

Developing Collaborative University-District Partnerships to Prepare Learning-Centered Principals

What can you expect to get from this module?

The purpose of a university-district partnership for the preparation and development of principals is to provide all schools leadership that results in improved student learning. In order to be successful, both parties in the partnership will have to relinquish control over areas which have traditionally been the sole responsibility of one of the parties.

Successful university-district partnerships have the *potential* to leverage the collective capacity of both organizations *if* they are both willing and able to work together to develop — within a formal structure — a shared vision, a shared sense of urgency, mutual accountability, and shared inquiry, and *if* both parties benefit and align their work with their missions.

Who should take this training?

This module is designed to be taught to forming or existing university-district partnerships. Decision makers and other stakeholders from both organizations must be present at the workshops.

Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this module:

There are no formal prerequisites for this SREB module. However, some participants may find it helpful to follow up this training with *Developing Internship Programs for School Leaders*.

What will you have to do to get the most from this module?

Participants must have the right team of people present — those that have the authority and knowledge to develop a partnership between a university and a school district. Participants must commit to attending as a team, completing the prework, attending two initial days, completing homework assignments, attending two separate follow-up days, and completing a Partnership Agreement.

Big Ideas in This Module

- The goal of redesigned programs is to better prepare school leaders to lead schools effectively and improve student achievement.
- Neither universities nor districts can single-handedly provide the breadth of experiences needed to adequately prepare school leaders.
- Partnering provides a way to design and deliver leadership preparation grounded in current calls for leadership qualities, better field experiences and more supportive learning structures.
- Mutual respect, understanding and trust can be built when all partners acknowledge their self-interests in light of the partnership's goals.
- Joint screening by university and school system leaders helps select the future leaders the district needs.
- Partnerships should tap potential leaders with demonstrated knowledge of curriculum and instruction.
- Program redesign should emphasize curriculum, instruction and student achievement.
- Field-based experiences should be a high priority and integrated throughout principal preparation.
- School leaders should participate in continuous learning activities closely aligned to school improvement.
- University and district partners need ongoing discussions on program results.
- Partnerships can succeed when both parties identify and develop enabling conditions that further their work.
- Well-written Partnership Agreements help to avoid barriers and remove them when present.
- Clear measures for evaluation drive improvement.

Module Design. *Developing Collaborative University-District Partnerships to Prepare Learning-Centered Principals* is a four-day workshop (2+1+1). It also includes prework and homework assignments. Each section is described below.

Prework (about three hours). Participants complete a survey of current practices in leadership development and reflect on key skills that school leaders need. They bring information on district needs to the workshop.

Introduction (45 minutes). Participants introduce themselves and focus on the need for and benefits of university-district partnerships.

Who Are We, and What Do We Hope to Accomplish? (four hours, 30 minutes). Participants begin with a review of articles through a jigsaw activity. Next, participants discuss how partnership membership evolves and who should be present to increase chances of success. Then, they look at the characteristics of partnership visions. They draft their vision/goals, determine partnership membership, and identify a facilitator for the partnership as well as a coordinator for each organization within the partnership.

What Skill Sets Do Our Principals Need? (three hours, 25 minutes). Participants learn that the partnership is most effective when the district has a clear idea of its needs. In a partnership activity, district partners present current information on needs and goals. Together, they construct questions that must be answered in order to get a clear, shared understanding of needs. Next, participants look at various characteristics and competencies required in school leaders. Finally, in a partnership activity, they develop a draft list of essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and experiences that school leaders should have to meet the needs of a district.

What are Best Practices in Selecting and Preparing Learning-Centered Principals? (three hours, 50 minutes). Participants form groups based on the readings they were assigned for homework to identify best practices in that area. Then, partnership members share findings and create a chart showing “ideal” practices. They start exploring actual practices in order to identify gaps.

Homework: Follow-up on Workshop One. Participants should attend the second workshop prepared to share their intervening work on decision points covered in workshop one.

Preview/Review: Reflections on Work to Date (two hours, 30 minutes). After a review of the “Big Ideas” from Workshop One, participants form groups based on the areas they worked on between workshops: Membership list and rationale for membership, goals/vision, school leader profile, or list of best practices in principal selection and preparation. After inter-partnership sharing, the leader probes to make sure they have thought deeply about the issues.

Enabling Conditions (two hours, 20 minutes).

Participants work with a tool that helps them understand and evaluate the enabling conditions present in the university and the district. They start by completing a survey independently, then they post their results for the whole partnership to see patterns. Once the results are posted, the trainer leads a discussion about their meaning. Then the partnerships work together again to re-examine the ratings and plan to share evidence.

Developing a Partnership Agreement (one hour, 40 minutes). Participants get guidelines for developing partnership agreements and samples of good ones. They then have time to start working on developing their own partnership agreement.

Homework: Follow-up on Workshop Two. Participants should come to the third workshop prepared to share your work on the decision points covered in Workshop Two.

Preview/Review: Reflections on Work to Date (1 hour, 50 minutes). After a quick review of the “Big Ideas” from Workshops One and Two, participants work in partnerships to summarize their work in several categories. Then, they form mixed groups with members of other partnerships and share ideas around a single topic. Finally, partnerships reconvene and discuss what they learned from other groups.

Anticipating Barriers (1 hour, 15 minutes). This section has two activities. In the first activity, participants work in small groups (not partnerships) to examine some case scenarios and figure out how to avoid or remove barriers. They will see the key role of the Partnership Agreement and Enabling Conditions through this exercise. In the second activity, participants work in their partnerships to make plans for identifying, avoiding, and/or removing barriers.

Caring for the Partnership (2 hours, 40 minutes). Participants complete several exercises that help them reflect on where they’ve been and think of strategies that will enable them to continue to push forward.

Assessing Progress (1 hour). The trainer presents key concepts related to measuring progress, and participants determine what components of program evaluation of most value to district, partnership, and university, and create a plan for collaboratively gathering and analyzing data.