SREB

Learning-centered Leadership Program

Good Principals Aren't Born — They're Mentored:

Are We Investing Enough to Get the School Leaders We Need?

Southern Regional Education Board

592 10th St. N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30318
(404) 875-9211
www.sreb.org

This report was prepared by a team of SREB staff, including Cheryl Gray, coordinator, Leadership Curriculum Development and Training; Betty Fry, director, Leadership Research and Publications; Gene Bottoms, senior vice president; and Kathy O'Neill, director, SREB Learning-centered Leadership Program.

The research and the publication are supported by the Wallace Foundation, which seeks to support and share effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. The foundation's three current objectives are to 1) strengthen education leadership to improve student achievement; 2) improve out-of-school learning opportunities; and 3) expand participation in arts and culture. In pursuit of these goals, Wallace supports the development of knowledge and analysis from multiple sources and differing perspectives. The findings and recommendations of individual reports are solely those of the authors. For more information and research on these and other related topics, please visit Wallace's Knowledge Center at www.wallacefoundation.org.

Good Principals Aren't Born — They're Mentored:

Are We Investing Enough to Get the School Leaders We Need?

Learning-centered Leadership Program

Southern Regional Education Board

Table of Contents

Foreword

Successful schools are complex, collaborative institutions requiring a high level of performance from every professional. School success critically begins with the school principal who — day in and day out — has prime responsibility for ensuring that all students meet challenging grade-level and college- and career-readiness standards. More often than not, the principal's leadership skills determine whether a school becomes a dynamic learning organization or a failed enterprise.

These highly skilled school leaders are not born — nor are they fully forged in the instructional setting of the school classroom. Neither do they emerge fully prepared to lead from traditional graduate programs in school administration. Most likely, effective new principals have been rigorously prepared and deliberately mentored in well-designed programs that immerse them in real-world leadership experiences where they are challenged to excel.

Mentoring is an integral component of principal preparation programs designed to improve school and student performance. *Good Principals Aren't Born — They're Mentored* draws on survey data from a sample of seasoned principal mentors who have guided interns in university-based principal preparation programs in the SREB region. This report describes the present condition of mentoring for aspiring school leaders. As the report makes clear, the "present condition" is far from satisfactory. The paucity of quality mentoring programs is retarding states' efforts to ensure that every student attends a school where strong leadership results in high academic performance.

This report lays out a course of action for policy-makers and the leaders of universities and school districts who share the responsibility to ensure that every beginning principal comes to the job fully prepared to make a difference in teaching and learning. This report also describes the necessary (and often non-monetary) investments required to create internships that can help aspiring school principals become transformational school leaders.

On the pages that follow, you will be challenged to design a mentoring structure that provides the in-depth experiences needed by aspiring principals to become effective school leaders. Consider these questions:

- *Why is mentoring aspiring school leaders important?*
- *Why should I be concerned about mentoring?*
- *What does an effective mentoring process look like?*
- *What is the current state of mentoring in our region?*
- *Where are the gaps between effective mentoring and what now exists in my state?*
- *What joint actions can states, universities and school districts take to close these gaps and produce leaders who can improve learning for all groups of students?*

Improving mentoring requires joint ownership and shared accountability from two systems — K–12 and higher education — that for too long have worked in isolation to train new principals. Each system has a vested interest in the efficacy of today's public school leaders who must prepare students for success in the middle grades, in high school, and in postsecondary studies and careers. The research and findings presented here leave no doubt that *the quality of the K–12-higher education partnership* can determine the success of any effort to improve the mentoring process for aspiring school principals.

SREB's Learning-centered Leadership Program supports states' progress toward an ambitious *Challenge to Lead* Goal for Education*: Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal*. With the right policy guidance and investments, district-university partnerships can create high-quality mentoring programs that will move states much closer to realizing this goal.

This publication joins other SREB research reports and training materials designed to assist states as they redesign their systems for preparing school leaders.[1] Our communities — and our children — need school leaders who can accelerate achievement and college- and career-readiness.

David S. Spence
President
Southern Regional Education Board

[1] See Appendix I for a list of curriculum modules and publications available from the Learning-centered Leadership Program.

Why Does Mentoring Matter?

One of the major credit card companies has a popular feature called "Sign and Travel." That's a fair description of aspiring-principal internship programs in too many preparation programs today. These programs go through the motions of mentoring, requiring that a practicing principal grant a "professional seal of approval" before a new principal is certified. In reality, this professional approval process amounts to little more than the practitioner's willingness to affix his or her signature to the requisite forms of internship completion. Just sign and travel. It's no trouble for anyone — unless you consider the thousands of underperforming schools in our region that desperately need highly capable new principals.

Why should education leaders and policy-makers be concerned about this "sign and travel" approach to mentoring aspiring principals? In any profession dedicated to serving others, it is crucial to put candidates to the test prior to initial credentialing by having them demonstrate mastery of essential competencies under the watchful eyes of practitioner mentors. What's more, the public has a right to expect high-quality school leadership *from the very first day* the new principal is on the job.

The sad state of many aspiring-principal mentoring programs is indefensible in an era when schools constantly need strong leaders adept at strategies that motivate people and elevate achievement for all groups of students. Today's new principals need to hit the halls running, ready to lead their staff to accelerate the improvement of teaching and learning.

But too many new leaders are left to "learn on the job." (Imagine training a surgeon that way.) Their first opportunity to plan and implement school improvement actions will be as head of a school — typically without much guidance from successful peers. In an environment of increasing accountability from the statehouse to the schoolhouse, this "sink-or-swim, stumble through it" approach to principal leadership development not only is counterproductive but helps explain why school reform efforts so often sputter and die out.

The research evidence is overwhelming: Quality principals result in quality schools that produce higher student performance. And the opposite is also true: Poorly prepared principals lead schools nowhere — and once certified, they remain in the system for many years, obstructing school improvement. Aspiring school administrators, potentially responsible for the quality of learning achieved by countless numbers of students, must be tested against rigorous performance requirements during a challenging internship supervised by experts in the field.

In too many instances, it is just not happening.

What We Should Be Doing

Getting new principals trained and ready to perform at high levels is the essential function of university educational leadership programs, working in partnership with local school districts. By improving the quality of mentoring and internship experiences, universities and districts can increase the ability of new school leaders to address real school problems before they leave the starting gate for their first principalship.

What we don't want (and have too much of): field-based experiences that amount to little more than pointing an aspiring principal to a vacant desk and loading him or her up with busywork and bus duty.

What we do want (and don't have enough of): high-quality school-based experiences for aspiring principals, organized around student achievement problems, that can jump-start their mastery of the skills needed to lead change in teaching and learning.

How do we get what we want? Good mentors are the key. Internships must be managed by professional practitioners who have the knowledge, time and commitment to determine whether aspiring principals are engaged in a rich set of experiences that enable them to develop their leadership competencies.

Good mentors provide the day-to-day feedback and coaching that will help interns transition from the role of classroom teacher (or other roles) to that of school leader. They know how to structure opportunities for interns to solve a range of school problems, first through observing and participating and then by actually leading teams in identifying, implementing and evaluating improvement interventions. Skillful mentoring helps interns shape beliefs — about whole-school change, students' capacities to learn, relationships with staff and community members, and ethical leadership practices. In contrast, poor mentoring can put future principals (and school improvement efforts) at risk by limiting opportunities for broadening their perspectives of principal leadership and school effectiveness.

It is a common expectation for practitioners with experience and expertise to fulfill the professional obligation of guiding new practitioners into their first administrative positions. But mentors are shortchanged when this important responsibility is added to the agenda of school management, leadership and improvement, without support or accountability from the school district or the intern's university. **Until we provide the resources and structures to ensure that every mentor has the ability and support to manage challenging experiences for interns in real-school situations, the value of the mentoring process to enhance leadership preparation — and ultimately to raise student achievement — is severely limited.**

SREB's research on mentoring for principals-in-training suggests that unless universities and local school districts make substantial changes, new school leaders will continue to reap limited benefits from their internship experiences.

These changes include:

- rethinking and restructuring the way mentors are selected and trained, the responsibilities they assume, and the roles they play in evaluating and documenting the competency of aspiring principals; and
- greater investments of resources — time, money and people — on the part of states, universities and districts if schools are to have the benefit of higher-quality leadership that results in improved teaching and learning.

What Do We Know About the Condition of Mentoring in the SREB States?

SREB conducted research to analyze the characteristics of mentoring provided in university-based principal preparation programs in the 16-state SREB region. The study focused on the perspectives of seasoned principals who mentor aspiring principals during a formal internship experience. The feedback from mentors on their own effectiveness, training and support provides a rich inside look at the current state of mentoring and the quality of the internship experience.

Here is what we found:

Choosing the right mentor and internship site is in the wrong hands.

States, universities and districts have abrogated their responsibilities to ensure the quality of field-based experiences by allowing interns themselves to select their mentors and internship sites. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents indicated that a criterion for matching mentors and interns was simply the intern's choice. A mentor's record of leadership associated with improved student achievement is an often-ignored criterion, with less than 25 percent of respondents citing it as a consideration for selection.

While the literature on mentoring places great importance on matching the intern's needs with a mentor's strengths, this is a relatively minor consideration, influencing far fewer decisions than the convenience of a close site or a familiar principal. More than 50 percent of respondents indicated that interns were matched with the school administrators for whom they already worked, while another 16 percent reported that interns were matched with other administrators in the school district. **As a consequence, most principal interns experience a narrow range of school environments and ways to solve pressing school problems.**

When it comes to mentoring, we get what we pay for — and that is not much.

States, universities and school districts do not invest adequate finances, staff and time in quality mentoring. States have vague policies and guidelines that fail to ensure that the efforts of universities and districts result in high-quality experiences with consistent outcomes. Universities assume programmatic responsibility for internships but fail to work closely with school districts to design a program framework, define learning expectations, or provide training and support for mentors and interns.

Districts take a hands-off approach to internships and mentoring rather than use them as a means to create a pool of highly qualified aspiring principals. Experienced principals agree to mentor out of a sense of personal obligation to help a teacher in the school complete a leadership degree or a certification program. They lack the district resources, training, support or incentives to play a key role in developing quality leaders for the school district or the profession.

The prevailing assumption is that it takes no special talents, training, tools or resources to provide effective mentoring. Just 38 percent of survey respondents received any training, and less than half indicated that their training helped them acquire the skills for developing competencies in aspiring school leaders. Training most frequently involved a meeting of the university program director or supervisor with the mentor and intern. These meetings were focused on roles and responsibilities and internship logistics rather than on how to provide effective experiences for learning and demonstrating leadership standards.

Slightly over half reported that their training addressed how to assess and evaluate the intern's performance (57 percent) and how to plan effective experiences to help interns learn and demonstrate leadership standards (53 percent). Less than half (40 percent) of the mentors received training on aligning field experiences with university course work taken by the interns, even though assisting interns to translate theory into practice was the responsibility most frequently identified as being within their role (63 percent of respondents).

Apparently, the quality of the mentor's performance is of little concern to anyone. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents either were not evaluated or did not know who evaluated their performance, and very small percentages indicated they were evaluated by the university (14 percent), the intern (13 percent) or the district (less than 3 percent).

As for supervision and support of mentors, one or two meetings with the university supervisor during the internship is the most frequent practice (55 percent of respondents); approximately 20 percent indicated that they received no support and that requests for assistance from the university supervisor did not elicit timely and effective responses. Only 9 percent of mentors reported that the university supervisor met with them and the intern at the school monthly. Twice-monthly meetings rarely occurred (1 percent of respondents).

Compensation that would motivate and reward mentors for their services is scarce and may not be very meaningful for principals who already have a specialist or doctoral degree. A few received stipends or university vouchers, but 73 percent indicated that they received no payment from the school district or the university. Without incentives, support or accountability, the commitment of the mentor to provide effective learning experiences for aspiring principals is likely diminished. **Good will has its limitations, even among the most dedicated mentors, and quality is compromised when mentoring goes unrewarded and is perceived as an add-on duty.**

Mentoring focuses on the wrong things.

The concern for programmatic issues such as clock time, task checklists and reporting is greater than the concern for specific learning experiences that develop mastery of the competencies for leading school improvement. More mentors (61 percent) indicated that their responsibility was to help interns complete a list of tasks determined by the university rather than to help them implement a project focusing on school improvement (53 percent) or develop and implement a professional growth plan for mastering leadership competencies (33 percent).

Mentoring is about observing — not practicing — leadership. The learning strategies that mentors reported using leave little doubt that many interns have minimal opportunities to learn how to lead school improvement in diverse school settings and to practice the skills necessary to lead teams of teachers. Since most interns are assigned to the schools where they already work, they have the advantage of knowing their mentors and internship sites, yet they remain in passive positions of observation and participation. It is more difficult for interns to establish leadership credibility among their peers, with whom they have a teacher-to-teacher relationship. Less than half of the mentors reported creating opportunities for interns to lead activities that would demonstrate essential knowledge and skills such as understanding the change process (25 percent), developing high expectations for learning (36 percent) or providing quality professional development (42 percent). About half of the respondents (56 percent) indicated that they assigned interns to observe in classrooms to determine instructional quality. The most frequently assigned learning activity was observing faculty meetings (79 percent of respondents).

While it is common to depend on mentors to model the competencies the university preparation program is designed to help aspiring principals master, only 39 percent reported modeling the competencies specified by the university. At the same time, mentors' self-assessments indicated that up to 21 percent lacked confidence in their ability to demonstrate all of the competencies needed to improve teaching and learning.

School districts have not claimed ownership of the mentor selection process — and are not capitalizing on mentoring as a means of securing a reliable supply of well-prepared new principals.

Investing in high-quality mentoring is an effective way for districts to secure a ready supply of capable school leaders who know from the start how to implement school reform strategies. **But school districts appear to be unconcerned about the quality of mentoring or its potential impact on the next generation of school leaders.** Only 20 percent of mentors indicated that school districts were involved in their selection, and even less (13 percent) indicated that they discussed interns' strengths

and weaknesses with central office personnel. Rarely are central office staffs involved in the training of mentors (11 percent), monitoring and evaluating mentors (3 percent) or evaluating interns (13 percent) to ensure a quality mentoring program that could inform subsequent hiring decisions.

Districts are in a prime position to certify that aspiring principals are qualified for the job, but their lack of involvement in mentoring and internships gives them little latitude for exercising a strong voice in licensure decisions.

Experienced practitioners' judgments about aspiring principals' competencies carry little weight.

Mentors are in a perfect position to evaluate the potential of candidates to assume leadership in schools, yet few actually have the opportunity to provide substantive feedback. While a majority of the mentors (64 percent) provided feedback directly to their interns, considerably less (55 percent) completed a formal evaluation for the university or the district. Mentors' evaluations of their interns' performance are most frequently based on completion of a list of tasks (56 percent) and a portfolio documenting performance of standards (49 percent). Evaluating interns on important leadership competencies — such as creating and implementing a school improvement project or carrying out action research on improving curriculum, instruction and student learning — was reported by only one-third of the mentors.

When it comes to assessing interns' successful completion of the preparation program, mentors' judgments have some influence. However, only a small percentage (4 percent) of mentors thought their evaluations were the most influential factor in interns' completion of the preparation program, with 32 percent reporting significant influence and 29 percent moderate influence.

While mentors are expected to help prepare aspiring principals and are well-positioned to make judgments about their potential for leadership, they are widely ignored by states' educational leadership licensure procedures. Seventy-six percent of the mentors responded that they were not asked to make a recommendation regarding their interns' qualifications for licensure.

Related Findings from Other SREB Studies

In *The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?* (SREB, 2004), these findings were reported from a survey of educational leadership department heads' perceptions of their internship programs:

- More than two-thirds of the department heads indicated that their universities had not established strong working relationships with local school districts that would support joint ownership of principal preparation and well-structured, well-supervised internships.
- Only one-third of surveyed programs placed interns in situations where they could gain a comprehensive understanding of how to lead changes in school and classroom practices that make higher student achievement possible.
- Overall, less than half of surveyed programs provide interns a developmental continuum of practice that begins with observing, then participating and then taking the lead in the essential elements of school improvement.
- Many aspiring principals are under-supported during their internships. The number of interns assigned to a faculty supervisor ranged from three to 35 among programs surveyed.
- More than half of the department heads rated their evaluations of interns' performance as having either an *average* or a *small* degree of rigor, as opposed to a *great* degree.

In *Schools Can't Wait: Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs* (SREB, 2006), these findings were reported from a study of the progress made by 22 pacesetter universities in redesigning their programs to emphasize instructional leadership and student achievement:

- About one-third (seven of 22) of the universities had made *substantial progress* in developing a strong working relationship with local school districts.
- Half (11 of 22) of the universities had made *some progress* in redesigning principal preparation to emphasize knowledge and skills for improving schools and raising student achievement.
- Only four of 22 universities had made *substantial progress* in developing programs with well-planned and well-supported internships; 14 had made *some progress* and four had made *no progress*.
- Only one university had made *some progress* in incorporating rigorous evaluations of participants' mastery of essential competencies; 21 of 22 had made *no progress*.

(See the SREB Web site at www.sreb.org for complete reports on the two studies cited here.)

What Do Interns Say About Their Mentoring?

In an effort to test our findings from the survey of mentors against interns' perceptions of the mentoring they received during their internships, we searched the literature for studies that surveyed interns on similar issues. This is what we found: Despite a widespread belief in the need for mentoring in principal internships and numerous definitions of the benefits, roles and functions, and ideal features of mentoring, there is scant empirical evidence of what interns actually experience or how mentoring affects their learning of essential school leadership competencies.

For example, Villani (2006) provides one of the most comprehensive treatments of what is considered to be best practices in new principal mentoring and induction programs and systematically lays out the features of a variety of such programs. However, interns' perceptions of the mentoring they received and its benefits to their learning are not addressed in her treatment of the topic.[2] A few studies did shed some light on interns' perceptions of mentoring and the potential impact of mentoring on their learning: Barry and Kaneko (2002); Cordeiro and Smith-Sloan (1995); Crocker and Harris (2002); Harris, Crocker and Hopson (2002); and White and Crow (1993).

After interviewing several aspiring principals in SREB states, Kathy O'Neill, director of the SREB Learning-centered Leadership Program, summed up the current state of mentoring:

The candidates reported few opportunities for meaningful field experiences and little contact with their mentors. All candidates were required to recruit their own principals as mentors, without benefit

[2] Villani, S. (2006). *Mentoring and induction programs that support new principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

of selection criteria or requirements for their training. There does not appear to be any structure for how mentors and interns are to interact. In addition, there is little oversight from the university faculty. One practicing assistant principal reported that his internship was a "joke." He recruited his own principal as his mentor and his experiences consisted of monitoring the ninth-grade hall, attending athletic events and troubleshooting technology problems. All information about the skills, practices and behaviors for providing instructional leadership for a school was acquired through his own initiative to take advantage of other professional development opportunities.

What Are the Components of an Effective Mentoring Process?

Effective mentoring results from a deliberate process designed by the university and the school district to provide real-world leadership experiences for aspiring principals. These experiences challenge interns to translate professional standards into everyday practice and to meet rigorous expectations and program requirements by experiencing the actual responsibilities of a school leader.

An effective mentoring process ensures that each intern is provided a range of experiences and coaching to develop the critical competencies needed to work with faculty and the community to create a high-performance learning environment. **Without standards, commitment and shared responsibility for results, mentoring becomes a random act of benevolence — resulting in unreliable quality, inconsistent experiences and haphazard mastery of essential competencies to improve teaching and learning.**

The following components of effective mentoring were gleaned from SREB's research and a review of the literature. They represent a synthesis of the findings and recommendations of a number of scholars and practitioners who have studied and written about mentoring of aspiring and beginning principals. (See the References section at the end of this report for information on literature that contributed to the identification of the components.)

High Standards and Expectations for Performance

Professional standards for educational administrators set the bar for what principals must know and be able to do to improve teaching and learning. Standards built around research-based competencies that are known to improve student learning can produce leaders who know how to support teachers, manage curriculum and instruction to promote student achievement, and transform schools into more effective organizations that foster powerful teaching and learning for all students.[3]

[3] Davis S., Darling-Hammond, L., Meyerson, D. and LaPointe, M. *(*2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals* (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

> *"Each of the standards reflects key aspects of the principalship and areas where mentoring can be crucial to a new administrator's success. Therefore, these standards should be considered when developing mentoring programs."*
> Villani, 2006

For each standard, states must identify the expected mastery level. Without clear descriptions of performance tasks and uniform tools to measure performance levels, the interpretation of standards can vary from state to state and from preparation program to preparation program. When this happens, states are left with a pool of licensed candidates who have varying levels of competency but are charged with uniform responsibilities for improving teaching and learning.

Standards with defined performance tasks are the bedrock upon which a state's policy framework for effective mentoring and internship experiences is based. **Policies are needed to ensure that all essential elements of an effective internship with quality mentoring are present.** These elements hold universities, districts and candidates accountable to best practices standards and ensure that requirements for internships are performance-based, rigorous and consistent from program to program.

The challenge for states is to create policies that set high standards and expectations for the university's and the district's responsibilities, the mentor's qualifications and actions, and the candidate's performance. States must send strong messages that high-quality internships for aspiring principals are essential to prepare future school administrators who can lead teaching and learning improvement.

(See Appendix II for examples of state policies that support effective mentoring of principal interns.)

Commitment of University and District Partners

Effective mentoring starts with collaborative planning by the university and the school district — long before interns arrive at the office doors of their principal mentors. Successful collaboration between the university and the district yields the necessary conditions for high-quality internships. These conditions include:

- *a common vision* for the competencies that candidates will gain as a result of mentoring in field-based learning experiences;
- *a shared commitment and responsibility*, represented by written agreements, for the allocation of resources necessary for success and the development of internship learning plans for candidates;
- *clearly defined expectations* of the roles of individuals who represent the university, the district and its schools;
- *a structure with procedures to collect feedback and to report results* to partners and constituents; and
- *recognized mutual benefits* for each organization.

Universities and districts share responsibility for designing an internship program aligned with state leadership standards and district leadership needs. A well-designed program includes a common vision for improving student achievement and provides opportunities to observe and reflect on leadership and school and classroom practices. In partnerships, program structures are created and adapted to meet the needs, sizes and capacities of universities and school districts without sacrificing quality.

> *"To better align school district needs with principal preparatory programs, partnerships need to be established between a university and a single district or a consortium of districts. The goal of any partnership is to provide more meaningful learning experiences and flexibility to students."*
> Lovely, 2004

Effective organizational partnerships are based upon collaboration and endure because they serve an important function for both organizations that neither could accomplish alone.

The challenge for university and school district partners is to share responsibility for creating a structure and a process that ensures every intern the opportunity for effective mentoring during a learning experience that reflects the diversity and depth of problem solving necessary for the principalship.

Problem-focused Learning

Opportunities for learning about school improvement and the importance of strong and effective leadership teams are at the core of the internship experience. Learning by observing, participating in and leading activities that improve teaching and learning ensures that the intern will have an experience with depth (leadership practices) and breadth (diverse school challenges). A robust internship experience focuses on working with teams of teachers to address student achievement problems.

> *"The essence of effective administration involves the resolution of problems that people in organizations face. As a result, mentoring relationships for administrators must be directed toward the discovery of ways to refine problem-solving skills."*
> Daresh, 2001

Mentors open the doors to authentic learning by providing a problem-focused internship experience. **Mastering leadership competencies in a school context requires a radical shift from managing checklists and routine tasks to leading a school team through the process of identifying a problem in curriculum, instruction or achievement, and then finding, testing and evaluating solutions.**

The challenge for mentors and their school districts is to provide opportunities for an intern to develop competence in leading change and solving actual student achievement problems of the school *within the scope of the internship* and prior to administrative licensure.

(See Appendix III for an example of a competency-based learning plan that focuses on leadership for improving student achievement.)

Clearly Defined Responsibilities for Mentors, University Supervisors and District Internship Program Coordinators

Effective mentoring is a skillful combination of demonstrating leadership practices and observing, assessing and coaching others' practices. Mentors model so interns will be exposed to leadership practices that meet high standards. As they model, mentors describe behaviors (that may have become second nature to them) *in the context of the standard*. Mentors analyze their routine and intuitive decisions and explain choices and actions to aspiring principals. Why did the mentor move in this direction rather than another? Why did the mentor choose this particular action from among several possibilities?

University supervisors have a critical role to ensure that these mentoring behaviors are consistent in every school and across every district where their interns are placed. Mentors also need the support of the district internship program coordinator to provide adequate time and attention to facilitate interns' learning.

> *"Team members must agree to the roles and responsibilities delegated to them. By accepting these roles and responsibilities, each member is empowered and committed to the process. Although there are multiple benefits to the team members, including their own growth and the opportunity to provide leadership to others, their first focus is to help the mentee become all he or she can be, and ultimately improve student performance."*
> Wilmore, 2004

With clearly defined responsibilities during the internship, key university and district staff can perform their roles with confidence and be held accountable for the quality of the learning experience provided to each intern.

The challenge for university and school district partners is to jointly dedicate the resources required for mentors, university supervisors and district internship program coordinators to fulfill their

responsibilities to provide high-quality learning experiences that meet the district's student achievement challenges.

(See Appendix IV for more information on responsibilities for mentors, university supervisors and district internship program coordinators.)

Meaningful Performance Evaluations

Most internship experiences are evaluated in name only. These "evaluations" require little more than a completed checklist of activities, a journal with entries describing tasks or a portfolio of artifacts providing some evidence of involvement. These methods fail to probe or evaluate the quality of the intern's experiences or the intern's success in gaining the required competencies and meeting performance standards.

Mentors are integral to implementing a valid and meaningful evaluation process. **Mentors are on the front line with aspiring principals and are in a good position to accurately assess their competencies and readiness for the principalship.** Performance measures, rather than time parameters, should determine the end of the internship and the intern's readiness to begin the role of school leader. Such a system requires that mentors and interns — at the very outset of the internship — are clear about the expectations for satisfactory performance on each standard.

> *"These internship experiences should be designed to be meaningful and highly professional learning experiences. They should be meant to provide for a long-term evaluation of a student's leadership ability in a school setting by those practicing professionals who are most experienced in those settings."*
> Capasso and Daresh, 2001

States, universities and districts must recognize that mentors serve a vital role as evaluators of the potential of interns to lead schools effectively. **Certifying graduates should not be a simple recognition of program completion but an authoritative endorsement that the graduate has mastered the necessary competencies for improving student learning.** Resources from both the university and the school district are needed to create the structure and opportunities for mentors to give valid feedback. Formal, consistent mentor training on the use of observation protocols and evaluation tools can provide for reliable assessments for high-stakes decisions.

The challenge for states, universities and districts is to ensure that internship performance evaluations move beyond checklists and satisfaction surveys to evidence of leadership performance and problem-solving skills that will influence program completion, licensure and hiring decisions.

Question: Who Is Responsible for Ensuring an Effective Mentoring Process?

Answer: state, university and school district leaders. It is doubtful that our present process of mentoring makes any positive difference in the preparedness of new leaders. It requires little effort or investment on the part of universities, school systems or mentors. Increasing the effort and investment necessary to make mentoring "matter" in principal preparation is a challenge that must be met to produce new principals ready to improve teaching and learning. Our schools and our students are looking to state, university and district leaders to meet this challenge. They have the power and decision-making authority to fix the problem.

Actions Needed by States, Universities and Districts

What State Policy-makers and State Agencies Can Do to Improve Mentoring	■ Require university-district partnership agreements that specify how each party is responsible and accountable for ensuring that the candidates they certify for administrative licensure meet the state's standards. ■ Develop intern performance tasks and criteria that, at minimum, require observation and participation in a variety of high- and low-performing school settings through field-based experiences and leadership of a team of teachers working on an initiative to improve student learning. ■ Establish mentoring standards — including criteria for selecting mentors based on experience with school improvement — and high-quality training to develop and evaluate the competencies of interns on performance tasks necessary to improve teaching and learning. ■ Base successful internship completion (necessary for administrative licensure), on achievement of leadership standards through mastery of the performance tasks indicated for each standard and not on the basis of time. ■ Require that these guidelines are met by universities and other entities to earn approval for offering an educational leadership program. ■ Allocate resources to support the mentoring needed to provide high-quality internship experiences in a variety of school settings. Place priority on preparing aspiring principals for low-performing schools.

What Universities Can Do to Improve Mentoring	■ Create true partnerships with school districts that reflect joint responsibility, accountability and mutual benefits. ■ Meet with district leaders to understand leadership succession plans, school improvement strategies and challenges, and the public environment. ■ Redefine internships to incorporate school-based, problem-focused learning experiences occurring throughout a candidate's program. ■ Reward faculty members who provide quality field experiences and contribute ongoing research to support leadership program improvements with tenure-track positions and other recognition traditionally given to university faculty.
What School Districts Can Do to Improve Mentoring	■ Integrate internships into the district's process for leadership development, succession planning and hiring. ■ Select experienced, highly skilled principals with proven records of leading improvement in student achievement as mentors; provide release time, training, resources, remuneration and recognition for their work. ■ Make mentor principals accountable for providing experience to interns in leading a school improvement initiative focused on improving student achievement.

About the SREB Survey of Mentoring in Principal Internships

To help answer important questions about the mentoring received by aspiring principals from seasoned principals during their internships, SREB conducted a survey of mentors who had recently worked with interns from university-based principal preparation programs in the 16-state SREB region. These questions framed the study:

- *Are interns mentored by principals confident of their own abilities to demonstrate effective practices for improving teaching and learning?*
- *Do current mentor selection, training and evaluation practices ensure that aspiring principals receive high-quality mentoring?*
- *Are mentors providing interns the experiences to master the leadership competencies essential for improving schools and raising student achievement?*
- *Are mentors provided with the support necessary to be effective?*
- *Do mentors have significant influence in decisions about interns' successful completion of a preparation program and issuance of the school administrator license?*

The survey was mailed in January 2006 to a sample of mentors chosen through random selection from a list of all mentor principals provided by the universities.[4] Of 251 eligible respondents, 80 returned completed surveys (32 percent response rate) about their mentoring experiences during the 2004–2005 school year. Thirty-three additional individuals named by universities stated that they had not mentored during this time or had never served as mentors.

The two-part survey instrument collected descriptive data about mentoring as currently implemented in principal preparation programs for the purpose of constructing a picture of the norm. Part I of the survey probed for information about the characteristics of mentoring

[4] Universities in West Virginia did not participate in the study.

programs, including mentor selection, training, roles and responsibilities, support and compensation, and evaluation of mentors, interns and internship quality. Part II of the survey focused on the opportunities that mentor principals provided to interns to deepen their understanding and give them authentic practice in essential competencies for improving schools and student achievement.

(See Appendix V for additional information about the survey instrument.)[5]

Findings from the SREB Study of Mentoring in Principal Internships

Mentors need to ensure that aspiring principals are prepared on the first day of the job *and* for all of the days that follow. Mentoring, in its current state, fails to accomplish this aim. Mentors are not being held accountable for these minimal results. **Results from the SREB mentoring study indicate that it is still the luck of the draw for interns when it comes to the effectiveness of mentoring in their field-based experiences.** The haphazard strategies and structures of the mentoring process — and the absence of organizational investment and accountability — return results by chance and not by design and commitment.

Interns rarely are more than audience members when it comes to leading school improvement tasks. Having a front-and-center seat to watch others perform leadership tasks is necessary but insufficient preparation for interns as they graduate from programs, receive administrative licenses and become heads of schools. Interns need to be the "lead actor" in their field-based experiences — performing on stage and practicing their performance until the mentor applauds *their* mastery.

The potential is promising. Mentors believe they can model the competencies necessary to improve teaching and learning, and they volunteer their services with little or no support, recognition or remuneration. They also appear to have made the commitment to provide time regularly to meet with their interns. Yet mentors need more than self-confidence. They need universities and districts to

[5] The Internship Survey can be found in Appendix 3 in *The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?* (05V02), available online as a PDF document on the SREB Web site (www.sreb.org).

assist them in creating structured learning plans with interns and in systematically modeling the full range of essential competencies. They need time to view interns demonstrating their competencies with a team of teachers. They also need training for skillfully evaluating interns' competency for the principalship.

Universities and districts need to significantly increase investments in high-quality mentoring during internships to ensure that aspiring principals have every possible chance to be effective at their first school.

What the Survey Revealed

Question 1:

Are interns mentored by principals confident of their own abilities to demonstrate effective practices for improving teaching and learning?

Mentors are experienced school principals; a large majority believe they can model practices that improve student achievement.

Findings

- **Sixty-five percent of respondents have six to 15 years and 25 percent have 16 or more years of experience as school leaders.**
- **Most mentors are confident of their abilities to model the leadership practices necessary to improve teaching and learning for their interns. (See Table 1.) The percentages of respondents indicating being able to model the 13 SREB Critical Success Factors (CSFs) at the competent or expert level ranged from 78 percent to 96 percent. (See Appendix I for a list of the SREB Critical Success Factors and how they were derived.)**
- **The greatest number of mentors expressed confidence in modeling how to *keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement*, with 96 percent placing themselves at the competent or expert level. Ninety-five percent of respondents indicated that they were competent or expert at modeling the two related CSFs of *setting high expectations for all students* and *recognizing and encouraging good instructional practices*.**
- **Mentors expressed the least confidence in modeling how to *obtain support from the central office and the community*, *collaborate with parents*, and *use and organize time*. Approximately 21 percent placed themselves at the little or no ability or some ability level on these three factors.**

For the most part, experienced and capable practitioners are mentoring aspiring principals.

The challenge may not be experience or competency. Instead, it may be whether the mentor's role is designed and communicated in a way that maximizes the potential to contribute. A well-structured mentoring process — with training, support and resources — is required to enable successful principals to function as mentors.

Table 1
Mentors' Confidence in Ability to Model SREB Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factors	Percentage of Respondents (competent or expert ability to model)	Percentage of Respondents (little or no ability or some ability to model)
Keep everyone informed and **focused on student achievement**.	96%	4%
Set **high expectations** for all students to learn higher-level content.	95	5
Recognize and encourage **good instructional practices** that motivate students and increase their achievement.	95	5
Create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that **every student counts** and where every student has the support of a caring adult.	91	9
Acquire and **use resources wisely**.	91	9
Use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement.	91	9
Understand how adults learn, and know how to advance meaningful change through **quality, sustained professional development** that leads to increased student achievement.	90	10
Continuously learn from and seek out colleagues who keep abreast of new research and proven practices.	88	12

Critical Success Factors	Percentage of Respondents (competent or expert ability to model)	Percentage of Respondents (little or no ability or some ability to model)
Create a **focused mission** to improve student achievement and a vision of the school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.	87	13
Understand the change process, and use leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively.	86	14
Use and organize time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement.	81	19
Make parents partners in students' education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration.	79	21
Obtain support from the central office and from community and parent leaders for the school improvement agenda.	78	22

Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Question 2:

Do current mentor selection, training and evaluation practices ensure that aspiring principals receive high-quality mentoring?

Interns cannot be guaranteed an opportunity to learn about leading change and improving teaching and learning — the things that schools most need them to do — if the most effective mentors are not chosen. In spite of the importance placed on including mentored internships in principal preparation programs, little attention is given to selecting the right person to do the mentoring and the right site for the intern's needs. In most cases, this responsibility rests with the intern.

Instead of leading improvement in curriculum and instruction in diverse school contexts, most interns are exposed to the leadership only in the school where they teach. The process of matching mentors with interns is seldom based on the strengths of mentors or the needs of interns. A mentor who is also the intern's home principal can be distracted by having to supervise the intern while arranging learning experiences for him or her. At the same time, interns mentored by their home principals and assuming a new role in their schools may be less inclined to work with teams of teachers to address an issue related to improving the quality of instruction.

Findings

- **Most mentors are selected by interns (56 percent of survey respondents) with universities making the selection for just over one-third of the interns (35 percent of survey respondents) and districts selecting mentors for one-fifth (20 percent of survey respondents). (See Table 2.) States rarely get involved in mentor selection (5 percent of survey respondents).**

Table 2
Individuals and Organizations Selecting Mentors

Individual or Organization	Percentage of Respondents
Student/intern	56%
University	35
School district	20
State	5

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Seventy-two percent of mentors indicated interns were mentored in their home school districts. (See Table 3.) For the remaining cases, program directors considered the match between the intern and the mentor on an individual basis. Only 7 percent of interns completed several rotations with at least one being outside their home school district. Three percent of interns were matched with mentors outside their home districts.**

Table 3
Relationship of Intern, Mentor and Home School District

Matching Options	Percentage of Respondents
Interns were matched with their home school administrators.	56%
Interns were matched with mentors within their home school districts but not with their home school administrators.	16
Program directors considered matches within the home district and/or the home school on an individual basis.	15
Interns had to complete several rotations, including at least one with a mentor outside their home school districts.	7
Interns were matched with mentors outside their home school districts.	3
Interns were full-time graduate students and did not have a home district or school.	3

Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Nearly half of the programs had no formally stated criteria for matching mentors with interns, according to 44 percent of respondents. Almost two-thirds of mentors said they were selected by interns; more than half of the mentors said they were the interns' home principals. (See Table 4.) Mentors seldom (11 percent) were selected because their strengths complemented the intern's needs or perceived weaknesses.**

Table 4
Criteria for Matching Mentors and Interns

Criteria	Percentage of Respondents
No formally stated criteria	44%
Intern's choice	62
I was the intern's home principal.	52
Physical/geographic proximity	28
Correspondence between my school level and the level at which my intern plans to work in the future	23
Intern's desired characteristics of a mentor	20
Strengths of the mentor complement the intern's needs or perceived weaknesses	11
Gender	0

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **The criterion most frequently used for mentor selection is experience as an administrator (60 percent of survey respondents) with the next most frequent criterion being principal of the aspiring principal's school (56 percent of survey respondents). (See Table 5.)**
- **Forty-one percent of mentors were selected to be mentors because of their commitment to professional development; 39 percent were chosen based on their reputation as an outstanding school administrator. Only 24 percent indicated that they were selected because of improvements in student achievement they had achieved in their own schools.**

Table 5
Criteria for Selecting Mentors

Criteria	Percentage of Respondents
Experience as an administrator	60%
Principal of the aspiring principal's school	56
Commitment to professional development	41
Reputation as an outstanding school administrator	39
Rapport with district and/or university staff	39
Past experience with aspiring principal interns	26
Improvement in student achievement at your school	24

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Schools pay the ultimate price for deferring important decisions about mentors, internship sites and learning experiences to interns, who then turn to a familiar face and the comfortable environment of the current school and district. Schools need new leaders with diverse experiences and an array of solutions for the improvement of teaching and learning. Interns need a site selection or mentor match process that considers their needs and the opportunities available to develop competencies. Together, district and university leaders can develop and implement a selection and matching process that considers the mentor's strengths, the intern's needs and the district's school improvement challenges.

Field-based experiences offer opportunities to see new contexts and approaches to school improvement. An ideal internship experience would provide interns opportunities to 1) observe principals' behaviors in a variety of low- and high-performing schools; 2) participate in diverse experiences that develop competencies according to a learning plan and without the constraints of being in a home school; and 3) lead teams to solve complex and comprehensive problems of low student achievement with authority conferred by mentors experienced in solving similar problems in their schools.

Question 3:

Are mentors providing interns the experiences to master the leadership competencies essential for improving schools and raising student achievement?

Most mentors are competent leaders; yet, by their own admission, half of them fail to provide interns with opportunities to work with teams of teachers to address problems of student achievement and to demonstrate their leadership competencies. Many mentors fail to provide opportunities for interns to see them perform the critical functions that principals perform in excellent schools — holding effective staff meetings, conducting instructional walk-throughs and observing teams of teachers meeting together to discuss student work.

Mentors have weekly contact with interns, but many internship activities are the same ones interns experienced as teachers. Providing interns a list of activities for participation, rather than giving them opportunities to lead and facilitate change, reduces the internship to a perfunctory checklist rather than a learning experience.

Mentoring adds little value if it does not provide experiences that go beyond theory, books and course work to advance interns' understanding of how school principals set the tone and culture for high performance and continuous school improvement. Mentors' misconceptions of being a listening ear, rather than a provider of learning experiences, diminishes the potential for fostering interns' understanding and mastery of the critical skills needed to lead a school.

Findings

- **Sixty-three percent of respondents perceive that their responsibility is to help interns translate administrative theory into practice. Sixty-one percent think it is to help interns complete a list of tasks. (See Table 6.) Only about half of the respondents indicated that they had a responsibility to help the intern create and implement a school improvement project or an action research project that focused on improving curriculum, instruction and/or student achievement. About half responded that guiding the intern's own reflection on leadership practices was a responsibility. Thirteen percent indicated that they lacked any well-defined responsibilities.**

Table 6
Perceived Responsibilities as a Mentor

Responsibilities	Percentage of Respondents
To assist the intern to translate administrative theory into practice	63%
To help the intern complete a list of tasks	61
To focus internship experiences on developing and demonstrating a set of standards (national, state or district) or competencies for school administrators	54
To help the intern create and implement a school improvement project or an action research project focusing on improving curriculum, instruction and/or student achievement	53
To guide the intern's reflection on his or her observation and practice of leadership concepts, behaviors and beliefs	53
To evaluate the intern's performance of required standards or competencies	48
To help the intern develop and implement a professional growth plan	33
To help the intern fulfill a learning contract	24
I did not have any well-defined responsibilities.	13

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Mentors typically interact with interns at least daily (46 percent of survey respondents) or several times each week (24 percent). (See Table 7.) Sixteen percent of the respondents indicated that the interns determined the frequency of interactions based on the need for assistance. Further inquiry would determine whether these interactions were directly supportive of interns' mastery of competencies.**

Table 7
Mentors' Face-to-face Interaction with Interns

Interactions	Percentage of Respondents
Worked with the intern only when he or she requested assistance	16%
Weekly meetings	16
Worked with the intern two to three times a week	24
Worked with the intern daily in the beginning, followed by a gradual reduction of time spent together as he or she gained more skills	28
Worked with the intern at least daily	9
Worked or met with the intern more than once a day across the internship period — the intern was like my shadow	9

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Across all categories of SREB Critical Success Factors (CSFs) identified as integral to improving student achievement, 51 percent or less of survey respondents indicated that interns led activities that built competencies in these areas. (See Table 8.)**
- **Interns were least likely to lead the first challenges new leaders face. Mentors reported that interns seldom (40 percent or less) had opportunities to lead in the following areas:**
  - **understanding the change process and using leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively (25 percent);**
  - **obtaining support from the central office and from community and parent leaders for the school improvement agenda (30 percent);**
  - **creating a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the school (31 percent);**
  - **acquiring and using resources wisely (33 percent);**
  - **creating a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult (33 percent);**
  - **continuously learning from and seeking out colleagues who keep abreast of new research and proven practices (36 percent);**
  - **setting high expectations for all students to learn higher-level content (36 percent);**
  - **making parents partners in students' education and creating a structure for parent and educator collaboration (39 percent); and**
  - **recognizing and encouraging good instructional practices that motivate students and increase their achievement (40 percent).**

Table 8
Strategies for Providing Opportunities for Interns to Learn and Practice Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factors	Percentage of Respondents (Intern observed.)	Percentage of Respondents (Intern participated.)	Percentage of Respondents (Intern led.)
Create a **focused mission** to improve student achievement and a vision of the school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.	54%	62%	31%
Set **high expectations** for all students to learn higher-level content.	53	53	36
Recognize and encourage **good instructional practices** to motivate students and increase their achievement.	61	51	40
Create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that **every student counts** and where every student has the support of a caring adult.	59	48	33
Use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement.	49	59	51
Keep everyone informed and **focused on student achievement**.	53	61	45
Make parents partners in students' education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration.	60	45	39
Understand the change process, and use leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively.	54	46	25

Table 8
Strategies for Providing Opportunities for Interns to Learn and Practice Critical Success Factors *(Continued)*

Critical Success Factors	Percentage of Respondents (Intern observed.)	Percentage of Respondents (Intern participated.)	Percentage of Respondents (Intern led.)
Understand how adults learn, and know how to advance meaningful change through **quality sustained professional development** that leads to increased student achievement.	47%	55%	42%
Use and organize time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement.	55	45	42
Acquire and **use resources wisely**.	64	43	33
Obtain support from the central office and from community and parent leaders for the school improvement agenda.	54	43	30
Continuously learn from and seek out colleagues who keep abreast of new research and proven practices.	56	49	36

Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Ideally, mentors provide interns with opportunities to observe improvement activities. However, mentors say only 53 percent to 79 percent observe the following: parent/community meetings (53 percent), classrooms (56 percent), team meetings (66 percent to 67 percent), school walk-throughs (70 percent), the principal carrying out responsibilities (75 percent) or faculty meetings (79 percent). (See Table 9.) No more than half of mentors said interns observed special education staffing conferences or presentations to the superintendent and the school board.**

Table 9
Strategies for Assisting the Intern to Develop Competencies

Strategies	Percentage of Respondents
Observing faculty meetings	79%
Shadowing me as I carried out my usual responsibilities as a school principal	75
Observing school walk-throughs to collect information about the delivery of curriculum and instruction	70
Observing school improvement council/team meetings	67
Observing grade level/subject area team meetings	66
Coaching the intern on how to improve his or her performance of competencies	62
Observing in classrooms to determine instructional quality	56
Observing parent conferences	53
Observing parent/community meetings	53
Critical reflection on leadership concepts, behaviors and beliefs	51
Performance evaluation	49
Observing special education staffing conferences	47
Direct instruction or participation in professional development sessions	44
Modeling leadership competencies specified by the university	39
Observing presentations that I or other principals made to the superintendent and the district school board	21
Assigned readings of case studies or other professional literature	19

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Selectively choosing interns' learning experiences is a critical function of mentors. Mentors can provide a lens that focuses on an insider's view of school leadership — decisions that are made behind closed doors, in front of school staffs and under stressful conditions. The mentor's role is to provide the opportunity for interns to encounter difficult or ambiguous situations and be accountable for the effects, intended or otherwise, of decisions made.

Mentoring demands careful planning and the support of the district office. The mentor is responsible for creating learning opportunities for interns by developing a learning plan that describes what will be observed, participated in and led throughout the field experience. Each activity is selected based on the competencies needed by the intern. Without these clarifications and plans, mentoring can default to "on-the-fly" conversations about the leadership skills of everyone but the intern.

Question 4:

Are mentors provided with the support necessary to be effective?

The current mentoring process is not a deliberate process with joint responsibility shared by universities and districts for grooming aspiring school principals. Mentors are provided information about program requirements and the tasks necessary to complete the internship but are not provided — by either the university or the district — the training, support and evaluative feedback necessary to develop aspiring principals' skills.

Lack of attention to the necessary components that would improve mentoring indicates that universities and districts do not regard the internship as a serious learning opportunity. Universities fail to challenge the mentor to provide the opportunities and coaching to develop aspiring principles able to meet the needs of school improvement. School districts' attention and support for effective mentoring is limited in many internship sites, and this constitutes benign neglect. Without a commitment of time, materials or remuneration, the district will reap a return proportionate to its meager investment.

Findings — Training

- **Only 38 percent of the responding mentors indicated that they had received training prior to serving as a mentor. Ninety percent or more of trained mentors said training content focused on program goals and objectives, and descriptions of roles and responsibilities of everyone involved. (See Table 10.) Seventy to 89 percent of trained mentors indicated that training covered what it means to be a mentor, a calendar of program events and tasks, and the agreement/contract signed by those involved. Less than half of those that were trained indicated that mentor training provided instruction on modeling essential competencies for leading school improvement, establishing rapport and trust, facilitating reflection, promoting adult professional development, cognitive coaching, or active listening.**

Table 10
Content Areas Addressed in Training Prior to Mentor Service

Training Content Area	Percentage of Respondents (range)
Program goals and objectives Descriptions of roles and responsibilities of all involved parties	90% or more
Information on what it means to be a mentor	80 – 89
Calendar of program events and tasks Signing of agreement/contract by all involved parties	70 – 79
Conceptual framework of the program — standards, vision of the school leader the program intends to produce and guiding principles Giving meaningful feedback on the intern's learning or performance	60 – 69
In-depth explanation and description of program curriculum Instruction on how to assess and evaluate the intern's performance Planning effective experiences for learning, and demonstrating leadership standards or essential competencies	50 – 59
Modeling essential competencies for leading school improvement and increasing student achievement Establishing rapport and trust with the intern Facilitating reflection Promoting adult professional development Cognitive coaching Active listening Aligning the intern's field experiences with the seminar or course-work learning objectives	40 – 49
Introducing the intern to the school in an appropriate way	30 – 39

Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **For nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the trained mentors, training was provided individually by the university program director or other faculty member. (See Table 11.) Twenty-nine percent received training in a workshop format provided by the university. Just 11 percent of those trained participated in a district-sponsored workshop.**

Table 11
Structure of the Training Received by Mentors

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
The program director or faculty met with you and the intern to review internship requirements and responsibilities.	50%
A workshop was conducted by the university for all mentors.	29
The program director or faculty met with you for several hours to explain the program.	14
A workshop was conducted by the district for all mentors.	11

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings — Support and Remuneration

- **The university supervisor who met with the mentor and the intern at school one to two times during the internship represented the most frequent type of support offered mentors by universities, occurring in about half of respondents' experiences. (See Table 12.) Nine percent of mentors met with the intern and the university supervisor at least monthly. One-third of mentors responded that they received information and resources. Twenty percent of the survey respondents indicated not receiving any support.**

Table 12
Types of Support Provided to Mentors by the Intern's College or University

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
The university supervisor met with the mentor and the intern at the school site one to two times during the internship.	55%
The university provided the information and resources necessary for the mentor to plan and facilitate effective learning experiences for the intern.	33
The mentor did not receive any support.	20
The university supervisor responded to the mentor's and the intern's requests for assistance in a timely and effective manner.	19
The university held one or more seminars or network meetings for mentors.	17
The university supervisor met with the mentor and the intern at the school site monthly during the internship.	9
The university supervisor met with the mentor and the intern at the school site using another schedule.	3
The university supervisor met with the mentor and the intern at the school site once every two weeks.	1
The university supervisor met with the mentor and the intern at the school site weekly during the internship.	0

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **School districts provided less support than universities. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents reported that their school districts provided no support to mentors. (See Table 13.) Seventeen percent said the district provided necessary resources. Only 9 percent of mentors indicated that district staff met with the university to coordinate the internship program. Five percent reported that district staff met with the mentor and the intern on a scheduled basis.**

Table 13
Types of Support Provided to Mentors by the School District

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
The mentor did not receive any support.	62%
The district provided the resources necessary for the mentor to plan and facilitate effective learning experiences for the intern.	17
District representatives responded to the mentor's and the intern's requests for assistance in a timely and effective manner.	13
The district held meetings with the mentor and college/university supervisors to coordinate efforts.	9
District representatives met with the mentor and the intern on a scheduled basis.	5

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Three-fourths of responding mentors received no compensation for their services. (See Table 14.) No mentors reported receiving release time to accommodate their mentoring tasks.**

Table 14
Compensation for Service as a Mentor

Remuneration	Percentage of Respondents
No compensation	73%
Monetary stipend	15
Voucher for graduate study at the university	9
Granted adjunct or clinical faculty status by the college or university	0
Given release time	0
Received graduate credit	0
I was a full-time mentor receiving a salary or fee for services.	0

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings — Evaluation

- **Most mentors repeat the mentoring experience, yet more than half report that their performance as a mentor was not evaluated. (See Table 15.) The college or university evaluated 14 percent of the survey respondents. Thirteen percent indicated that their interns evaluated their performance. Only 3 percent indicated that the school district evaluated their performance as a mentor.**

Table 15
Evaluation of Mentors' Performance

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Not evaluated	57%
Don't know	22
College or university	14
Intern	13
School district	3
Self-evaluation	3

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Only 15 percent of survey respondents indicated that the goal of mentor evaluation is to assess the ability to facilitate and support the intern's learning and growth as an aspiring principal. (See Table 16.)**

Table 16
Purpose of Evaluating Mentors' Performance

Purpose	Percentage of Respondents
My performance was not evaluated.	59%
I don't know.	24
To assess my ability to facilitate and support the intern's learning and growth as an aspiring school leader	15
To assess my ability to facilitate the intern's mastery of identified standards or competencies	8
To assess my overall effectiveness in the mentoring process	8
To assess whether or not I will be asked to mentor in subsequent years	7

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Universities and districts share responsibility for the quality of the mentoring process. Jointly, they must develop substantive training opportunities, provide support and materials, communicate effectively, recognize and reward mentors, and hold mentors accountable for the learning opportunities they provide to interns.

Mentor training needs to focus on the specific skills that enable the intern's performance to improve: establishing trust, modeling, questioning, listening, promoting reflection, providing feedback, collaborating, delegating, resolving conflict, giving praise and evaluating. Training needs to provide mentors an opportunity to develop and practice their own new skills while learning to do the same for interns. Even the most experienced mentors need professional development on the leader's role in improving student achievement, communicating with parents and involving the community.

Question 5:

Do mentors have significant influence in decisions about interns' successful completion of a preparation program and issuance of the school administrator license?

Mentors are largely ignored in providing formal input on the intern's grade, program completion status, state licensure or leadership potential in the school district. Their influence about the intern's performance is limited to discussions directly with the intern, occasional meetings with the university supervisor and — for a few mentors — conversations with district personnel.

Mentors are generally pleased with their interns' potential and would recommend almost all for a principalship. This is true despite limited opportunities for interns to observe different settings, to have planned learning experiences aligned to critical competencies and to lead in a school improvement initiative where their competencies are demonstrated, observed and refined.

Findings

- **Sixty-four percent of survey respondents evaluated their interns' performance in discussions with the interns. (See Table 17.) Half of the respondents completed formal evaluations of their interns or discussed interns' performance with the university supervisor. Thirteen percent of survey respondents discussed their interns' strengths and weaknesses with district personnel. Thirteen percent were not involved with the evaluation of performance. Five percent of survey respondents provided input for interns' grades. Fourteen percent completed a recommendation regarding the intern receiving an administrative license.**

Table 17
Activities to Evaluate the Intern's Performance

Evaluation Activities	Percentage of Respondents
The intern and I discussed his or her performance together.	64%
I completed a formal evaluation of the intern's performance, using procedures provided by the university and/or the district.	55
I discussed the intern's strengths and weaknesses with the university supervisor.	51
I reviewed and signed off on the intern's portfolio.	49
I filled out a survey.	30
I completed a recommendation regarding the intern receiving a school administrator license.	14
I discussed the intern's strengths and weaknesses with district personnel.	13
I weighed in during the grading process.	5
I was not involved with the evaluation of the intern's performance.	13

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Approximately half of the respondents indicated that intern evaluation was composed of a list of tasks (56 percent), a portfolio documenting standards or competencies (49 percent), or satisfactory performance of a specified set of standards, competencies or program goals (48 percent). (See Table 18.) Only 20 percent indicated that a professional growth plan was a significant component of the evaluation.**

Table 18
Components of the Intern's Evaluation

Components	Percentage of Respondents
The intern's completion of a list of tasks	56%
The intern's completion of a portfolio documenting performance of state or district standards or competencies	49
The intern's satisfactory performance of a specified set of standards, competencies or program goals	48
The intern's creation and implementation of a school improvement project or action research that focused on improving curriculum, instruction and student achievement	33
The intern's fulfillment of a learning contract related to a specified set of standards, competencies or program goals	28
The intern's development and implementation of a professional growth plan	20
I don't know.	11

Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were asked to select all options that applied.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **Three-fourths of survey respondents were not asked for any recommendations regarding intern licensure. (See Table 19.)**

Table 19
Decisions Regarding Recommendation for Licensure

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
I was not asked to make a recommendation regarding licensure.	76%
I recommended all that I mentored for licensure.	21
I recommended ___ out of ___ for licensure.*	3
I recommended none of the interns that I mentored for licensure.	1

*Of the two respondents indicating this response, one recommended 22 out of 24 interns (92 percent) and the second recommended the only intern he or she had.
Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Findings

- **In spite of minimal opportunities to lead an improvement effort and no standardized criteria for evaluation, 73 percent of mentors indicated that their interns were prepared for principalship. (See Table 20.) With the exception of 4 percent, the remaining respondents reported that their interns were satisfactory overall, with no major weaknesses and some strengths.**
- **Although mentors have limited opportunities to make formal evaluations and recommendations, they perceive having influence on interns' completion of preparation programs or attainment of licenses in school administration. (See Table 21.) Whereas 65 percent of respondents believed they influenced program completion to varying degrees, only 36 percent believed they had the same influence on licensure.**

Table 20
Mentors' Perceptions of Interns' Preparedness for a Principalship

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents
Strong overall, with no major weaknesses and many strengths	73%
Satisfactory overall, with no major weaknesses and some strengths	23
Very poor overall, with many major weaknesses	0
Some major weaknesses, with little or no strengths	0
Major variations in quality, depending on the university where the intern was enrolled	4

Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Table 21
Mentor Evaluation Significance to Intern Program Completion or Licensure

Response Option	Percentage of Respondents (program completion)	Percentage of Respondents (licensure)
I did not evaluate the intern's performance.	15%	14%
No impact whatsoever	1	28
Very little influence	6	13
Moderate influence	29	23
Significant influence	32	12
Single most influential factor	4	1
I don't know.	13	9

Source: SREB *Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey*

Mentors are ideally positioned to provide feedback to district offices, as well as references for other districts contemplating hiring. Mentors need training on a well-designed evaluation procedure to discern their interns' strengths and weaknesses on critical competencies and to offer a valid and reliable performance evaluation that influences program completion and licensure decisions. Well-qualified mentors, trained in a sound evaluation system, can provide the critical perspective offered by real-world learning that is currently missing from most programs.

Mentoring as a Measure of Investment in Educational Leadership Preparation

SREB's research provides little evidence that the mentoring investments of states, universities and school districts are adequate to prepare aspiring principals for the challenges they will face in their first principalships. Interns and their mentors have been left to their own capabilities — with little support or few guarantees of high-quality learning experiences to benefit the state in leading school improvement efforts. Mentors cannot achieve their potential without first having policies to set directions, training to develop capacities and processes to ensure quality.

Making the initial investments can quickly return results and benefit future student learning.

- States can use the SREB survey to identify gaps between what is effective and what now exists in the state to plan for policy development ***this year***.
- Universities can train mentors ***this year***, with immediate positive results in influencing the quality of interns' learning experiences.
- School districts can provide resources and opportunities ***now*** for mentors and interns, recognizing that high-quality mentoring is essential for leadership succession.
- Mentors can engage interns ***today*** in identifying and addressing problems of low student achievement.

These recommendations are starting points — minimal deposits to begin replenishing the nearly depleted investments committed to the mentoring effort. More substantive investments, suggested by this study, are necessary to adequately ensure that aspiring principals are fully prepared for the challenges of the job.

To paraphrase a sage, "An investment in leadership always pays the best interest."[6] The time to invest is now. *School leadership can't wait.*

6 Benjamin Franklin has been attributed with the quote, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

SREB's Learning-centered Leadership Program

SREB's aim is to create leadership programs that prepare aspiring principals and school leadership teams to aggressively lead improvement in curriculum, instruction and student achievement. Through reviews of literature and research data, SREB has identified 13 Critical Success Factors (CSFs) associated with principals who have succeeded in raising student achievement in schools with traditionally high-risk demographics. These factors, defined by three overarching competencies, represent the framework for SREB's Learning-centered Leadership Program.

Competency I: Effective principals have a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement.

CSF 1. **Focusing on student achievement:** creating a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible

CSF 2. **Developing a culture of high expectations:** setting high expectations for all students to learn higher-level content

CSF 3. **Designing a standards-based instructional system:** recognizing and encouraging good instructional practices that motivate students and increase their achievement

Competency II: Effective principals have the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement continuous student improvement.

CSF 4. **Creating a caring environment:** developing a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult

CSF 5. **Implementing data-based improvement:** using data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and in student achievement

CSF 6. **Communicating:** keeping everyone informed and focused on student achievement

CSF 7. **Involving parents:** making parents active partners in their students' educations and creating a structure for parent and educator collaboration

Competency III: Effective principals have the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices.

CSF 8. **Initiating and managing change:** understanding the change process and using leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively

CSF 9. **Providing professional development:** understanding how adults learn and advancing meaningful change through quality sustained professional development that leads to increased student achievement

CSF 10. **Innovating:** using and organizing time and resources in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement

CSF 11. **Maximizing resources:** acquiring and using resources wisely

CSF 12. **Building external support:** obtaining support from the central office, from community leaders and from parents for the school improvement agenda

CSF 13. **Staying abreast of effective practices:** continuously learning from and seeking out colleagues who keep them abreast of new research and proven practices

Support for State System Redesign

The **Learning-centered Leadership Program** stimulates and supports states by:

- conducting research on the preparation and development of school principals and preparing benchmark reports that track the progress of the SREB states in achieving the SREB *Challenge to Lead* goal: *Every school has leadership that results in improved*

student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal;

- developing training modules that support aspiring principals' preparation and current principals' on-the-job application of knowledge and practices that improve schools and increase student achievement, and preparing trainers to deliver the modules through university preparation programs, state leadership academies and other professional development initiatives;
- providing guidance and technical assistance to states interested in leadership redesign and keeping policy-makers aware of the urgency for change, spurring them to action and maintaining momentum by convening annual forums and disseminating publications focused on key issues; and
- assisting states to develop policies and plans for providing high-quality training and assistance to leadership teams in low-performing schools that result in improved school and classroom practices and increased student achievement.

The Learning-centered Leadership Program, with funding provided by the Wallace Foundation, has developed training materials for states' use in redesigning educational leadership programs. Training is customized and conducted at local sites and also offered semiannually in Atlanta.

SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules for State System Redesign

Developing Internship Programs for School Leaders: A How-to Guide for States, Universities and Districts (2006)

Mentoring School Leaders in Competency-based Internships (2006)

Leadership Redesign: A Model for Statewide Improvement in Student Achievement (2005)

SREB School Leadership Publications

Leadership publications are available for purchase or for downloading at no cost from the SREB Web site at http://www.sreb.org/main/Leadership/pubs/pubsindex.asp.

Schools Can't Wait: Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs, (06V04); 2006

A District-driven Principal Preparation Program Design: The Providence School Department and the University of Rhode Island Partnership, (05V05); 2005

The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right? (05V02); 2005

Preparing a New Breed of Principals: Leadership from the University President's Office, (04V15); 2004; Web only

Progress Being Made in Getting a Quality Leader in Every School, (04E12); 2004

Academies in the Lead: Redesigning Leadership Academies for Student Achievement, (03V59); 2003

State Policies for Effective Mentoring

Policy	Criteria for Policy
Clear Expectations for Mastery of State Leadership Standards	Create policies with clear expectations of what principals need to know and do to improve teaching and learning and the rigorous performance requirements for mastery.
Collaboration between Universities and Districts	Require universities to work with school districts within their regions to prepare a written agreement to: ■ design and deliver high-quality internship experiences with resources provided by each partner; and ■ design a process to assess intern competencies, certify program candidates as qualified for licensure, and evaluate program effectiveness. Have school districts develop a succession plan for principals in partnership with local universities. Make the written agreement to collaborate a component of the university's program approval.
Adequate Resource Allocations	Require the university and the district to make the necessary investments to implement a well-designed internship program with high-quality mentoring that prepares aspiring principals to improve teaching and learning and the district's school improvement process. Hold the university program accountable through the educational leadership program approval process for ensuring adequacy of resources. Hold the district accountable through the school improvement process for ensuring leadership succession planning for its schools.

Investment	Criteria for Policy
Mentor Selection	Select mentors with a record of leadership for improving student achievement and the ability to demonstrate the specific competencies needed by aspiring principals. Make the selection process a collaborative decision of the university and the district. Create a process that is uniform across all programs.
Mentor Training	Require the university and the district to jointly train all mentors to (1) provide high-quality learning experiences, coaching and feedback to interns; (2) evaluate performance using the state's criteria for mastery of competencies; and (3) understand the internship program and the mentor's roles, responsibilities, support and accountability.
Coaching and Feedback for Competency Mastery	Require mentors to (1) provide high-quality coaching and feedback to help interns master leadership competencies and meet state leadership standards; (2) provide learning experiences that are developmental (progressively observing, participating and leading) and focused on the school's student achievement challenges; (3) facilitate a structured learning plan for the internship that addresses district/school needs, intern needs and university requirements; and (4) meet frequently and regularly with interns to monitor progress toward mastery of performance requirements.
Coherent Performance Evaluation System for Program Completion, Certification and Licensure	Establish criteria and uniform procedures to decide completion, certification and licensure requirements for aspiring principals. Make use of performance evaluations of internship experiences provided by mentors, university supervisors and district internship coordinators for high-stakes decisions. Hold universities and districts responsible for the reliability of performance evaluation measures.

Competency-based Learning Plan

Competency-based learning plans focus on leadership for addressing low student achievement. The following learning experiences can develop learning-centered leadership competencies.

Learning Leadership Practices

- Identifying effective leadership behaviors of principals in diverse school settings
- Focusing on specific leadership competencies within the context of authentic, school-based problems
- Assessing curriculum and instructional gaps for different groups of students
- Drawing on research to understand and improve teaching and learning
- Leading a team to solve a problem related to student achievement
- Seeking research-based solutions based on sound judgments about best practices
- Developing skills, testing beliefs and questioning assumptions prior to assuming a principalship

Solving Important School-based Problems

Challenges at the Elementary School Level

- Accelerating the development of children entering kindergarten with delayed development of language and/or social skills
- Providing special help for students exhibiting early reading and mathematics difficulties; having all students reading proficiently by the end of the third grade

- Developing teachers' implementation of a balanced reading program that includes phonics and word attack skills, vocabulary development, fluency and comprehension skills
- Getting minorities and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds achieving and maintaining at grade level, particularly in grades four and five
- Communicating effectively with parents and guardians from diverse cultures; developing teachers' abilities to teach in a culturally responsive manner
- Implementing strategies to minimize the loss in achievement that occurs over the summer months
- Developing teachers' abilities and interests in teaching a science and social studies curriculum that prepares students for success in the middle grades

Challenges at the Middle Grades Level

- Aligning curriculum and instruction, including classroom assignments, student work and classroom assessments, to grade-level and high school-readiness standards for success in college-preparatory courses in grade nine
- Having students, particularly males, see the usefulness of their studies and be engaged in learning
- Providing students with extra academic help before it's too late; getting students back up to grade-level standards
- Developing parents' and students' understanding of the importance of decisions impacting preparedness for college-prep classes in high school
- Having teachers working and learning together; having teachers develop the depth of knowledge to teach a rigorous academic core
- Having all students reading at grade level by the end of the middle grades

- Getting most students to take and pass Algebra I by the end of the eighth grade
- Eliminating curricula that are repetitious, disjointed or not aligned, and curricula that are not rigorous preparation for college-preparatory course work in high school

Challenges at the High School Level

- Aligning curriculum and instruction, including classroom assignments, student work and classroom assessments, to grade-level and college- and career-readiness standards
- Assigning course work that is relevant to the world of students and having students engaged in assignments, discussions and projects that make learning more understandable and memorable
- Upgrading uneven teacher expectations for student work and correcting poor communication from teachers about what constitutes A- and B-level work
- Ensuring that students at risk of dropping out remain in school and are engaged in learning; getting students back on course when they return after an absence
- Getting all teachers on board and supporting reading and writing for learning across the curriculum and other research-based teaching strategies, including the effective use of technology for learning
- Developing parents' and students' understanding of the importance of rigorous course work and the decisions that will help prepare students for postsecondary studies and careers
- Providing students with extra academic help
- Working with students who lack adult relationships in the school and students with few peer relationships or social involvement in school activities, and connecting every student to an adult mentor/adviser
- Developing teachers' abilities to work together and across traditional departmental boundaries
- Establishing a mentoring program for new teachers

Planning Learning Experiences to Address Problems of Low Student Achievement

Internships Are Tiered Learning Experiences **Observing** *school leaders* **Participating** *in a variety of school improvement experiences* **Leading** *by assuming building-level leadership responsibilities of a team*	
Tier: **Observing — *school leaders in two differently performing schools***	
The Field Experience Plan	Early in the program, the candidate observes school leaders and classrooms in several low- and high-performing schools. These observations are analyzed to identify the schools' challenges and the strategies that are being used to close the gap between current student performance and the district/school expectations and goals for higher achievement. The intern identifies the related decisions and behaviors of each school's principal and the necessary actions to improve each school.
Examples of Specific Field Activities	**Observing** ■ the performance of teachers by comparing what happens in different classrooms to promote student achievement ■ the behaviors principals use to assess and improve instruction and the extent to which these behaviors incorporate critical success factors for improving student achievement ■ the actions of the school improvement team to identify school challenges and strategies to improve curriculum, instruction and student achievement ■ the support of parents and the community for school improvement goals and strategies
How Mentors Support Learning	The mentor principal meets weekly with the intern to discuss and assist with the interpretation of observations, encourage reflection and provide feedback to support learning. The mentor poses questions to assess the quality of the intern's analysis, suggests additional probing questions and helps the intern identify opportunities to enhance the observation experience.
How Progress in Mastering Competencies Is Monitored	The intern records observation experiences in all schools in a journal, providing evidence of understanding how to analyze school performance and the critical success factors utilized by each school leader. A final report at the culmination of the experience provides a profile of each school and its student achievement gaps, the improvement process and strategies, and the leaders' behaviors in closing these gaps. The intern's ability to analyze the situation in each school will be evident in the content and quality of the journal entries and the final report from the comparison of the schools.

Planning Learning Experiences to Address Problems of Low Student Achievement

Internships Are Tiered Learning Experiences **Observing** *school leaders* **Participating** *in a variety of school improvement experiences* **Leading** *by assuming building-level leadership responsibilities of a team*	
Tier: **Participating — *in experiences that directly develop competence in demonstrating the state's leadership standards***	
The Field Experience Plan	The intern and the mentor create opportunities within the mentor principal's school or district that will directly develop the specific competencies and performance tasks required to meet state leadership standards. These opportunities are described and mapped in a field-based learning plan that is the "road map" for the intern to follow throughout the program.
Examples of Specific Field Activities	**Participating in:** ■ analyses of student achievement data with teams of teachers ■ presentations with the mentor principal on a school improvement strategy to the school faculty and community ■ facilitation of content or grade-level meetings that focus on the use of a new instructional strategy ■ discussions of resource reallocation to support school improvement
How Mentors Support Learning	The mentor principal meets weekly with the intern to discuss the implementation of the learning plan, encourage reflection and self-assessment, provide feedback on the intern's performance in the experience, and assess progress on mastery of specific competencies. The mentor suggests additional opportunities to explore for each competency during the participation experience.
How Progress in Mastering Competencies Is Monitored	The intern tracks progress on each competency in a journal, a log or a competency tracker provided by the university. In addition, the intern collects artifacts of the learning experience for each competency in a portfolio. The intern's final report and presentation will provide details of the initial self-assessment, the experiences to use for building mastery, and a current self-assessment for the university supervisor, mentor principal and district internship program coordinator.

Planning Learning Experiences to Address Problems of Low Student Achievement

Internships Are Tiered Learning Experiences **Observing** *school leaders* **Participating** *in a variety of school improvement experiences* **Leading** *by assuming building-level leadership responsibilities of a team*	
Tier: **Leading — *by assuming building-level leadership responsibilities for solving a key problem of student achievement***	
The Field Experience Plan	The intern identifies through data analysis and observation a key problem of student achievement in the mentor principal's school. These problems cut across competency areas, so that interns can apply a range of skills in leading a team in problem solving.
Examples of Specific Field Activities	**Leading** ■ a team of teachers in identifying root causes for the identified problem of student achievement ■ a process of data analysis to probe more deeply the root causes of the problem ■ a study team to identify best practices and develop an improvement strategy that focuses on the identified problems ■ the process to evaluate programs and strategies that were identified as solutions to the problem under study
How Mentors Support Learning	The mentor principal meets with the intern throughout the week to discuss the problem-focused experience, encourage reflection and self-assessment, provide feedback on the intern's leadership role in the experience, and support application of specific competencies. The mentor probes for evidence of data-informed decision-making and selection of research-based strategies. The mentor provides support for the time, materials and other resources. The mentor provides recommendations for district involvement as needed.
How Progress in Mastering Competencies Is Monitored	At the beginning of the learning experience, the intern presents the problem to a panel of school, district and university staff. The intern highlights an initial analysis of the problem and suggests strategies to influence student achievement, getting feedback and commitment from the panel. During the experience, the intern tracks progress in a journal. The intern also collects artifacts for the problem and each competency in a portfolio. Finally, the intern presents the problem, strategies and results to the returning panel for feedback and follow-up by others in the school.

Responsibilities for Mentors, University Supervisors and District Internship Program Coordinators

Responsibilities for Mentors

- Welcome interns to the district.
- Orient the intern to the community and school culture.
- Help the intern decide on the sequence of developmental activities most appropriate for the internship (creating a learning plan), given the needs of the intern, the district and the state.
- Provide coaching for skills development.
- Facilitate/design opportunities for completion of internship activities.
- Allocate time for frequent, regular contacts with the intern.
- Model leadership competencies and make one's leadership choices explicit to the intern.
- Encourage the intern in identifying and solving problems.
- Track the intern's progress against standards.
- Encourage reflection and self-assessment; provide feedback on the intern's performance in the experience.
- Assess progress on the mastery of specific competencies; suggest additional opportunities to experience each competency during the internship.
- Consult with the intern's university supervisor.
- Assist the intern in developing his or her portfolio.
- Make sure the intern gets a thorough picture of the duties of the principal.
- Evaluate interns' performance on standards using valid measurement procedures.

Responsibilities for University Supervisors

- Meet with interns prior to their internships to identify needs, contemplate appropriate placement, explain internship procedures, and help set expectations.

- Match mentors with interns.
- Provide materials that define the expectations, processes and schedule of the internship to the intern, mentor and district internship program coordinator.
- Provide periodic seminars for interns to share what they are learning, to critique each others' observations and activities, to discuss alternative courses of action, and to get feedback from university faculty.
- Allocate time for frequent, regular contacts with the intern.
- Provide feedback and support to the intern.
- Review the learning plan and help the intern stay on track with expected competency demonstrations.
- Consult with the mentor and provide constructive feedback.
- Assist the intern in developing a portfolio demonstrating mastery of performance tasks.
- Evaluate interns and assign grades with input from their mentors.
- Understand all university, district and state requirements for interns.

Responsibilities for District Internship Program Coordinators

- Recruit and select mentors.
- Match mentors with interns.
- Provide a formal entrance to and exit from the program.
- Help the intern form relationships with people in the district and gain an understanding of central office functions that support leadership of student achievement.
- Provide mentor training and support.
- Ensure that mentors and interns have time allocated to complete internship responsibilities.
- Make sure the intern's learning plan addresses district strategic goals.
- Observe the intern as he or she moves through the internship program.
- Assist interns in gaining entry to settings that provide opportunities to work with diverse students, teachers, parents and communities.
- Create a pool of leader candidates based on evaluations of interns' strengths and weaknesses.
- Provide time for mentors to carry out their responsibilities.

Mentoring in Principal Internships Survey

The survey questionnaire was designed to learn more about mentoring programs for aspiring principals. Part I of the survey addressed the following: selection of mentors, training, roles and responsibilities, support and compensation, and evaluation of interns, mentors and the internship. Part II of the survey focused on the quality of the opportunities mentor principals provide interns to deepen their understanding and gain authentic practice in essential competencies for improving schools and student achievement.

Survey Part I — Characteristics of Mentoring Programs

Part I of the survey probed for information about the following practices:

- selection of mentors;
- training provided mentors;
- roles and responsibilities assumed by the mentor;
- support and compensation provided the mentor by the university and the district; and
- strategies used to evaluate the quality of the internship and the intern's performance.

Survey Part II — Opportunities to Learn and Apply the Critical Success Factors

Part II of the survey focused on the quality of the opportunities mentor principals provided interns to deepen their understanding and gain authentic practice in three essential competencies for improving schools and student achievement.

Essential Competencies for Improving Schools and Student Achievement

Effective principals have:

- a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement;
- the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement; and
- the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices.

These competencies, identified through prior SREB research conducted by Bottoms and O'Neill (2001), are closely aligned with those subsequently derived from the reviews of research by Leithwood, et al. (2004) and Davis, et al. (2005).[7]

The competencies are further defined by 13 practitioner-validated Critical Success Factors that indicate specific knowledge, skills or actions principals take to move school improvement forward and to gain higher student achievement. (See Appendix I for a complete list of the SREB Critical Success Factors.)

The survey asked mentors to indicate the various ways in which the intern was provided opportunities for learning and applying each of the Critical Success Factors in school improvement activities ongoing in the school.

[7] See the following:
Bottoms, G. and K. O'Neill. *Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action*. SREB, 2001.
Leithwood, K., K. Seashore Louis, S. Anderson, and K. Wahlstrom. *How leadership influences student learning*. Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement, University of Minnesota, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at The University of Ontario, and Wallace Foundation, 2004.
Davis, Steve, L. Darling-Hammond, D. Meyerson and M. LaPointe. *School leadership study: Developing successful principals (Review of Research)*. Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, 2005

Response Options on Learning Opportunities

- I did not provide opportunities.
- The intern observed me model how to lead.
- The intern participated in activities that I led.
- I guided the intern's reflection on leadership practices and outcomes.
- The intern analyzed and evaluated my performance as a leader.
- Other (specify)

In addition, mentors were asked to rate their own ability to model each Critical Success Factor for the intern by choosing one of the following options: **little or no ability to model, some ability to model, competent modeling or expert modeling.**

References

Barry, C. K., & Kaneko, J. (2002). Mentoring matters! Through San Diego's mentor program, principals address the practical application of instructional issues with the input of trusted colleagues. *Leadership*, 31(3), 26-29.

Bloom, G., Castagna, C., & Warren, B. (2003). More than mentors: Principal coaching. *Leadership*, 32(5), 20-23.

Bradshaw, L. K., & Phillips, J. C. (2002). Learning what they need to know: School leaders' lessons of experience. In G. Perreault & F. Lunenburg (Eds.), *The changing world of school administration* (pp. 182-198). Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Capasso, R. & Daresh, J. (2001). *The school administrator internship handbook: Leading, mentoring, and participating in the internship program*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Cordeiro, P. A. & Smith-Sloan, E. (1995, April). *Apprenticeships for administrative interns: Learning to talk like a principal*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Creighton, T., & Johnson, J. (2002). The need for a leadership practice field: An antidote for an ailing internship experience. In G. Perreault & F. Lunenburg (Eds.), *The changing world of school administration* (pp. 157-166). Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Crocker, C., & Harris, S. (2002). Facilitating growth of administrative practitioners as mentors. *Journal of Research for Educational Leaders*, 1(2), 5-20.

Crow, G. M. (2001). *School leader preparation: A short review of the knowledge base*. Nottingham, United Kingdom: National College for School Leadership. Retrieved August 25, 2006, from http://www.ncsl.org.uk/media/F7B/95/randd-gary-crow-paper.pdf

Daresh, J. C. (2001). *Leaders helping leaders: A practical guide to administrative mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. C. (1997). Improving principal preparation: A review of common strategies. *NASSP Bulletin*, 81(585), 3-8.

Daresh, J. C. (1997, February). *Research on beginning school leaders: Where do we go next?* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Daresh, J. C., & Playko, M. A. (1996, April). *Lessons for educational leadership from career preparation in law, medicine, and training for the priesthood*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.

Daresh, J. C., & Playko, M. A. (1994, February). *A planning model for local administrator mentor program development*. Paper presented at the annual American Association of School Administrators Convention, San Francisco, CA.

Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals* (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Educational Alliance at Brown University & National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2003). *Making the case for principal mentoring*. Providence, RI: Authors.

Ganser, T. (1994, November). *The impact of time and place in mentoring*. The Mentoring and Resource Network. Retrieved August 25, 2006, from http://www.mentors.net/03ocasspapers/time_place.html

Ginty, E. F. (1995). Supporting the success of the aspiring and beginning school leader. *NASSP Bulletin*, 79(575), 34-41.

Gray, B. (1989). *Collaborating: Finding common ground for multiparty problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hackmann, D., & English, F. (2001). About straw horses and administrator shortages: Confronting the pragmatics of the administrative internship. *UCEA Review*, 42(2), 9-14.

Hackmann, D., Russell, F., & Elliott, R. (1999). Making administrative internships meaningful. *Planning and Changing*, 30(1), 2-14.

Harris, S., Crocker, C., & Hopson, M. (2002). Issues that mentors share with protégés. In G. Perreault & F. Lunenburg (Eds.), *The changing world of school administration* (pp. 199-208). Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Kajs, L., Decman, J., Cox, C., Willman, E., & Alaniz, R. (2002). Addressing mentor-principals' lifelong learning needs in the preparation of principal candidates. In G. Perreault & F. Lunenburg (Eds.), *The changing world of school administration* (pp. 325-346). Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Coffin, G. (1995). Preparing school leaders: What works? *Connections*, 3(3), 1-7.

Lovely, S. (2004). *Staffing the principalship: Finding, coaching and mentoring school leaders*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Malone, R. J. (2001, July). Principal mentoring. *ERIC Digest*. (Report No. 149). Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

Mattessich, P. W., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. (2001). *Collaboration: What makes it work* (2nd ed.). St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Moir, E., & Bloom, G. (2003). Fostering leadership through mentoring. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 58-60.

Monsour, F. (1998). Twenty recommendations for an administrative mentoring program. *NASSP Bulletin*, 82(594), 96-100.

Southern Regional Education Board. (2006). *Developing internship programs for school leaders: A how-to guide for university and school district partners* (Leadership Curriculum Training Module). Atlanta, GA: Author.

Southern Regional Education Board. (2006). *Mentoring school leaders in competency-based internships* (Leadership Curriculum Training Module). Atlanta, GA: Author.

Southern Regional Education Board. (2006). *Schools Can't Wait: Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

Southern Regional Education Board. (2005). *A District-driven Principal Preparation Program Design: The Providence School Department and the University of Rhode Island partnership*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

Stein, S. J., & Gewirtzman, L. (2003). *Principal training on the ground: Ensuring highly qualified leadership*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Trenta, L., Beebe, R., Cosiano, P., & Eastridge, H. (2002). Administrator entry year programming: A cross-institutional pilot program-process, program descriptions, and lessons learned. In G. Perreault & F. Lunenburg (Eds.), *The changing world of school administration* (pp. 376-388). Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Tucker, P., & Grogan, M. (2001). Contextual responsiveness in administrative internships. *UCEA Review*, 42(2), 9-14.

Villani, S. (2006). *Mentoring and induction programs that support new principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

White, E. & Crow, G. M. (1993, April). *Rites of passage: The changing role perceptions of interns in their preparation for principalship*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Wilmore, E. L. (2004). *Principal induction: A standards-based model for administrator development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

SREB *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education

1. All children are ready for the first grade.
2. Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
3. Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
4. All young adults have a high school diploma — or, if not, pass the GED tests.
5. All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for postsecondary education and a career.
6. Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
7. The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.
8. Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
9. Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal.
10. Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
11. The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
12. The state places a high priority on an education *system* of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.

The Southern Regional Education Board has established these Goals for Education, which challenge SREB states to lead the nation in educational progress. They are built on the groundbreaking education goals SREB adopted in 1988 and on more than a decade of efforts to promote actions and measure progress.

SREB's Learning-centered Leadership Program focuses on the assessment and improvement of states' actions and progress on Goal 9: *Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal.* For more information about the program, contact SREB at (404) 875-9211 or e-mail: schoolleadership@sreb.org.

(07V05)