosters growth among students and educators (Stewart, 2013). If programs frame quality leadership in terms of fiscal, operational, and instructional knowledge, as well as emphasizing the value of personal and professional growth among staff and communities, then programs may be forced to think differently about their own practices when it comes to candidate induction and assessment.

In their nationwide review of nonprofit and for-profit, and conventional and innovative principal preparation programs, Hess and Kelly (2005) identify two key practices that program providers should reconsider to effect changes in quality: recruitment practices and candidate internships. The authors suggest that principal preparation programs should consider going beyond immediate candidates and attract outside talent. They encourage programs to be more selective and identify masterful teachers or individuals that possess promising leadership characteristics but may not otherwise consider going into leadership themselves. Expanding the pool of talent allows programs to innovate otherwise stagnant recruitment practices, by attracting non-traditional candidates to support diverse needs of urban leadership, language diversity, and rural education (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Talent scouting is not a new practice, at least not in the private sector. It is common in sports, as competitive teams recognize the value of acquiring talent outside of their immediate region to build strength where needed. The same goes for the field of technology, where companies seek candidates to improve their own initiatives. Of course, what administrative preparation programs have to bargain with is different from these two examples. The premise remains that widening the candidacy pool and being more selective can improve

the quality of both candidates and the program's output. This approach may pose challenges for institutions with lax enrollment practices and those that must meet certain enrollment rates. For these institutions, the CalAPA's rigor and its disclosure of candidate pass rates may prove to be motivators for program redesign.

Hess and Kelly's (2005) work also highlights practices in fieldwork or internship experiences, suggesting that principal preparation programs need to do much more than simply increase internship hours or shift to a cohort model. Districts have a significant role in facilitating fieldwork placements by recommending model leaders in their schools. Jointly designing placements that provide authentic leadership experiences to candidates requires honest and open communication between preparation programs and districts.

If in the continuum of an administrative candidate's preparation we have recruitment on one end, course and fieldwork in the middle, and the goal of successful job placement at the other end, perhaps right before the latter is the most critical piece, assessment of competencies. Prior to the CalAPA, culminating assessments for programs in California may have looked different from one program to another. Orr and Orphanos's (2011) list of elements culminates with standards-based assessments for candidates, with feedback loops for programs. A program's ability to effectively evaluate a candidate's readiness to enter the field of leadership and assume the role of a principal is dependent on the quality of both the methods and measures used to assess competencies taught and practiced throughout the program. Performance assessments that are aligned to standards can help address these issues.

Performance Assessments to Demonstrate Entry-Level Competency

Preparation programs must take a close look at the critical components of their course sequence, the support structures that are in place for candidates, and the manner in which leadership competence is assessed. A shift in how candidates are assessed is timely and something that researchers have called for. Advocates of reform for leadership preparation programs have pointed to performance assessments as a reliable method for licensure programs to consider.

A review of policies and data gaps pertaining to effective school leadership (Briggs, Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013) identifies performance assessments as an approach that should be part of principal preparation

programs. A change of this magnitude reminds us that an administrative preparation program’s success should not be defined by its passing rate, but rather by the quality of leadership dispositions, skills, and experiences that it disseminates and provides to its candidates so that they may be better prepared to do the work needed in their communities. Researchers have suggested that authentic performance-based assessments can be good indicators of a candidate’s competence and ability to lead (Linn, Baker, & Dunbar, 1991; Orr et al., 2017). What each advocate recommendation points to is the need for rigorous assessments to determine a candidate’s competence, something that the CalAPA is specifically designed to address.

Similar Efforts

A preparation program’s process for recommending an administrative candidate for licensure may consist of successful completion of the program’s course sequence, completion of externship or fieldwork experience measured in hours, passing an exit exam or a form of culminating assessment, and in some cases development of a signature assignment such as a portfolio. Not yet common, however, is the use of performance-based assessments.

Some states—like Indiana, for example—require candidates to successfully pass the Praxis exam, a proctored computer-based exam which consists of 65 multiple choice questions and a constructed response (Indiana CORE Assessments for Educator Licensure, 2018). There is, however, a significant effort toward performance-based assessments as part of the administrative licensure track. In 2012, Massachusetts developed the Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL), the purpose of which is to assess the leadership competencies of administrative candidates seeking licensure (Orr et al., 2017). Candidates seeking an initial administrative licensure must demonstrate competency for each of the following four tasks:

- Task 1 - Leadership through a Vision for High Student Achievement
- Task 2 - Instructional Leadership for a Professional Learning Culture
- Task 3 - Leadership in Observing, Assessing, and Supporting Individual Teacher Effectiveness

Task 4 - Leadership for Family Engagement and Community Involvement (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MDESE], 2017)

PAL is the first of its kind to be validated and studied for reliability and serves as an example of an innovative assessment of a candidate's readiness for administrative licensure (Orr et al., 2017). Following this example, California's CalAPA initiative embraces performance assessments as a promising practice to evaluate future leaders.

California's Response to Assessing Administrative Candidates

The CTC allows for two paths to earn a preliminary credential: 1) an accredited professional preparation program or 2) a state-approved alternative examination. The Cal-APA applies to people in the former category and not to those who earn a credential by the test option. There is not an assessment required for candidates to clear their credentials.

Due to concerns with the effectiveness of school administrators' ability to meet the demands of the complex needs of California's public schools in the 21st century, the CTC approved implementing a performance assessment for all preliminary services credential candidates in 2013. In 2015, the Budget Act was passed and provided the necessary funding for the development of an administrator performance assessment. The CTC then drafted the California Administrative Performance Assessment Design Standards and the Preliminary Administrator Preparation Program Implementation Standards, presented them to various stakeholder groups, and highlighted their alignment with the already established California Administrator Performance Expectations (CAPEs) and California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

The resulting CalAPA is intended to provide both a summative assessment of candidate administrative ability and a formative framework to guide and develop candidate competence as the candidate engages in the process (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CTC], 2017). It is only the second statewide administrator performance assessment to be established, following the Massachusetts PAL.

The CalAPA's required tasks are both complex and rigorous. As a result, most programs that prepare administrative credential candidates will need to adjust their programs to match the requirements and expected outcomes of the CalAPA. The scope of CalAPA encompasses three cycles of inquiry to measure aspects of candidate performance (Table 2). Detailed

rubrics exist for each of the performance assessments, which will be scored by local administrators and professors, who themselves hold administrative services credentials, under the direction, training, and calibration of the CTC. The CTC selected Pearson to administer the assessment given that this company administers the state’s teacher performance assessment. However, Pearson did not design the assessment. Rather, a design team made up of educational leaders in collaboration with CTC staff developed the assessment, which was then piloted and field-tested by administrative services credential programs across the state.

Table 2
CalAPA Leadership Cycles and Descriptions

<p>Cycle 1: Analyzing Data to Inform School Improvement and Promote Equity</p>
<p>Analyze multiple sources of school site/district data for the purpose of identifying equity gaps, and their potential causal factors, to inform an initial draft plan addressing a problem statement centered on equitable improvement in line with the school’s vision and mission. At the conclusion of this leadership cycle, candidates will reflect on their capacity to analyze data to inform school improvement and promote equity for all students.</p>
<p>Cycle 2: Facilitating Communities of Practice</p>
<p>Facilitate collaborative professional learning within a community of practice for the purpose of improving teaching and student learning through an identified evidence-based strategy. Candidates will reflect on how their facilitation supports the group to address the problem of practice, and how candidates responded to the group’s feedback on their facilitation and on their ability to support the professional learning of the community of practice.</p>
<p>Cycle 3: Supporting Teacher Growth</p>

Candidates will coach an individual teacher to improve teaching and learning. Candidates will familiarize themselves with coaching and observation practices at the school and conduct a full coaching cycle. Throughout this leadership cycle, candidates will reflect on their strengths and areas for professional growth as a coach and leader.

(CTC, 2017)

Phased Implementation

Designing and implementing a performance assessment to innovate the credentialing process is an ambitious undertaking. It requires a concerted effort between the commission and key stakeholders to provide input to authenticate the alignment of the assessment's components with the goal of reaching a well-designed assessment that accurately measures a candidate's competence. With this in mind, the CTC developed a strategic implementation plan involving a phased rollout. Each phase focuses on a critical piece of development, testing, and evaluative measures.

Several phases have been completed to date. The adoption of administrative performance assessment design standards, a validity study of the CAPEs, the adoption of these expectations by the CTC, and the development of assessment and scoring rubrics were all completed in 2016. In the spring of 2017, a pilot test of the performance assessment was conducted. Currently, the CTC is administering and monitoring the field-test phase, which finished in the spring of 2018. The field-test phase includes a group of commission-approved administrator preparation programs that will contribute feedback from faculty and administrator candidates based on their interactions with the cycles and rubrics as they are currently implemented. Field-test scores will be non-consequential and scores will not be disclosed by the CTC. It will still be the responsibility of the preparation program to provide a grade or credit to the candidate for their participation.

There are two remaining phases of the operational administration of the CalAPA. The first general rollout to all preparation programs will begin in the fall of 2018. While all administrative candidates must participate in the CalAPA and submit all three cycles for scoring, this will be a non-consequential year. Scores will not count against candidates, but they will be released to universities and candidates. The second and final operational phase will be implemented in 2019. All candidates that enroll

in an administrative credentialing program on or after July 1, 2019 will need to successfully complete the three cycles of the CalAPA with passing scores in order to obtain licensure.

One Preparation Program’s Efforts

San Diego State University’s (SDSU) Tier 1 administrative services program has undergone an extensive assessment and redesign to better respond to the California Administrator Performance Expectations, as well as the key standards defined via CalAPA. This intensive effort has leveraged existing relationships with key districts in San Diego County as partners in redesign, which reflects their roles as the university’s “customers” that go on to employ the candidates the program produces.

The effort began in the fall of 2016 with a review and gap analysis of the existing program’s strengths and limitations. Using the Quality Measures tools developed by the Education Development Center (EDC), faculty and district partners reviewed the existing program’s scope and full range of objectives. A detailed needs assessment, followed by an initial review of the program’s 12 courses, was conducted. Course redesign and revisions followed. Each resulting course was then piloted in sequence during the 2017-18 academic year, and a detailed assessment of the revised courses was conducted. Table 3 summarizes this redesign effort.

Table 3
Program Assessment and Redesign Process

Phase	Process
Fact-Finding, Needs Assessment, and Gap Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess program strengths and opportunities using Quality Measures - Analyze gaps in standards: Standards vs. Practice, CalAPA-assessed skills - Review articulation among CAPE standards, CalAPA-assessed tasks, and existing course objectives - Engage district partners regarding currently unmet, and anticipated, future

Phase	Process
	leadership needs
Program Redesign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate and update course content - Review and redesign assessments in preparation for CalAPA - Align coursework with clinical experiences and CalAPA - Review and redesign course syllabi, using an iterative design process
Pilot Revised Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement revised courses - Collect formative course performance data to include student work samples, course evaluations, instructor reflection, and peer review
Review/Revise Piloted Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convene review team following implementation of each course - Review formative course performance data with instructor and design team - Conduct gap analysis between stated course content and outcomes, and implemented course content and outcomes realized - Revise course and syllabus as necessary

It must be noted that the redesign work is both iterative and perpetual. Courses are reviewed at their conclusion each time they are taught and updated based on specific data points that include the instructor's reflection, an analysis of student evaluations and student work product, and a comparison of the syllabus to the actual course implementation.

Intentional Redesign

The faculty and district partners were forced to make deliberate choices throughout the redesign process. For example, SDSU may have experienced success in addressing new requirements hastened by CalAPA by simply updating or reallocating existing assignments. Such an effort may not have required the deeper analysis and consideration of course content that this effort involved. Likewise, the development of new content, and reallocation of content across the course sequence, would not have been required. Finally, the need to engage in continuous cycles of review and data-driven improvement would not have been as urgent. The faculty determined early on that such an effort would likely fall short of fully embracing the opportunity for formative assessment and growth that CalAPA provides to candidates. Instead, SDSU chose to reconsider the program in its entirety, through the complementary lenses of the CalAPA cycles and the districts that employ graduates. This made for a considerable, time-intensive effort that resulted in a largely redesigned program that is fully responsive to the needs of the region's schools and provides the skills California has carefully and deliberately identified for entry-level school leaders.

Though the language in the CalAPA around equity is not explicit, the responsibility of a thoughtful response to issues of equity lies in the partnership between a preparation program and the districts it serves. SDSU and its district partners recognized this as an opportunity. This led SDSU and district partners to co-construct foundational knowledge and practices focused on equity. It helped define common language and expectations of what equity-driven leadership means and how it functions in the educational landscape. This work also emphasizes the importance that the partnership places on embedding values of equity and social justice throughout the program, ultimately helping to shape the leaders that are most needed.

Supporting Statewide Implementation

CTC, through its regional think tanks, has supported programs in learning more about the CalAPA and has used SDSU as one example of successful program changes. CTC staff has sought to help programs across the state integrate the new performance assessment into their programs. The initial

step was a two-day workshop designed to formally introduce the CalAPA, describe one university's response as an example, and support the initial planning of personnel from programs in attendance.

In November of 2017, and again in January of 2018, representatives from multiple administrative services credential programs across the state came together for workshops to learn more about the CalAPA design, pilot, and implementation. The sessions sought to provide participants with an initial understanding of the assessment and highlight one potential process for redesigning and updating existing preparation program curricula to align with the new performance assessments. The workshop was provided through a collaboration with SDSU's Educational Leadership faculty and the CTC.

The stakes are high for all program providers; administrative candidates, districts, and the public will be critical in evaluating preparation programs through the publicly available CalAPA pass rates. For the program providers involved in this workshop, professional development was designed to instill a better understanding of the new accountability measures and provide time for teams to create a plan of action for responding to the CalAPA.

Tier 1 providers learned more about the rigorous components of the CalAPA, administrative accountability measures, and the integration of the CAPE and California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs) into the CalAPA. CTC disseminated development information, design history, assessment components, and explanation of the pilot study and feedback summary. SDSU was invited to share experiences and best practices regarding their program alignment, course restructure, and content redesign of their Tier 1 program. The presentation included details of their journey, which involved the creation of urgency and buy-in, course redesign, resource allocations, efforts to include district partners, and the initial implementation of the CalAPA.

Outcomes of the workshop were designed to help Tier 1 programs to be not only knowledgeable of the CalAPA, but also able to determine, articulate, and create a plan for needed changes to their program and courses in order for their students to be successful on the CalAPA.

Initially, many workshop attendees expressed their concern regarding CalAPA assignment requirements and the lack of program alignment and course content in their Tier 1 programs. Many workshop attendees shared that transitioning to the CalAPA format will force their faculty to reflect on current course content and pedagogy. The teams

shared that they hope this reflective process will guide programs in making the necessary course content changes to help their students be successful on the CalAPA and, ultimately, as principals.

Accommodating the CalAPA: Initial Responses from Program Participants

A program evaluation was initiated to document participants' responses to, and probable outcomes of, the workshop experience. The evaluation effort employed limited surveys collected prior to and immediately following the workshop. While the long-term intent of this evaluation effort is to chart program responses to and accommodations for the CalAPA over time, this initial, formative inquiry sharply focused on the first 48 hours of CalAPA introduction facilitated by the workshop. Specifically, we examined participant self-reported knowledge about the CalAPA and beliefs about necessary actions and anticipated responses to the CalAPA, both 1) prior to engaging in the workshop and 2) at the conclusion of the workshop.

Survey items included both open-ended and Likert-based selected response items. Survey data was analyzed to describe the participants' self-reported levels of understanding and confidence in implementing CalAPA-related curricular changes. Additionally, a comparison of pre- and post-workshop responses was conducted to quantify any response shifts that could be attributed to the workshop content. Finally, participants reported their anticipated allocation of time for a range of possible CalAPA-prompted efforts that included developing curriculum, rearranging assignments, and training faculty on CalAPA.

A total of 72 participants provided survey responses. This included 33 respondents at the November workshop conducted in San Diego. Another 39 responses were collected from participants at the January workshop held in Santa Clarita. Our intent was to describe changes in understanding based on key aspects of the CalAPA initiative, as reported by workshop attendees.

CalAPA Knowledge and Self-Assessed Confidence Concerning Its Implementation

The workshop was designed to increase participants' understanding of the CalAPA and bolster their ability to influence their programs' responses to

its implementation. Four key questions were posed to participants prior to and following the workshop. Figure 1 presents a comparison of aggregated participant responses to these questions which were provided on a five-point Likert-scale. Mean responses were also calculated to describe the average rating. Increases in ratings, on average, were observed when post-workshop responses were compared to those collected prior to the workshop.

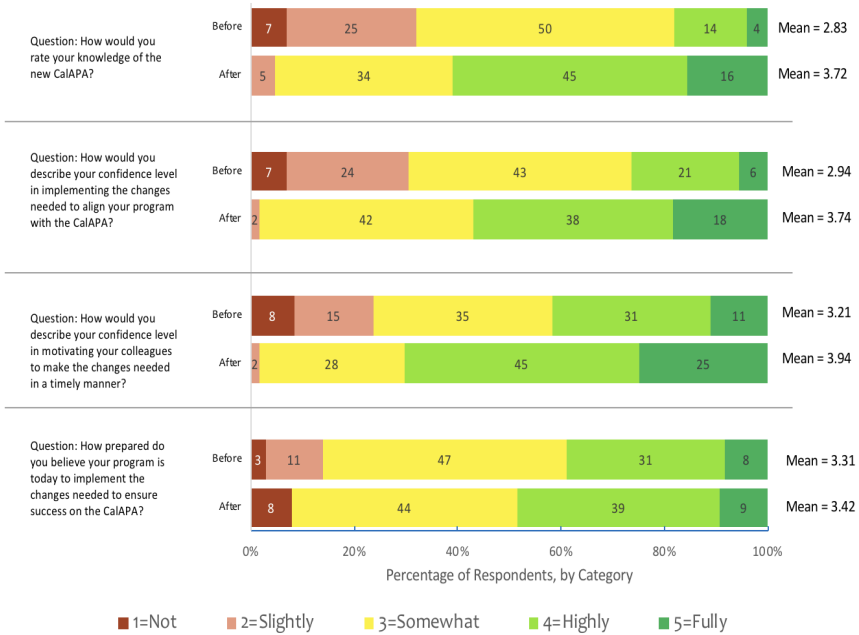


Figure 1. Participant Response Distribution Self-Assessed CalAPA Constructs, Pre-to-Post Comparison (n=72)

Participant ratings increased most favorably with regard to self-assessed knowledge of the CalAPA. The average responses increased by almost one full point (presurvey M=2.83, postsurvey M=3.72), and the standard deviation decreased, indicating ratings which were more closely clustered around the elevated postsurvey mean (presurvey SD=.90, postsurvey SD=.78). Similar changes occurred for questions about confidence in implementing changes (presurvey M=2.94, SD=.98;

postsurvey M=3.74, SD=.78) and confidence in influencing the response of colleagues (presurvey M=3.21, SD=1.09; postsurvey M=3.94, SD=.77). It was participants’ perceptions of their preparation to implement the necessary changes that underwent the smallest amount of growth (presurvey M=3.31, SD=.88; postsurvey M=3.42, SD=.96). Here, the participants’ responses became less consistent, based on the increased standard deviation calculated for the postsurvey.

Anticipated Allocation of Efforts to Implement CalAPA

Respondents also indicated their anticipated allocation of efforts for a range of potential activities in response to the new CalAPA requirement. Figure 2 presents the distribution of responses to this query.

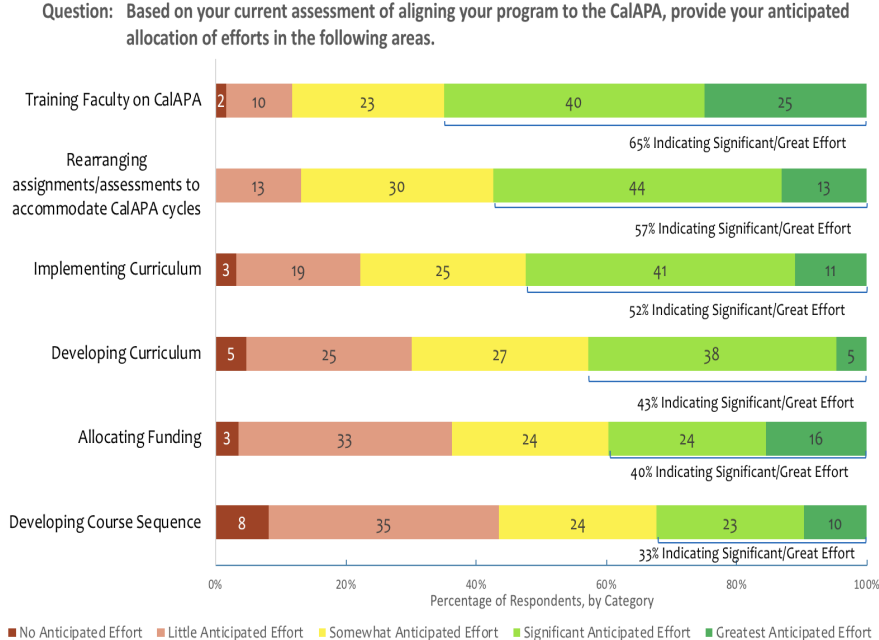


Figure 2. Participant Response Distribution for Anticipated Allocation of Efforts in Response to CalAPA (n=72)

The training of faculty garnered the highest number of “greatest anticipated” and “significant anticipated effort” responses. This was

followed closely by intentions to rearrange assignments and assessments, given the added assessment requirements of the CalAPA. Interestingly, only one-third of participants indicated a strong intention to address course sequencing through development efforts, while 43% indicated a likelihood of developing curriculum.

Anticipated Barriers to Implementing CalAPA

Participants were also asked to anticipate potential barriers in accommodating the CalAPA in their programs. Responses to this open-ended question were categorized, resulting in the following key constructs and corresponding frequencies with which they were expressed by participants:

- Time (24)
- Funding (5)
- Lack of Program Staffing (5)
- Organizational Resistance (4)
- Candidate Pass Rates (2)
- Lack of CalAPA Knowledge (2)
- Lack of Logistical Knowledge (2)

Participants noted time as an anticipated barrier 24 times. The second most frequently occurring response related to funding and its availability to support the necessary efforts program providers would need to make to integrate CalAPA into their curricula. Another unique response was the anticipation of resistance from both university and district partners. Within this response, there were references to considerations of political realities in relation to possible pushback from faculty as well as district partners.

Looking to the Future

Our evaluation of the CalAPA workshop revealed a series of initial impacts the workshop had on participant knowledge of the new performance assessment, as well as participant insights on the changes they anticipate making in adapting their program. Overall, the workshop had a significant impact on participant knowledge of the CalAPA. The data gathered indicates a positive increase in participants' knowledge and

confidence to mobilize efforts toward aligning their programs to the new performance assessment. The data also indicates that preparation programs see training faculty on the CalAPA as a main priority in redesigning their programs. In this regard, the workshop provided valuable content and time to both gain knowledge and chart a plan going forward. Initial responses indicate that, as next steps, programs will focus their efforts on modifying assignments over restructuring course sequence, courses offered, or the overall curriculum of the program. This differs from SDSU's approach. SDSU approached the opportunity to redesign the entire program with intentionality by assessing the program, strengthening district partnerships, aligning courses with the administrative standards, and defining experiences that would prepare candidates for the CalAPA.

Initial feedback also points to two challenges programs face: aligning curriculum and providing meaningful internships. Programs anticipate struggling with aligning curriculum with CalAPA while staying true to their program's vision. Designing and refining the balance between what makes a program unique and preparing candidates for credential performance assessments is a challenge. However, programs should not lose sight of their strengths but, rather, leverage them to revise their program to prepare candidates for the CalAPA. SDSU serves as a positive example, as this program took the opportunity to redefine its relationships with partner districts and its focus on equity, which surfaced through its work with districts. Programs also continue to seek out ways of providing meaningful internships. Increasing the length of internships alone does not make up for quality of supervisors and coaches; however, if both the length and quality of placements are well-structured, this can result in a powerful combination that provides aspiring administrative candidates with meaningful internship experiences.

Current national discourse around privatizing education has prompted educators and researchers alike to think about the implications of a system such as the CalAPA. We know three immediate implications: 1) the CalAPA will assess the preparedness of soon-to-be principals, 2) preparation programs will need to make adjustments to prepare candidates, 3) if administrative candidates successfully pass the CalAPA, then they have demonstrated initial preparedness to lead schools. The CalAPA has been designed to help raise the rigor of assessing administrative candidates with the goal of supplying California with principals that can successfully lead public schools through the diverse challenges they face.

As programs engage in the work of redesign, we anticipate learning more about what efforts have the most substantial impacts on programs and their candidates. Our intent was to document early steps and intentions in the change process. Additional program evaluation conducted over time will further expand our understanding of the initial data reported here on the CalAPA accommodation process, as experienced by a range of administrator preparation programs in California.

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Student Perceptions of an Accelerated Online Master's in Education Administration Program Through the Lens of Social Presence

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze student perceptions of the success of an online accelerated Master's in Educational Administration (MAEd) program through the lens of social presence by asking the following question: What are student perceptions of teaching and learning in an accelerated MAEd program? Forty-eight graduate students in an accelerated, one-year MAEd program were surveyed to identify their perceptions. Findings from the study indicated that emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion were key elements in student perceptions of teaching and learning in their online MAEd program.

Keywords: online learning, graduate program, perceptions, higher education, social presence

Need for the Study

Due to the growth of extended learning and online program offerings in higher education, prospective Master of Educational Administration (MAEd) students have many options when selecting where and how they will earn their degrees. In particular, students who enroll in MAEd programs are often busy, full-time professionals whose responsibilities venture beyond the typical work day (Jaggars, 2016; Kaifi, Mujtaba, & Williams, 2009). As universities struggle to meet the growing need for alternative programs and to compete in a rapidly changing higher education landscape, it is important to consider how these adult learners experience their own education when developing university programmatic choices that better serve graduate students (Fedynich, K. Bradley, & J. Bradley, 2015). One avenue for exploring the intersection of students' perceptions of online teaching and learning and programmatic choices is through the use of the social presence model (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 1999).

This paper applies a bold organizational model to a traditional program survey as a way to analyze students' perceptions of online teaching and learning experiences. In addition, this analysis couples the focus on technology of today's information age with the notions of diversity and social justice prevalent in our global society. We did so as a means to provide a rich opportunity for improved program and leader development through the examination of future educational leaders' perceptions of their own learning experiences. The research question posed was: *What are student perceptions of teaching and learning in an accelerated MAEd program through the lens of social presence?*

The intent of the original survey was to better understand student perceptions of their MAEd online program. In addition, by using a community of inquiry framework coupled with the social presence model, data were collected to analyze overall social presence in the online MAEd program.

Literature Review

This review of the literature explores student experiences in online classes related to factors of social presence; it also includes course design elements, instructor–student engagement and interaction, and the humanizing elements of voice and video. Drawing from research that

analyzes equity gaps in online education, implications for social justice and leadership also begin to emerge (Kaupp, 2012; Kumi-Yeboah, 2018; Wood, 2015). Due to the achievement gap between successful learning experiences in face-to-face versus online courses, questions have arisen concerning the best ways to engage students, which course design features encourage persistence and lead to success, and the impact of teacher–student and student–student interaction. Taken together, these studies provide clues as to how social presence may be a key factor in students’ experiences of online programs.

Many studies have examined the state of online courses (e.g., Jaggars, 2016; Johnson, Mejia, & Cook, 2015; Xu, 2013). Emerging research focuses on connections between social presence, community building, retention, and overall student success (e.g., Borup, West, & Graham, 2012; Bush, Castelli, & Lowry, 2010; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999; Jaggars, 2014; James, Swan, & Daston, 2016; Whiteside, 2015). Asking students about their perceptions of their own experiences, whether positive or negative, is important to instructors and academic institutions in guiding their online programs (Kaifi et al., 2009). This literature review explores online student perceptions through the lens of social presence.

Social Presence

Garrison (1997) defines social presence as the degree to which participants are able to protect themselves effectively within a given medium. Gunwardena and Zittle (1997) refer to social presence as how one is seen as a real person in mediated communication. Others, such as Tu (2000), define social presence as the degree of person-to-person awareness, whereas Picciano (2002) describes it as a sense of belonging to a community, and Whiteman (2002) as the impression that others are participating in the communication process. Most recently, Whiteside (2015) characterizes social presence as the degree to which online participants feel connected to each other. Numerous additional definitions of social presence continue to evolve as studies of the interaction of communication in online learning environments progress. Drilling down to the core of social presence and how it materializes and impacts online course results is complex. Next, we examine the community of inquiry framework to better understand social presence.

Community of Inquiry Framework

The community of inquiry framework explores the interconnectivity of social, teaching, and cognitive presences in order to better understand online teaching and learning (Figure 1). For the purposes of this paper, we refer to the community of inquiry framework simply as the “Framework.” A large portion of the existing research addresses social presence through the Framework. Akyol and Garrison (2008) studied the Framework in online learning experiences of graduate students, concluding that all three presences—social, teaching, and cognitive—exhibited a significant relationship with students’ satisfaction, but with social presence having the most significant correlation coefficient (.539). The Framework also led to the development of the Framework Survey, which has been used in numerous research studies to learn about online learning and teaching environments (Swan & Richardson, 2017). Studies using the Framework Survey have focused on the role of social presence (Annand, 2011), the interrelationship of presences (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999), students’ perceptions and satisfaction (Maddrell, Morrison, & Watson, 2017), and perceived learning (Richardson & Swan, 2003).

In this study, we used the Framework to explore the issue of students’ perceptions of online education. The figure below guided us in answering our research question regarding students’ perceptions of teaching and learning. This figure shows the connection between social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. We next examine the social presence model within this Framework.

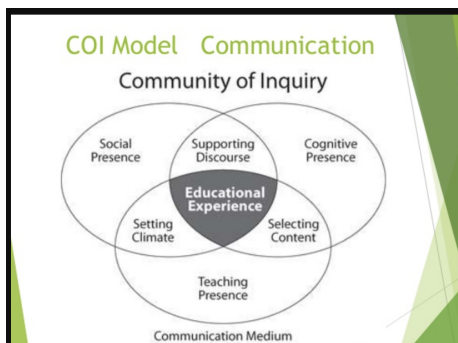


Figure 1. Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison et al., 1999)

Social Presence Model

Wei, Chen, and Kinshuk (2012) analyzed over 500 questionnaire-based surveys collected from learners with previous experiences in online classes at three schools. Their analysis revealed that social presence has a substantial effect on learning interaction, which in turn affects learning performance. In one study of 16 online courses, Whiteside (2015) analyzed online discussions, as well as collecting and coding instructor and student interviews, concluding that social presence is the overarching principle that drives learners, instructors, academic content, norms, behaviors, instructional strategies, activities, and outcomes.

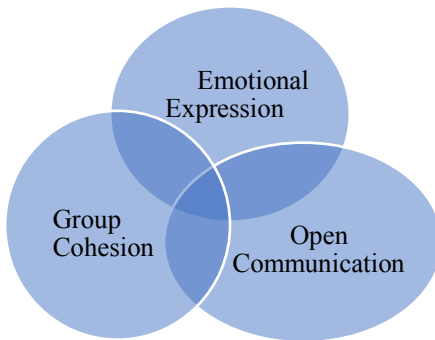


Figure 2. Social Presence Model (adapted)

Open Communication

One expansive study of 23 online courses at two community colleges by Xu and Jaggars (2013) concluded that after reviewing and comparing online course organization and presentation, learning objectives and assessments, interpersonal interaction, and use of technology, only the quality of interpersonal interaction within a course relates positively and significantly to student grades.

Other research has focused on the types of activities that instructors engage in online and how students respond to them. Rucks-Ahidiana, Barragan, and Edgecombe (2012) conducted a thorough analysis of the varying technology tools and digital course features available in online courses by examining the categories of archival presentations, communication forums, external web-based sources, and

instructional software. The categories were examined for purpose and satisfaction, and the authors claim that though students value being engaged in a variety of ways in online courses, instructors do not integrate a wide variety of tools, whether due to lack of knowledge or training.

Instructors play an important role in engagement and in student program satisfaction. Bolliger and Halupa (2012) studied 84 online health education doctoral students, finding a negative correlation between anxiety and satisfaction in the program. Students preferred an online program because it gave them flexibility in their busy lives, which often included long commutes and heavy work schedules. These students identified instructors' timely feedback and interaction as important to their course satisfaction. In addition, the researchers posited that instructors could reduce student anxiety and increase satisfaction through student orientations, student-centered approaches, and planned interventions (Bolliger & Halupa, 2012). Furthermore, when there is a high level of trust between the instructors and students, the learning space fulfills a certain purpose in students' lives and increases the likelihood of learning; this trust, coupled with the online learner requiring a mature and disciplined disposition, assists the student in forming a good relationship with their instructor and supports overall success in the online experience (Kaifi et al., 2009).

It is not enough to take face-to-face course content and transfer it to an online setting. Online course design requires in-depth training and knowledge, as well as an understanding of how adult learners process digital information. Oh and Jonassen (2007) posit that without special consideration, the typical asynchronous discussion format of many online courses aligns poorly with constructivist theory and the nature of learning complex course material, such as that which is found in most MAEd courses. As faculty develop courses and programs in an online format, they must pay careful attention to course design.

Carr (2014) examines graduate students in an online educational leadership course, illuminating three distinct elements that contribute to student engagement: course design, instructor role, and student role. Course design encompasses course organization, planning, and teacher visibility as pertinent contexts for student engagement. The instructor's role allows for the creation of a comfortable online environment. Carr finds that instructor visibility and student interactions with the instructor allow for better engagement through interactive sessions. The roles of both instructors and students change in an online environment and both share

equal control of the learning process. In fact, the majority of the instructor's time is spent designing the learning experiences and in front-loading the course design and content (Fedynich et al., 2015), rather than in direct instruction. In summary, open communication is one of the three components of the social presence model. Next, we examine group cohesion.

Group Cohesion

The importance of connection is mentioned by other researchers such as Al Ghamdi, Samarji, and Watt (2016), who remind us that online instructors must attend to immediacy behaviors in order to reduce the psychological distance that sometimes forms in a virtual environment. They use the term e-immediacy and explain that online instructors can create it by using humor, addressing students by name, or using emoticons in correspondence. This helps foster a more personal relationship with students and ultimately allows students to feel connected to the instructor and to the classroom community.

Establishing rapport is an important element in creating a stronger classroom community. One component of social presence is classroom rapport, first defined by Bernieri (1988) as harmonious interactions between faculty and students. A study by Glazier (2016) of 465 students over six years compared one course that used built-in rapport-building strategies, such as humanized instruction features like video, extensive personalized feedback on assignments, and personalized emails, to an online course with none of the above rapport-building strategies. The study examined rapport through course grades and an anonymous student survey. Both qualitative and quantitative data show that rapport building by the instructor can improve student success as measured by course grades and retention rates (Glazier, 2016). Despite the negative difference in these measures often seen in online courses, rapport offsets this effect, and students in the online rapport class had lower attrition and higher grades. This is significant because this strategy has been shown to be particularly effective for students requiring additional support.

Social presence is increased when the class moves away from being purely text based and incorporates voice and video (Jaggars, 2016). In other words, when students see and hear each other and the instructor online, social presence is increased. Students have a sense of belonging to a community, and the shift from teaching themselves or solely ingesting

content to being part of a learning community increases their success in online settings. Borup (2012) interviewed 18 students in three different online courses that incorporated a variety of video-based teaching and learning strategies. The inclusion of video interaction had a substantial effect on students' perception that the online class felt more like a face-to-face classroom and that the instructor had a social presence. In another study of online design features, video chats were one of the factors students reported to increase the teacher-student relationship (Jaggars, 2016). This idea of social presence is also examined by Sung and Mayer (2012), who determine the five most important elements of social presence to be social respect, social sharing, open mind, social identity, and intimacy. All these facets are areas in which video and voice can enrich online students' learning experience.

These five facets of social presence also contribute to academic achievement. Student engagement and instructor online interaction assist students in achieving their academic outcomes (Parenti, 2013). Moreover, students' perceived sense of learning and progressing toward their academic goals is connected to a sense of a greater learning community (Trepalacios & Perkins, 2016). Thus, students' perceptions are tied to not only their opinions of instructors' connection to students but also their sense of learning.

One way in which students report experiencing the social presence of an instructor is the immediacy of response and type of feedback received (Picciano, 2002; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Wei, Chen, & Kinshuk, 2012). Gordon (2016) stresses that online instructors need to apply immediacy behaviors typically used in face-to-face classes, both verbal and nonverbal, to the online environment in order to increase overall learning and course satisfaction. Students look for responses to instructor emails and questions, interaction on discussion board forums, and feedback on assignments and papers. Richardson and Swan (2003) surveyed 97 students in online learning courses and found that teacher immediacy behaviors increased students' feelings of social presence, which in turn impacted perceived satisfaction and learning in the course. That said, students' feelings of social presence as it relates to satisfaction and learning venture beyond the type of feedback received into addressing social justice issues within online courses.

Social Justice Implications and Gaps in the Literature

Online options improve access to higher education in California (Harris, 2013; Johnson, Mejia, & Cook, 2015). Online courses are also a bonus for workforce development, as they allow adults who might not otherwise be able to complete additional education or training to attend school (Harris, 2013). Even though having the choice and flexibility of online courses is beneficial, underserved students succeed at lower rates in these courses (Johnson, Mejia, & Cook, 2015; Xu, 2013).

First-generation college students, working students, returning students, low-income students, and those with food insecurities face additional obstacles academically that often result in their dropping out and/or taking a longer time to reach their goals (Harris, 2013; Johnson, Mejia, & Cook, 2015; Xu, 2013). Not surprisingly, these same challenges are also a factor in online classes. However, for many college students, online courses offer the flexibility needed to continue working and fulfill other family and personal responsibilities without having to be on campus for all their coursework.

Student outcomes are lower in online courses across the board, and this gap is even more pronounced among racial and ethnic groups that already face an achievement gap in face-to-face classes (Johnson, 2015). An estimated one-third of online students in California community colleges are Latinx, and Kaupp (2012) reports that Latinx students have lower rates of persistence and success in online settings. One of Kaupp's (2012) most significant findings is that Latinx students who were dissatisfied with their online classes reported that they did not feel a strong instructor presence in those particular courses.

Social presence can be increased through video and voice tools that humanize the instructor and build a stronger rapport and connection with students (Cox-Davenport, 2013; Glazier, 2016). Building a strong and supportive teacher–student relationship benefits all students, whether online or face-to-face, and especially students of color (Wood, Harris, & White, 2015). Our study contributes to the literature gap by clarifying how students' perception of their online teaching and learning experience through social presence can reduce student drop-out rates and time to degree.

Methods

Conceptual Design

In this mixed-methods study, we aimed to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and characteristics in the MAEd program among a smaller sample of people (Creswell, 2002). The survey's original design was created to measure the efficacy of various program points in meeting state standards, future implementation of those standards, and overall program satisfaction rather than measuring social presence specifically.

Following the Framework, the social presence model offers a window into another way that social presence may be connected to online course student retention and success. In this model, social presence is examined as the most substantial factor in maximizing learning in online settings. Whiteside (2015) introduces the five integrated elements: affective association, community cohesion, instructor involvement, interaction intensity, and knowledge and experience. Examining the concept of social presence through this lens allows us to understand how these elements relate to satisfactory online experiences.

Procedures

In order to understand students' perceptions, we analyzed Question 12, the open-ended narrative question: "We welcome any additional feedback you have about your program; your feedback will be used to help our efforts to continuously improve our program." Using the Framework and the social presence model, we evaluated the responses through the social presence lens. We then adapted Creswell's (2002) six steps to qualitative data analysis and implemented Garrison et al.'s (1999) Community of Inquiry Coding Template (Appendix A). We read through the narrative responses for the open-ended question, labeled the segments of information with codes, reduced overlap and redundancy of codes, and collapsed the codes into themes in order to analyze the data (Table 1).

Table 1
Social Presence Coding Scheme

Element	Category/ Theme	Indicator	Code	Code	Code
Social Presence	Emotional Expression	Emotions	Positive	Negative	N/A
Social Presence	Open Communication	Risk-free expression	Professors	Program	Curriculum
Social Presence	Group Cohesion	Encouraging Collaboration	Face Time	Administration	Communication

Unit of analysis. The unit of analysis for this study was the collective answers and statements from the survey. We did not focus on comparing individual responses to one another or examining students’ perceptions outside the Framework and social presence lens.

Triangulation of data. Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different types of data in descriptions and themes in qualitative research (Creswell, 2002). Because we only examined one open-ended narrative question, we decided to triangulate the data from that question with the Likert Scale Question 8: “I was satisfied with the following aspects of the MA program: curriculum, innovative professional practice, online classroom climate, and faculty capacity.” We chose to use the data from Question 8, as it contained social presence themes already embedded; the results appear in Table 2.

Table 2
Question 8 Raw Data

Question 8: I was satisfied with the following aspects of the MA program:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Curriculum	0	3	22	23	48
Innovative professional practice	0	7	22	19	48
Online classroom climate	0	3	18	27	48
Faculty capacity	0	3	18	27	48

Using Table 1: Social Presence Coding Scheme, we assigned each aspect of Question 8 a social presence element. Then, we scored the

Question 8 responses assigning a numeric value to each category response as shown in Table 3 (Creswell, 2002).

Table 3
Question 8 Numeric Values

Question 8: I was satisfied with the following aspects of the MA program:	Question 12 (open-ended, narrative) Social Presence Coding Scheme (Table 2) Element	Numeric value
Curriculum	Open communication	164
Innovative professional practice	Group cohesion	156
Online classroom climate	Emotional expression	168
Faculty capacity	Open communication	168

Profile of Population and Sample

The sample for this study included 48 respondents, made up of students at the end of their MAEd online program and recent online MAEd program graduates from 2016–18 who volunteered to participate.

Instrumentation

An online request via email and an online course link were created and 48 students/recent graduates responded and completed the survey. These surveys, which we analyzed to better understand students’ perceptions of an accelerated online MAEd program, represent one university in Southern California (Appendix B). The survey contained 13 questions: nine designed in a Likert Scale format, one multiple choice question regarding program start date, and one open-ended narrative response. Question topic areas ranged from factors influencing their selection of this program to workload appropriateness.

Limitations

Although this study revealed pertinent data of student perceptions, there were some overarching limitations. These limitations are as follows: the survey was not designed using the social presence model; the study captures program-wide rather than course-specific data; the data retrieved was from an MAEd program in its first two years of existence and implementation of a new program involves some growing pains, which

may have influenced responses; and students may have used the open-ended survey question to identify further complaints rather than identify program strengths.

Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

Reliability. Reliability is established in this study through the use of common procedures, similar protocols, and predictability. In our study, we were committed before we began research to a specific procedure of analyzing the data through the lens of social presence. We examined all open-ended narrative responses as sources of evidence (Yin, 2009).

Validity. Internal validity attempts to establish a causal relationship between the treatment and the outcome (Yin, 2009). We aim to establish external validity by demonstrating that the students' responses can provide insight into improving programmatic decisions in order to produce better student online learning.

Generalizability. Generalizability refers to the extent to which the study can potentially be transferred to a different context with similar findings (Van den Akker, 1999). Although this study is not a universal one, we hope to be able to transfer the study to a similar context with similar conditions. We provide detailed evidence and descriptions of the narrative content to enable readers to transfer information to other settings and determine whether the findings are also transferrable.

Findings

The data analyzed yielded a number of results presented via the social presence model. Findings are organized into the following social presence model elements recorded as instances, in other words, the number of occurrences: emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion (Table 4). Findings included positive and negative emotional expression; open communication regarding students' professors, program, and curriculum; and group cohesion as demonstrated through face time, administrative support, and overall communication. In this next section, we review the findings through each of the following themes: emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion.

Table 4
Social Presence Instances Summary Table

Category/Theme	Code	Instances/Occurrences
Emotional Expression	Positive	3
Emotional Expression	Negative	5
Open Communication	Professors	16
Open Communication	Program	7
Open Communication	Curriculum	9
Group Cohesion	Face Time	3
Group Cohesion	Administration	2
Group Cohesion	Communication	5

Emotional Expression

Asking students about their perceptions of their online program experience is important in guiding online program development (Kaifi et al., 2009). In this study, we observed three separate instances of positive emotional expression and five separate instances of negative emotional expression regarding the overall program. Students either expressed positive or negative emotions within this category rather than having both positive and negative responses within their narrative responses. Students whose perceptions fell into the positive emotional expression category used the following phrases to describe their experience: *I was so incredibly pleased with my experience in this program; was a good experience thank you; and this program was perfect for me... for my busy lifestyle.* Students' perceptions in the negative emotional expression category included the following narratives: *I struggled to keep up; it was difficult to know if I was on the right track; it was difficult to balance work, life, kids and everything else; and simply tracking assignments [was difficult].*

Open Communication

Professors. Knowing professors play an important role in student learning, we examined the open communication responses in the student survey narrative. Within this theme, 16 instances from 15 individual students regarding professors appeared in the data; 14 responses included positive comments regarding the professors and two responses indicated a need for improvement. The positive responses included the following

narratives: *professors were knowledgeable... and flexible; all the professors were wonderful; instructors were flexible with assignments and due dates; faculty members were exceptional and provided high levels of practical and professional guidance; the professors were amazing; some... professors helpful, thoughtful, and collaborative; professors were well organized; all instructors were more than fair in accommodating assignments; professors were supportive and knowledgeable; I appreciate my instructors time and professionalism; professional faculty, friendly, helpful, and available; faculty so accessible and amenable to our needs; and professors were... professional and helpful.* The negative responses included the following statements: [professor's name] *was not supportive as all the other professors and thesis chair advisors need to provide more guidance.*

Program. Trust, timely feedback, and interpersonal interaction within a course all play an integral role in student perceptions and achievement (Bolliger & Halupa, 2012; Xu & Jaggars, 2013). In the survey data from this study, there were seven instances of program-related statements with only one comment calling for improvement: *helpful rubrics, easy to navigate [the platform]; great program design; [good] program pacing; loved the [course assignment] posts, pacing of the program, and poor organization.*

Curriculum. Course design and curriculum are equally important to the success of online programs and their instructors (Carr, 2014; Oh & Jonassen, 2007). Statements from this study regarding curriculum appeared as follows in nine instances: *good, good pace, expensive, concerns* (stated twice), *questionable, redundant, curriculum, challenging, and issues.*

Group Cohesion

Face time. When students see and hear the instructor online, social presence is increased (Jaggars, 2016). Students reported a positive response to requesting or including face-to-face time within the asynchronous online program model. Three responses included face time as follows: *face time [with the professor] is helpful; the face to face meetings were good; and [I] wanted [a] face to face conference.*

Administration. Although not part of the social presence model, people outside of faculty and students appeared in the data. Two instances of working with the university staff and administration appeared as

follows: *I sought guidance from the administration and the staff were great.*

Communication. Finally, communication and instructors' connection to students are crucial to a successful online program (Trepalacios & Perkins, 2016). Five statements appeared in the study regarding communication: *Others [professors] have been a struggle to maintain communication with; the only area... [that] did not meet expectations was in communication; I felt there was very little communication; communication of expectations could be clearer; and several professors were MIA.*

Conclusions

This study points to the positive impact of teachers' social presence and humanizing elements on students' online course experience, especially among those who value a closer teacher–student relationship (Cox-Davenport, 2014; Delmas, 2017; Glazier, 2016; Jaggars & Xu, 2013; Pacanksy-Brock, 2013). Key findings include the three categories of the social presence model, namely emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion, which appeared throughout the students' responses. Specifically, the following codes surfaced upon multiple instances: positive, negative, professors, program, curriculum, face time, administration, and communication.

Students reported that they were most satisfied with the online classroom climate and faculty capacity out of all four options indicated in Question 8. Equally important in the open-ended narrative question was faculty, with a total of 14 instances of positive remarks. This further solidifies the conclusion that instructors, whether online or in face-to-face classrooms, have a powerful influence on not only student perceptions but also student academic achievement (Glazier, 2016). In addition, this finding strengthens the need for further investigations of student–instructor connections in the online environment.

Discussion

This study demonstrates the efficacy of using a social presence lens to analyze student perceptions of an online accelerated MAEd program. It further illuminates the importance of open communication in the social presence model, particularly in the areas of student relationship to their

professors and curriculum. Similar to a traditional face-to-face classroom model, instructors are the most important factor in student academic success and positive learning experience (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Future Research

Online courses are here to stay and are increasing rapidly. However, without knowing more about, and applying, best practices in course design and interaction, students taking these courses will continue to demonstrate lower persistence and success rates. Further research assessing how teachers can best include humanizing elements that foster strong interaction and examining which aspects students feel more strongly support them in their online classes can provide useful information for everyone from policymakers to instructional designers and teachers. To further address gaps in the existing research, future studies could investigate synchronous versus asynchronous interactions, the value of voice and video feedback versus text feedback for specific types of assignments and activities, teachers' attitudes toward including voice and video, and aspects of training and support needed for teachers to integrate elements of social presence. Online courses support a wide variety of university students, and identifying best practices and applying them to course design and delivery will ensure that students will be as successful in online settings as they are in face-to-face classes. This, in turn, will ensure that equitable and humanized online learning experiences are in place to support student success.

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Appendix A

Community of Inquiry Coding Template

Elements	Categories	Indicators (examples only)
Cognitive Presence	Triggering Event	Sense of puzzlement
	Exploration	Information exchange
	Integration	Connecting ideas
	Resolution	Apply new ideas
Social Presence	Emotional Expression	Emoticons
	Open Communication	Risk-free expression
	Group Cohesion	Encouraging collaboration
Teaching Presence	Instructional Management	Defining & initiating discussion topics
	Building Understanding	Sharing personal meaning
	Direct Instruction	Focusing discussion

Source: Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (1999). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87–105.

Appendix B

MAEd Survey

Q1 Please rate how important the following factors were in your decision to select an accelerated online MA program.

	Not Important (1)	Slightly Important (2)	Important (3)	Very Important (4)
Length (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenience of the online format (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Credential Option (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other - please specify: (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2 Please indicate when you started the MA in Educational Administration program.

Q3 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about your preparation in the MA in Educational Administration program in the following areas. California Administrator Performance Expectations (CAPEs) as a result of the MA in Educational Administration program . . .

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
I am prepared to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth of all students. (CAPE 1) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am prepared to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth. (CAPE 2) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am prepared to manage the organization to cultivate a safe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

and productive learning and working environment. (CAPE 3) (3)				
I am prepared to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources. (CAPE 4) (4)	0	0	0	0
I am prepared to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard. (CAPE 5) (5)	0	0	0	0
I am prepared to influence political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices. (CAPE 6) (6)	0	0	0	0

Q4 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about your preparation in the MA in Educational Administration program in the following areas. Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs) as a result of the MA in Educational Administration program . . .

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
I am prepared to meet the required standard for dispositions in the profession. (1)	0	0	0	0
I am prepared to demonstrate proficiency in the CAPEs. (2)	0	0	0	0
I am prepared to develop and apply research skills to address student improvement within my teaching setting. (3)	0	0	0	0
I am prepared to analyze and integrate research. (4)	0	0	0	0

Q5 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about the MA in Educational Administration program.

Q6 The pacing of the courses was appropriate for an accelerated MA program.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q7 The workload of the courses was appropriate for an accelerated MA program.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)

Q8 I was satisfied with the following aspects of the MA program:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
Curriculum (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Innovative professional practice (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online classroom climate (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty capacity (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 The field work contributed to understanding the role of an administrator in the following areas:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
Decision making (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data analysis (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent engagement (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student voice (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Budget development (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional development (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10 The program met my expectations.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)

- o Agree (3)
- o Strongly Agree (4)

Q11 I would recommend this program to other potential candidates.

- o Strongly Disagree (1)
- o Disagree (2)
- o Agree (3)
- o Strongly Agree (4)

Q12 We welcome any additional feedback you have about your experience in the program. Your feedback will be used to help our efforts to continuously improve our program. _____

Exploring the Leadership Practices of Elementary School Principals Through a Distributed Leadership Framework: A Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to explore the leadership practice of two urban elementary school principals through a distributed leadership framework. Methods: The study employed an ethnographic case study and data were collected through semistructured interviews and observations. A case study for each principal was created, followed by a cross-case analysis. Findings: Exploring leadership practice through a distributed leadership framework provides insights into how leadership practice is enacted by individuals and their situational context. Conclusion: Additional research should focus on the how of leadership practice to provide school leaders deeper insights into the work of school improvement.

Keywords: distributed leadership, educational leadership, school leaders, leadership practice, principals

Introduction

Creating equitable educational systems to close the opportunity gap is the most significant challenge facing 21st-century education in the United States (Bryant, Triplett, Watson, & Lewis, 2017; Huggins, Klar, Hammonds, & Buskey, 2017; Valant & Newmark, 2016). However, obstacles arise when principals engage in efforts to improve instruction and close the opportunity gap for culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in their schools (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Howard, 2010). Quite often, school leaders, specifically principals, are left to figure out how to create conditions to improve instruction and increase academic achievement by enlisting the support of other individuals in their schools (Bredeson, 2013; Dimmock, 2012; Halverson & Clifford, 2013). As a result, principals are examining more responsive leadership approaches and seeking to adopt new leadership skills in order to address the challenges of improving student achievement and close the opportunity gap for the diverse student populations in their schools (Dimmock, 2012; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Smith, 2017; Vang, 2015).

The traditional leadership perspective in which one person, generally the principal, is responsible for enacting all leadership functions and responsibilities has quickly given way to a more distributed perspective of leadership practice (Huggins et al., 2017; Spillane, 2006, 2007). A distributed perspective moves beyond this narrow view and invites an examination of the leaders in schools that engage in or influence practice that impacts teaching and learning (Spillane, 2006). The practice of distributed leadership extends beyond traditional roles and responsibilities to integrate coordinated actions and interactions across the school community (Dimmock, 2012; Gronn, 2008; Mulford, 2008; Spillane, 2006). In turn, these coordinated interactions among school leaders can harness human capital and resources to improve teacher practice, which can have a sustained impact on efforts to close the opportunity gap for diverse student populations (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Robinson, 2008).

This article examines the leadership practice of two principals working in urban elementary schools that have demonstrated annual gains in student academic achievement as measured by the annual state accountability assessment. The following research question was addressed: What are the leadership practices of principals working in

schools that demonstrate annual gains in student academic achievement as measured by the annual state accountability assessment?

In the following sections of this article, there is a brief review of the literature with a focus on the constructs of distributed leadership as a conceptual framework for examining and analyzing leadership practice in schools. The methods employed to conduct this qualitative case study of two elementary school principals are then described. Next, the themes that emerged from the data analysis and the consequent findings are presented. Finally, the article ends with a discussion of the findings, recommendations, and a conclusion.

Literature Review

Distributed leadership is a relatively new concept in the field of leadership and organizational performance (Dimmock, 2012; Halverson & Clifford, 2013; Harris, 2004, 2013; Spillane, 2007). A distributed perspective of leadership provides a conceptual framework by which the *how* of leadership practice can be examined and may serve as a more accurate way of representing patterns of leadership that occur in schools (Bredeson, 2013; Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2006).

Theoretical Conceptualizations

A growing body of empirical research draws on the distributed perspective in order to understand how leadership practice extends to those with no formal roles in schools (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Dimmock, 2012; Spillane, 2006). Prominent researchers Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004), as well as Gronn (2000, 2002a, 2002b), have developed conceptual frameworks for analyzing leadership practice in schools; however, their conceptual frameworks differ (Dimmock, 2012; Halverson & Clifford, 2013).

Gronn (2000, 2002b, 2009) describes three patterns of collective action observable in the practice of distributed leadership: (a) spontaneous collaboration, where leadership practice is a result of the collective interactions of individuals with different skills and expertise to accomplish a task; (b) shared roles, where leadership emerges between two or more individuals coordinating their efforts to accomplish a task; and (c) institutional structures, where leadership practice is dictated by formal organizational structures or roles.

Moreover, Gronn (2000, 2002a) proposes that distributed leadership emerges as a result of the interactions of people in a group or groups of people acting as one connected network with a specific purpose. In this conceptualization, Gronn (2002b) views leadership as a concerted action to be explored from a broader understanding of leadership practice rather than a collective of each person enacting tasks. This perspective holds that people in a given organization are working in tandem to merge their efforts and expertise so that the collective outcome of the group is greater than the efforts or actions of one person alone.

In contrast, Spillane (2006, 2015) conceptualizes leadership practice from a distributed perspective where leadership practice is the focus of the analysis (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). A practice lens provides insights into how leadership is enacted in schools, including which individuals are networking together, what they do, and why they do it (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Spillane, 2006). A distributed perspective views leadership practice in schools as an outcome of the interactions of formal and informal leaders, their situational context, their use of tools in facilitating these interactions, and the organizational structures that constrain or influence their interactions (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Spillane & Healey, 2010). Therefore, a distributed perspective of leadership practice is always the starting point for understanding the *how* of leadership as it unfolds in the work of schools (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Huggins et al., 2017; Spillane & Healey, 2010).

A distributed leadership framework provides an alternative way of examining the complexities of how multiple individuals and principals engage in the work of improving teacher practice and student learning outcomes (Halverson & Clifford, 2013; Huggins et al., 2017; Spillane, 2005, 2015). This shift in focus further contributes to a more integrated understanding of the leadership practice of school leaders instead of a narrow examination of isolated individuals lacking any situated context (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Dimmock, 2012; Spillane & Healey, 2010).

Methodology

The researcher used a case study design grounded in the ethnographic research tradition (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Schram, 2006) to examine how the complex relationships and interactions of two urban elementary principals in contextual situations intersect as leadership practice and constitute distributed leadership. This article highlights the

two case principals and the range of leadership practice that occurred through their interactions with teachers while situated in various contexts and settings.

Participants

This case study was conducted in a large urban school district in Southern California. The three data sources were (a) elementary principals, (b) leadership team members, and (c) grade-level teachers. Participants varied in gender, age, ethnicity, and length of educational experience. The two case study principals were identified and selected using criterion sampling. Both case principals have spent their entire professional careers in this urban school district. Principal Artavia (pseudonym) worked as a teacher, instructional coach, and assistant principal and has been the principal at the case school, Cedro Elementary School (pseudonym), for six years. Cedro Elementary School has a high-poverty (72%), predominately Latinx (99%) student population with 50% of the students identified as English learners. Principal Amado (pseudonym) worked as a teacher, categorical programs coordinator, and assistant principal and has been the principal at the second case school, Almendro Elementary School (pseudonym), for 12 years. Almendro Elementary School has a high-poverty (87%), predominately Latinx (95%) student population with 82% of the students identified as English learners.

Data Collection

Data collected from observations described the setting and context, interactions, behaviors, and leadership practice of both case principals. Interviews and observations allowed the researcher to examine and explore the *how* and *why* of leadership practice. Field notes taken during observations of the case principals described the setting, school cultures, and interactions with leadership team members and grade-level teachers. The use of multiple data sources (Merriam, 2009) enhanced the data reliability through triangulation in two specific ways: (a) first, by asking each case principal to review the field notes, transcriptions, and coding schemes; and (b) second, by sharing interview transcripts and notes with each case principal to ensure a high degree of accuracy in capturing detailed information about their interviews (Glesne, 2011).

The semistructured interviews with each principal lasted two hours. All interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. After each interview, the researcher wrote analytic memos based on personal reflection and perceptions. Interview questions were aligned with the research questions and focused on examining how case principals enacted leadership practice in a variety of settings and contexts through their use of various tools and organizational routines. Additionally, interview questions provided the researcher with an opportunity to collect a wide spectrum of insights and perspectives about leadership practice, and to understand the social patterns and norms of a culture-sharing group (Glesne, 2011).

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were ongoing throughout the study. The data were organized and analyzed in the following sequence: (a) organizing and establishing familiarity with the data; (b) generating categories; (c) identifying themes; and (d) coding of the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The researcher examined both case schools, and categorized and noted similarities and differences in each case. As patterns and trends emerged, the researcher was better able to understand the leadership practice of principals in each case school. The synthesis of the data collected from the case schools yielded a deeper understanding of the leadership practice of both case principals. Comparing and contrasting leadership practice provided further insight into the enactment of leadership practice, the distribution of leadership practice across many individuals, and how the tools, routines, and context of a given situation help to define leadership practice in each case school.

The researcher used a professional transcription service for all principal and focus group interviews, and then read and reread all of the transcripts to recheck them for accuracy prior to the data analysis process. A coding system was developed based on the conceptual framework addressed in the literature review on leadership theories and the research questions to generate themes and descriptions and to create relational categories for the data. Upon completion of the data collection and preliminary analysis process, the researcher began a thematic data analysis and interpretation by sorting all of the responses from interview

participants and field notes, including the examination of themes across both case schools.

Data collected from each of the case schools were analyzed through a within-case and cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis was conducted based on where similarities and differences between both case schools were noted and categorized. Data analysis suggested four broad themes of leadership practice that emerged between principals, leadership team members, and grade-level teachers in both case schools that address the research question for this study.

Findings

The case study data are organized around four themes of leadership practice. The leadership practices are (a) a focus on instructional improvement, (b) monitoring instruction in classrooms, (c) structures to promote collaboration, and (d) supporting leadership development for teachers. Each case highlights the most significant leadership practice of each principal and sheds light on the intricacies of leadership practice as it unfolds in the interactions of others. A cross-case analysis of the leadership practice of the two case principals is presented in the discussion section.

The Case of Principal Artavia

A Focus on Instructional Improvement

Principal Artavia understood the need to build a sense of urgency around improving the quality of instruction to reverse the three-year decline of academic achievement and close the opportunity gap. Principal Artavia commented:

When I first got to the school, there was no question that the priority had to be one of setting a focus, dedicating resources and support for improving instruction. We have a moral obligation to do what we can to improve student achievement because we are talking about children from this community. I tried to make sure that teachers understood that we could and had to do this.

Realizing the daunting challenge of stemming the decline of student achievement and closing the opportunity gap, Principal Artavia gave serious thought and reflected upon how teachers at the school could

be leveraged as leaders in a collective and focused way to address the opportunity gap. What resulted was the establishment of two routines, purposeful goal setting and a data analysis cycle, that would have a direct impact upon instructional improvement and teacher practice over time.

Goal setting. Principal Artavia implemented SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) instructional goals as a high-leverage strategy to maintain a focus on instruction, hold teachers accountable for student progress, and create a way for the school community to measure and see student achievement progress over time. The goal-setting process pushed teachers to become more focused on instruction in a specific way, and over time teachers began to realize how a routine such as goal setting could be instrumental in focusing individual teachers and their grade-level cohorts on instruction. Principal Artavia underscored the importance of goal setting by commenting:

You begin your work with goal setting. Your reflective questions begin to be about why students are not progressing, and what goals will you set to help them progress. The gains in achievement are mostly because we kept focusing on a process of improving instruction and teacher practice over the years.

Data dialogues. From the principal's perspective, formative and summative data dialogues provided a process and structure for communicating directly with teachers and their grade-level peers about assessment data. Initially, the data dialogues were a difficult sell for the principal, and teachers balked at having to engage in these dialogues. Gradually, however, the data dialogues had a deep impact upon teachers and eventually laid the groundwork for building a school culture focused on improving instruction and creating internal accountability for student academic progress. Principal Artavia provided this insight:

The data dialogue was my way of focusing individual and grade-level conversations with teachers about what kind of results they were getting with their teaching. Now we are able to see teachers engaging in data dialogues with each other at their grade-level meetings, which has made everyone more serious about making sure all students achieve and show improvement.

Monitoring Instruction in Classrooms

According to Principal Artavia, the school district's Framework for Instructional Improvement became the guiding tool to monitor instruction

in classrooms. The Framework has been instrumental in strengthening the principal's understanding of effective pedagogy and instructional practices, effective classroom management, student-centered learning, and supportive classroom environments. Principal Artavia offered this perspective:

It would be very difficult, next to impossible, for me as to keep a focus on instruction if I did not visit classrooms regularly to see what was actually happening with teaching and learning. I have a commitment to students to improve their quality of learning by improving the teacher's understanding of effective instruction, and the Framework helps me accomplish this.

Conversations about practice. Principal Artavia believes in the importance of engaging teachers in conversations about practice, a necessary part of monitoring instruction in classrooms. Conducting conversations about practice has been a productive way to make meaningful instructional change, monitor the implementation of instructional strategies, and reinforce the message of a focus on instruction. Principal Artavia emphasizes the importance of principal leadership and a commitment to improving teacher practice and instruction through conversations with teachers as follows:

You need to have conversations with teachers about what you observe in their classrooms. You give them feedback so they can improve. But you can't have these conversations if you aren't regularly visiting classrooms and monitoring the quality of instruction you see, then meeting with the teacher afterwards. It is about giving specific feedback to the teacher to improve their practice that counts.

Structures to Promote Collaboration

An advocate of removing barriers of isolation between teachers and deprivatizing teacher practice, Principal Artavia took the opportunity to improve upon an existing routine to facilitate teacher collaboration and grade-level articulation: the data analysis cycle.

Data analysis cycle. Principal Artavia established a quarterly data analysis cycle so that teachers would develop a common instructional focus to improve instruction. Additionally, by providing teachers with the opportunity to engage in a process of analyzing data, they were able to

teach each other how to use data to identify instructional goals for improvement. Principal Artavia summed up this process as follows:

This opportunity where teachers begin to share, begin to take responsibility, begin to take leadership in making commitments about instructional strategies, how they are going to improve teaching and learning is key to why we have begun to see student achievement improve over time.

Supporting Leadership Development for Teachers

After months of skepticism, many teachers began embracing Principal Artavia's call to assume leadership roles in the school. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the principal's beliefs about developing teacher leadership practice through job-embedded professional development. Teachers were encouraged and supported in their efforts to take responsibility for creating and leading professional development initiatives at the grade level and during faculty meetings as a way to build their capacity and empower themselves as leaders. Principal Artavia reflected:

It's about developing teacher leaders, giving all teachers an opportunity to do professional development, to be leaders in their area of expertise. By providing this leadership opportunity it's allowing them to be innovative and creative in how they want to approach meeting their own growth and needs as learners.

The Case of Principal Amado

A Focus on Instructional Improvement

Principal Amado spoke of having inherited a school with a vacuum of leadership. Consequently, the principal was determined to create a sense of urgency surrounding the need for instructional improvement. Principal Amado's leadership practice around this effort is summarized in this manner:

Remember, it's about having an instructional focus, a pathway for improvement if there is going to be any impact on teaching and student learning. Teachers need to understand the urgency about improving instruction. If they lose this focus, student achievement suffers and it's more difficult to close that gap.

Conversations about practice. From Principal Amado's perspective, efforts to create a strong focus on improving instruction in classrooms often resulted in conversations with teachers about their practice and delivery of instruction. Such conversations are critical opportunities for the principal to provide teachers with feedback so they can improve their practice. At times, conversations with teachers about their practice can create tension, as described by Principal Amado:

This is about leadership work and setting expectations that everyone must contribute to improving instruction in the school. I set the tone and expectations. Sometimes teachers struggle with the message of what needs to be done to improve. It's hard to have these conversations, but necessary so teachers see where they need to improve in their teaching.

Monitoring Instruction in Classrooms

Principal Amado conducts classroom visitations to monitor the delivery of instruction and the implementation of instructional strategies. Classroom visitations have become a way to monitor the connections between teacher practice and professional development learning over time. Principal Amado highlighted the importance of classroom visitations to monitor instruction as follows:

Consistent classroom visitations help me to communicate my expectations for what instruction needs to look like every day, and to give teachers feedback and suggestions for improvement. This is part of my effort to keep the focus on instructional improvement. It sets a tone that we take this work seriously.

Peer observations. From Principal Amado's perspective, leadership practice is not solely his responsibility as principal, but should involve all teachers as they work to improve their own practice, demonstrate leadership through observation and participation, and support building leadership practice in others. According to Principal Amado, building leadership practice in others acknowledges that teachers serve a critical role in visiting their colleagues' classrooms and engaging in providing feedback to their peers, while at the same time gaining the experience and skills necessary to have conversations about practice with their peers. Principal Amado summed up the importance of peer observations as follows:

Providing all teachers with the opportunity to engage in classroom observations is a direct way to influence teacher commitment to improving instruction. It can deepen the trust and collaboration between the teacher and the principal over time if done thoughtfully. And over time I can see changes in their practice and how this change impacts student learning in a positive way.

Structures to Promote Collaboration

Principal Amado was very committed to improving upon how teachers and administrators used data to improve teaching and learning. This became the impetus to establish a dedicated time every six weeks for teachers and administrators to analyze formative and summative student data. The data analysis process put in place at the school created ongoing opportunities for teachers and administrators to not only collaborate but to also build their leadership capacity around using data to improve teaching and learning.

Data analysis cycle. Principal Amado believes that a robust, data analysis cycle has been critical to improving student learning and achievement. Additionally, Principal Amado felt it would be extremely difficult for teachers to collaborate and set instructional goals for students without a robust data analysis process. Over time, the majority of teachers were able to see how analyzing formative and summative data assisted them and the principal in determining professional development topics and identifying areas of student need. Principal Amado's gradual delegation of leading the data analysis meetings resulted in an increasing number of teachers realizing that, with the right amount of support and encouragement, taking on this type of leadership role creates a strong culture of internal accountability to student learning and achievement outcomes.

Grade-level meetings. The weekly grade-level meetings were another example of how Principal Amado embraced an existing structure to promote collaboration and reinforce the important message of instructional improvement as a pathway to improving student achievement. Principal Amado relied on an organic process to build teacher leaders by encouraging them to come together weekly to engage in instructional planning based on the needs of their students. Principal Amado provided the following insight into this organic process:

I have made it a point to encourage teachers individually about the importance of stepping up and taking on leadership roles in the school. I encourage them to try leading discussions, to use grade-level data as a jumping off point for discussions, and I encourage them to look at student needs for their grade-level planning.

Supporting Leadership Development for Teachers

Principal Amado has played a pivotal role in providing leadership opportunities for teachers. The principal understands the challenges of motivating teachers to become empowered leaders of professional development opportunities at the school. It is through professional development opportunities that Principal Amado has created relevance for teachers by having them take charge of their own individual and group learning. Over time, Principal Amado felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride in supporting teachers as leaders of learning in the school. Principal Amado commented:

Allowing teachers to take a greater role in leading their own professional development has been beneficial for the school. Teachers bring their expertise and knowledge to the table, and that creates opportunities for everyone to learn from each other. That's what leadership looks like in action, and something I am most proud of.

Discussion

This study examined the leadership practices of two urban elementary school principals through a distributed leadership framework to better understand how each principal enacted leadership practice in their schools to improve student achievement and close the opportunity gap. The following section provides a cross-case analysis of the leadership practice of both case principals organized around the four themes of (a) maintaining a focus on instruction, (b) monitoring instruction in classrooms, (c) structures to promote collaboration, and (d) supporting leadership development for teachers.

A Focus on Instructional Improvement

Principal Artavia and Principal Amado understood the importance of maintaining a focus on instructional improvement in order to increase student academic achievement over time. Both case principals were intentional in their conversations with teachers about improving their practice to impact student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2009). The strategic use of routines such as goal setting, a data analysis cycle, and ongoing data dialogues were a personal way for case principals to connect themselves and their teachers to the goals of maintaining a focus on instruction and impacting student learning (Spillane, 2007). The leadership practice that resulted from the implementation of these routines served to strengthen the commitment of administrators and teachers to improving instruction (Bredeson, 2013; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

Monitoring Instruction in Classrooms

The case principals understood the importance of monitoring instruction in all classrooms to improve student achievement (May & Supovitz, 2011). Principals Artavia and Amado were very clear in communicating their purpose for monitoring instruction in classrooms; however, each case principal's purpose for conducting classroom visitations was different.

Principal Artavia used the Framework for Instructional Improvement as a tool to benchmark teacher pedagogical practices in a more specific way than Principal Amado, who did not use the Framework as a tool to collect and benchmark evidence of teacher practice during classroom visitations (Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003). In Principal Amado's case, the Framework served as a starting point for providing feedback to teachers about their classroom practice.

Structures to Promote Collaboration

In order to create a more active professional learning community in their schools, both case principals created structures to support teachers and provide time for collaboration around instruction (Bredeson, 2013; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Principal Artavia believed in the importance of providing structured opportunities for teachers to engage in planning, goal setting, and data analysis as a way of boosting confidence in their

leadership abilities (Halverson & Clifford, 2013). Contrasting with this is Principal Amado's belief that grade-level meetings provided both the structure and opportunity for teachers to come together based on individual and grade-level needs to address instructional issues, and to focus on the challenges of making their instructional delivery relevant to students (Dimmock, 2012; Halverson & Clifford, 2013).

Supporting Leadership Development for Teachers

Both case principals understood the need for supporting a distributed approach to leadership practice in their efforts to improve teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2009). Principal Amado attempted to make teaching practice more transparent by engaging teachers in a cycle of inquiry using data to identify student learning needs, and then developing improvement strategies to address those needs (Spillane, 2006). By contrast, Principal Artavia attempted to make grade-level meetings more teacher driven and less dependent on principal facilitation as a leadership capacity-building strategy to foster teacher ownership of instructional improvement efforts (Bredeson, 2013; Huggins et al., 2017).

The cross-case analysis suggests that leadership practice was constituted by the ways the principals developed leadership practice in others. The case principals created opportunities for meaningful interactions between themselves and their teachers (Bredeson, 2013). By creating structured opportunities for teachers, leadership team members, and administrators to engage in the work of school improvement, both case principals arrived at similar outcomes of maintaining a focus on instruction while building teacher leadership capacity and practice (Halverson & Clifford, 2013).

Finally, the key to closing the opportunity gap for their students was clear for both case principals: a commitment to strong leadership that provided opportunities for individuals within their schools to have direct responsibility and influence over school improvement efforts. Additionally, both case principals viewed distributed leadership as a framework that could be understood as a combination of both vertical and horizontal leadership (Harris, 2013; Jones & Harris, 2014), which stemmed from the interactions and interrelationships of multiple individuals situated in specific contexts and driven by the aim of improving teacher practice and student achievement.

Recommendations

School leaders must possess leadership skills and knowledge that allow them to address the challenges they face in closing the opportunity gap and creating schools that are responsive to the demographic shifts in student populations. Findings generated from continuing empirical research using the lens of a distributed framework can provide school leaders with perspectives on leadership practice and efforts to close the opportunity gap and improve academic achievement for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Further examination of how the social and situational distribution of leadership practice occurs, coupled with identifying the tasks, interactions, and resources of school leaders, provides powerful examples of how school leaders shape efforts to create equitable and responsive educational systems. By providing researchers and practitioners with an analytic framework for examining leadership practice, school leaders, including principals, are better positioned to create more responsive and equity-driven educational systems designed to close the opportunity gap for all students.

Additionally, given the magnitude of the challenge school leaders face in closing the opportunity gap and creating schools that are responsive to an increasingly diverse student population, school leaders must look for and apply alternative methods of engaging other individuals in this work. Efforts to close the opportunity gap will likely fall flat, or even fail, if the responsibility for this work is concentrated on only one or two individuals solely because they possess formal leadership roles instead of distributing the work broadly across the school. The principal cannot undertake the daunting task of improving schools as a lone practitioner. Consequently, principal leadership must focus on galvanizing and empowering other individuals to organize for effort, action, and improvement.

Conclusion

Given the magnitude of the challenge posed by closing the opportunity gap, current efforts to create educational systems that are responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students call for a deeper examination and analysis of how school leaders enact leadership practice. Additionally, principal leadership demands the skill of knowing how to motivate and empower others to address the social and academic needs of

diverse students. Since principals cannot undertake the task of school improvement as lone practitioners, they must seek out and enact alternative ways of engaging others in this work. A distributed leadership perspective offers a way for researchers and practitioners to examine leadership practice through the perspective of multiple individuals at all levels of the school, and to rethink how human capital can support school efforts to close the opportunity gap.

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