

# School Leadership in an Era of Accountability

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# Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Figure 1: Collaboration of Multiple Stakeholders in Principal Leadership	2
Overview of Challenges Facing the Principalship	3
Overview of Policy Initiatives to Respond to the Challenges in the Field	4
Figure 2: Developmental Stages of School Leadership	5
Working Conditions	6
Challenges	7
Policy Initiatives	8
Shortages	10
Challenges	10
Policy Initiatives	11
Professional Preparation	13
Challenges	13
Policy Initiatives	14
Professional Development	16
Challenges	16
Policy Initiatives	16
Conclusion	18
References	19

Following a general discussion of the challenges facing the principalship, the reader will find on pages 3 and 4 an overview, first of the challenges facing the field, organized into four broad categories: Working Conditions, Shortages, Professional Preparation, and Professional Development, followed by an overview of policy initiatives put forth to address these challenges. Each section directs the reader to page numbers in which a more complete discussion of each of the issues and initiatives is discussed later in the document. Two figures depict the importance of collaboration among the many stakeholders to finding and implementing solutions and the developmental stages of a school leadership career and important activities at each stage. The conclusion sums up the urgency of finding solutions to these various challenges. Finally, the reference section lists 34 documents from which the facts, exemplar programs and policy initiatives were drawn. The reader is directed to these references for further information.

# School Leadership in an Era of Accountability

As our nation seeks significant reforms in education, it increasingly looks to principals to lead the way. We believe good school principals are the cornerstones of good schools and that without leadership from the principal efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed [8]. Major policy initiatives at the national and state level have pointed a spotlight on issues of educational leadership. At the national level, No Child Left Behind legislation has highlighted Teacher and Principal Quality as major elements of reform. The ISLLC Standards have outlined specific knowledge, skills and dispositions of school leaders [2]. In Virginia, The Standards of Accreditation, the Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria, and the Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act have created a framework in which issues of leadership can be addressed.

While we have invested many of our fondest hopes for school reform in the principalship, many fear that the role has expanded beyond what is reasonable in a single job description. As our expectations for principals have grown, there are concerns that the resources to make these growing expectations realistic have not been forthcoming. The result is a job that looks to many to be untenable. As a result, many of those from whose ranks principals have traditionally come are not pursuing the position. Those who hold administrative licenses are not applying for positions, and fewer are pursuing licensure.

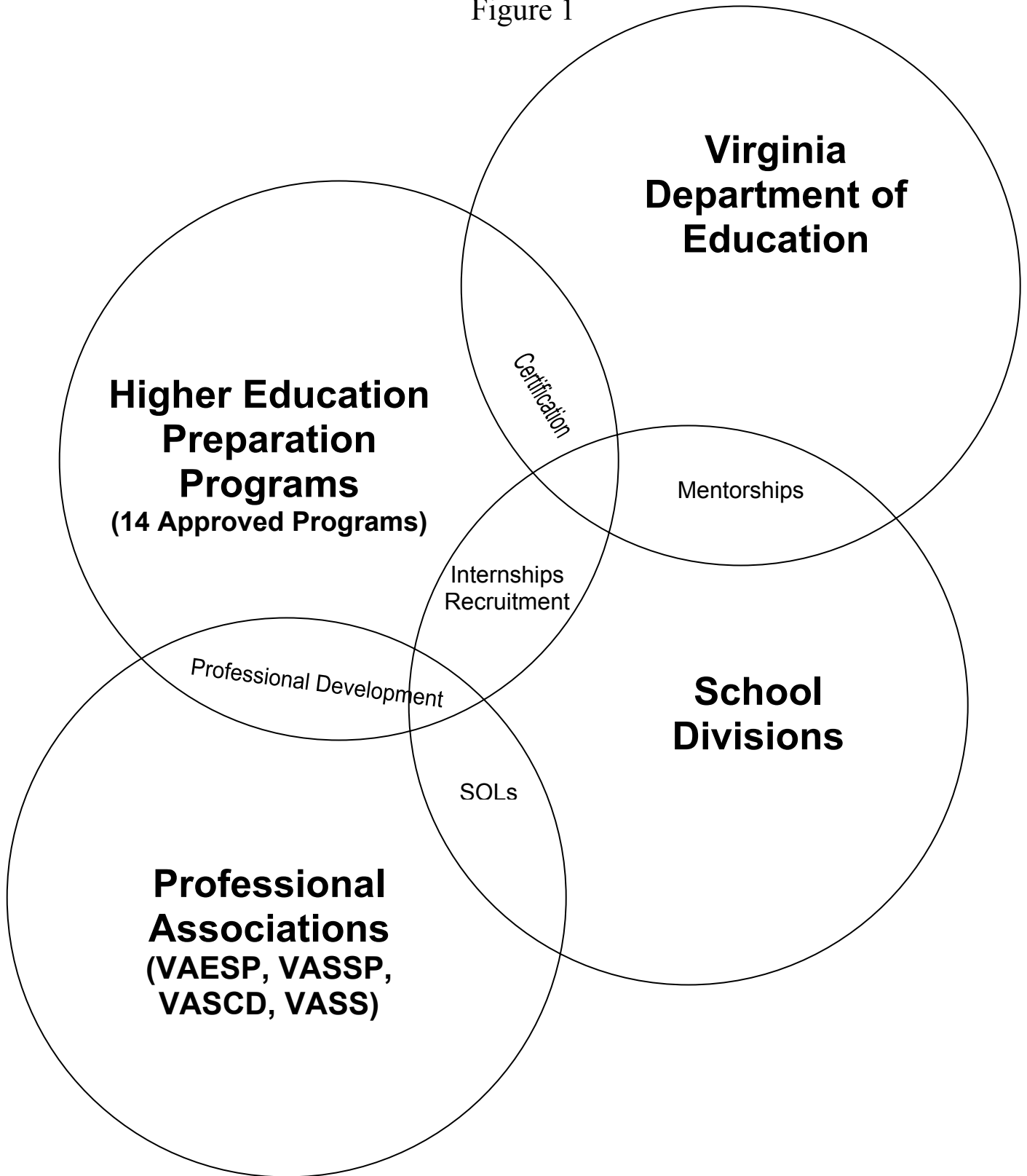
Solutions will not come from any one sector of the educational community, but must be forged by a “commitment among stakeholders to finding common ground and working interdependently toward the realization of mutually agreed upon goals” [34]. The major stakeholders in Virginia have been the Virginia Department of Education, higher education preparation programs, school divisions, and professional organizations (e.g., VAESP, VASSP, VASCD, VASS). Each of these stakeholders intersects with other agencies to provide significant contributions to the development of principal leadership. See Figure 1. Notably missing are businesses that play a key role in leadership institutes in other states such as Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas.

What follows is a synthesis of the extensive research on the existing conditions of educational leadership and carefully considered policy options to address current challenges. Our purpose is to provide a roadmap for policymakers so that they can chart a thoughtful course in the reform of educational leadership for Virginia’s schools. It is critical to note that the challenges and solutions exist along a developmental continuum for the principalship. To improve school leadership in Virginia, both in terms of quality and quantity, will require a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that addresses identified problems throughout the professional career of principals. See Figure 2.

The document is organized around four major areas of concern: working conditions of principals as the results of expanding expectations, followed by a look at the growing shortages that are resulting from the job becoming less attractive. Next, issues arising from the need of adapting preparation programs to these changed expectations and finally the challenge of creating systems of professional development to support principals in keeping up with a rapidly changing environment.

# Collaboration Among Multiple Stakeholders in Principal Leadership Development

Figure 1



# School Leadership in an Era of Accountability

The principalship is facing challenges unlike any before in its history. With greater demands for accountability and increased achievement for *all* students, principals are expected to be instructional leaders on top of their full plate of managerial tasks. Policymakers in Virginia, like those across the country, are examining these challenges with the goal of enhancing both the quantity and quality of educational leadership for Virginia’s schools and students. A discussion of each of the topics presented here follows on the page numbers indicated.

## Challenges

<p><b>Working Conditions</b> (see page 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>C-1</b> Extensive time demands</li> <li><b>C-2</b> Increased expectations for instructional leadership and operational management</li> <li><b>C-3</b> Lack of administrative and clerical support</li> <li><b>C-4</b> Insufficient authority to effect change</li> <li><b>C-5</b> Increased organizational challenges</li> <li><b>C-6</b> Increased stress</li> <li><b>C-7</b> Inadequate compensation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Professional Preparation</b> (see page 13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>C-13</b> Leaders must be knowledgeable in the core technology of schools</li> <li><b>C-14</b> Preparation programs need to link theory to practice</li> <li><b>C-15</b> Novices need to complete enriched internship experiences</li> <li><b>C-16</b> Prospective school leaders need to hone skills in distributed leadership</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shortages</b> (see page 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>C-8</b> Anticipated shortages, especially in urban and rural areas</li> <li><b>C-9</b> Early retirements</li> <li><b>C-10</b> Attrition</li> <li><b>C-11</b> Difficulty attracting high quality candidates</li> <li><b>C-12</b> Lack of diversity among principal candidates</li> </ul>	<p><b>Professional Development</b> (see page 16)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>C-17</b> Fast-paced changes in federal and state programs</li> <li><b>C-18</b> New skills needed to support expanded role expectations</li> <li><b>C-19</b> Lack of systematic coaching and/or mentoring</li> </ul>

## Policy Initiatives

During the last ten years, there has been a growing recognition of the impending administrative shortage that would mirror the teacher shortage. Many professional organizations have stepped forward to both identify the challenges and offer policy initiatives to address the underlying problems. The following recommendations reflect a synthesis of the most promising ideas suggested thus far.

<p><b>Working Conditions</b> (see page 8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>I-1</b> Restructured role (e.g., associate principal of operations, assistant principal of instruction)</li> <li><b>I-2</b> Allocation of more personnel for administrative and clerical duties</li> <li><b>I-3</b> Increased authority and flexibility for site-based decision-making</li> <li><b>I-4</b> Salary benchmarks</li> <li><b>I-5</b> Portable benefits</li> <li><b>I-6</b> Incentives, such as loan forgiveness, increased pay and more sabbatical opportunities, especially in underserved areas</li> <li><b>I-7</b> Recognition programs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Preparation</b> (see page 14)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>I-14</b> Redesigned university-based preparation programs with a focus on teaching and learning, field-based projects, and internships</li> <li><b>I-15</b> Standards-based program evaluation, such as ELLC</li> <li><b>I-16</b> Use of performance-based assessments to ensure that program graduates can demonstrate skills</li> <li><b>I-17</b> Multiple licensure routes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shortages</b> (see page 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>I-8</b> Identification of talent within schools and school divisions</li> <li><b>I-9</b> Sponsorship of talented prospective leaders</li> <li><b>I-10</b> Financial support for training in exchange for service commitments</li> <li><b>I-11</b> Statewide recruitment efforts for minority candidates</li> <li><b>I-12</b> Establishment of a Principal Scholarship Loan Program</li> <li><b>I-13</b> Strategies to retain excellent principals</li> </ul>	<p><b>Professional Development</b> (see page 16)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>I-18</b> Induction year program with mentorship</li> <li><b>I-19</b> Executive coaching</li> <li><b>I-20</b> Leadership academies to improve skills in key areas (e.g., data-driven decision-making, special education law and procedures)</li> <li><b>I-21</b> Collaborative Professional Development Councils</li> <li><b>I-22</b> Improved support network</li> </ul>

# Developmental Stages of School Leadership

Adapted from presentation to the Virginia Commission to Review, Study, and Reform Educational Administration by Joe Murphy

Figure 2

Pre-administrative Job				On the Job					
Preparation				New Administrator		Mid-Career		Late Career	
Developmental Stages									
Recruitment & Selection into Profession	Preparation Program	Licensure	Internship	Recruitment & Selection into Job	Induction	Relicensure	Conditions of Work	Professional Development	Professional Evaluation

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## Working Conditions

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As our expectations for our schools have grown, expectations for the principalship have concurrently been expanded as well. The role now includes significant responsibilities for the instructional leadership of schools, insuring that all children achieve to meet high standards, and that the needs of children with disabilities are met. The managerial tasks of principals have also been expanding, as regulations, reporting requirements, and email access to the principal have increased. Principals are charged with maintaining safe school environments and must anticipate and be prepared for all manner of threats to children's safety. Finally, principals are expected to be agents of change as schools respond to increased technology and higher standards imposed by external constituents. Added to these challenges are issues such as increasing teacher turnover, greater expectations for community involvement and engagement, and myriad social problems that impact student learning.

The primary mission of schools is instruction. In fostering this mission, principals must build learning communities within their schools and engage the broader school community in creating and achieving a compelling vision for their schools. As instructional leaders, principals provide guidance and actively support curriculum development. They must be able to teach, coach, and develop teachers in their schools toward improved performance [26]. Instructional leaders must be steeped in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to supervise a continuous improvement process that measures progress in raising student performance. Principals need to be aware of the latest research on teaching and learning to make good judgments about teaching strategies. They also must be aware of the special needs of all youngsters, both

those who struggle and those who excel, in order to effectively monitor instruction and provide necessary resources. More complex special education requirements due to the adoption of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] and Chapter 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] have compounded the need for technical knowledge for building-level leaders.

Principals must also perform the vital tasks of organizing, budgeting, managing, and dealing with disruptions inside and outside the school. They must make sure that the buses run on time, that children are fed safe, nutritious and attractive food, and that the facilities are maintained in good repair. Principals report increased paperwork demands as a result of statutory responsibilities and increased regulatory oversight. Maintaining safe environments and dealing with student behavior problems are also more time consuming than they once were. Dealing with disruptions caused by more involved and activist parents, advocating on behalf of their children, also are part of principals' responsibilities.

As principals attempt to reconcile diverse responsibilities within a context of increasingly critical constituencies, it is difficult to achieve the proper balance between instructional leadership and management responsibilities [17]. Because management tasks are more explicit and procedural compliance is typically a high priority for district-level administrators, instructional leadership may be neglected. Principals frequently report that they lack time to be effective instructional leaders. Although it is widely acknowledged that the top priority of the principalship must be leadership for learning, "the principalship as it is currently constructed – a middle management position overloaded with responsibilities for basic building operations – often fails to meet this fundamental priority." [17, p. 3].

There are calls across the profession for a realistic restructuring of the principal's role to

alleviate the vice in which many principals now find themselves. Most proposals call for the creation of roles to relieve principals of many of the management functions so that they can focus on instructional leadership. These *associate principals of operations* or *service coordinators* [5] assume many of the managerial tasks from the principal. The principal continues to be the chief administrator and responsible for the building's orderly operation, yet is relieved of the day-to-day management responsibilities that currently rob principals of the time required for instructional leadership. The common message in all the suggested modifications is that one person cannot possibly meet all the expectations of the building principal.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **C-1 Extensive time demands**

- ☑ Fast Fact: 84% of Virginia principals reported working more than 50 hours per week. This is up significantly since 1988 when 68% reported working more than 50 hours. Almost 30% of Virginia principals reported working more than 60 hours [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Only 3% of high school principals in Virginia reported working less than 50 hours per week. Almost half of high school principals report working more than 60 hours per week [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Nationally, the typical high school principal works 62 hours per week (excluding student activities, events, etc.) [23].

### **C-2 Increased expectations for instructional leadership and operational management**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Over half of Virginia principals said they were spending much more time on paperwork and on email than they were just five years ago [3].

- ☑ Fast Fact: 30% of Virginia principals reported that they were spending more time on special education meetings than in the past [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: A quarter of Virginia principals report spending much more time on student discipline and instructional leadership than in the past [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Nationally, high school principals report spending more than 20 hours per week dealing with parent issues, discipline, and community relations [23].
- ☑ Fast Fact: A majority of elementary principals at the national level reported spending increased time in curriculum development, instructional practices, working with social service agencies, and site-based staff development [4].

### **C-3 Lack of administrative and clerical support**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Two-thirds of Virginia principals reported they had neither sufficient time nor personnel (i.e., assistant principals) to fulfill the mandated expectations as an instructional leader [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Almost half of Virginia principals said their school district did not provide adequate administrative support (i.e., administrative assistants and secretaries) for them to fulfill the management dimensions of their job [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: At the national level, 83% of principals agreed that their district had experienced an enormous increase in responsibilities and mandates without getting the resources necessary to fulfill them [27].
- ☑ Fast Fact: High school principals nationally report that they need more staff to help with curriculum development (77%), professional development (71%), program evaluation (69%), and student assessment (67%) [27].

### **C-4 Insufficient authority to effect change**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Only 55% of the Virginia principals surveyed perceived that they had the needed level of authority to make decisions in their areas of responsibility. Over a third said their level of authority was only moderate [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Nationally, over two-thirds of principals say they need more autonomy in removing ineffective teachers from the classroom and rewarding outstanding teachers and staff [27].

### **C-5 Increased organizational challenges**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Virginia principals identified as highly significant or significant problems in organizational management, including:
  - \* Special education law and implementation (90%),
  - \* Legal issues (88%),
  - \* Working with families (88%), and
  - \* Non-academic student behavior (discipline, drugs, etc.) (85%) [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 86% of principals in a national sample reported that keeping up with the local, state and federal mandates for schools takes up too much administrative time [27].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Principals in a national sample said that colleagues who leave the profession are frustrated by politics and the bureaucracy (47%) and unreasonable demands brought about by higher standards and accountability (34%) [27].

### **C-6 Increased stress**

- ☑ Fast Fact: 82% of Virginia principals rated managing stress as a major area of concern and a professional development need [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 71% of principals on a national level reported that managing public

criticism and political heat has become a routine part of being a school administrator [27].

### **C-7 Inadequate compensation**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Nearly half of Virginia principals reported that their salary increases had lagged behind that of teachers in the past five years [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: In some cases, Virginia principals make less per diem than a highly experienced teacher [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Nationally, the average daily pay rates of experienced teachers were \$226 compared to \$235 for relatively new elementary assistant principals, \$249 for middle school principals and \$255 for high school principals [10].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 60% of school administrators stated that insufficient compensation compared to responsibilities discouraged qualified applicants from applying for principal positions [7].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 97% of principals in a national study stated that improving the pay and prestige of administrators would be an effective means of improving school leadership [27].

## **POLICY INITIATIVES**

### **I-1 Restructured role**

Many stakeholders that have studied the issue of principal overload have proposed the restructuring of the principalship. There is a growing recognition that the role as it is currently defined is simply unmanageable. One person cannot fulfill all of the responsibilities now placed on principals' shoulders, so they end up working long hours and still leaving some important duties undone. Most proposals center on the creation of new roles to assist the principal with the management functions of the job in order to allow the principal to function as the "C.E.O. of Instruction" with a focus on

fostering student learning. These associate principals or service coordinators function as part of the principal team. For these new configurations to be productive, preparation programs need to place greater emphasis on the concept of and skills for distributed leadership.

Newport News Schools have instituted new leadership roles, with Assistant Principal for Operations and Assistant Principal for Instruction positions in many of their schools.

### **I-2 Allocation of more personnel for administrative and clerical duties**

In addition to new leadership positions to support the management functions of the school, principals need more support staff to assist them with paperwork and reporting requirements.

### **I-3 Increased authority and flexibility for site-based decision-making**

Greater authority over hiring and firing decisions would give principals the ability to shape a staff aligned with the school mission. The frustration and stress principals experience at the building level increases when they do not have the support from their superintendent and school board to make necessary personnel and financial decisions.

### **I-4 Salary benchmarks**

Salary benchmarks, based on education and level of experience, established at the state level would encourage more competitive salaries for principals.

### **I-5 Portable benefits**

Principals are lost to the field when their benefits, such as retirement and continuing contract status, prevent them from being mobile and relocating to areas of student enrollment growth.

### **I-6 Incentives, especially in underserved areas**

One strategy school divisions, especially those in underserved areas, can use to attract and retain quality school leadership is to offer incentives such as loan forgiveness, increased pay, and signing bonuses.

Another strategy for keeping hard-working principals on the job is to offer more frequent sabbatical opportunities, especially for those serving in particularly stressful environments.

### **I-7 Recognition programs**

Another strategy some states have used is to create programs to honor principals who have made substantial progress in raising student achievement in their schools.

The Governor of Ohio recognizes schools that have made significant gains on the Ohio Proficiency Tests with a commendation and an award of \$25,000 in unrestricted funds.

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## Shortages

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Growing shortages in the principalship are beginning to be reported around the country. The “graying” of school administrators coupled with increased job complexity, rising standards, and greater demands for accountability have led to increased numbers of administrative vacancies nationwide. Although the number of individuals holding administrative licenses or endorsements exceeds the number of position vacancies each year, recruitment and retention of qualified and certified administrators has become one of the greatest challenges confronting school systems across the nation [7, 12, 17, 19].

*The workday of school administrators approaches the inhumane, precluding an outside life, and has become by its overwhelming capacity to consume its incumbents, an unattractive career, even for many who are drawn to it by disposition. [11, p. 76].*

Fewer teacher leaders are choosing career paths that will result in administrative positions [8, 19, 29, 30]. There are signs that the situation will only grow worse as the job looks less and less attractive.

### **CHALLENGES**

#### **C-8 Anticipated shortages, especially in rural and urban areas**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Virginia principals have indicated that an average of 8% a year plan to retire in the years from 2004 to 2006, reflecting the retirement of those who entered the field in the early 1970s [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: In 1999-2000, 405 new administrators were hired in Virginia, which represented an annual growth rate of 8% in the number of newly hired administrators [32].

- ☑ Fast Fact: In a national study, nearly half of all urban, suburban, and rural school districts reported shortages of interested candidates for principal positions [8, 17, 19]. In another study, shortages were reported by 61% of urban superintendents [27].
- ☑ Fast Fact: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of education administrators is expected to grow at 10-20% through 2005 [7].

#### **C-9 Retirements**

- ☑ Fast Fact: 56% of current Virginia principals plan to retire before 2010 [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: In 1999-2000, 35% of all administrators in Virginia had 25 or more years of experience [32].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Over 60% of the Virginia administrators, who left their position between 1997 and 2000, were retiring [32].
- ☑ Fast Fact: In 1998, 51.5% of elementary principals across the country were 50 years or older compared to only 38.1% in 1988. Most of these principals (62%) planned to retire as soon as they became eligible within their state program [4].

#### **C-10 Attrition**

- ☑ Fast Fact: While 65% of elementary APs in Virginia indicated they would seek a position as principal of an elementary school, only 34% of high school APs planned to seek a high school principalship [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Only 58% of current elementary principals nationwide plan to remain in their current position until retirement [4]
- ☑ Fast Fact: In the spring of 2001, principals across the southern Virginia border received letters of solicitation from North Carolina offering perks and touting the advantages of their state's retirement system over that offered in Virginia [3].

### **C-11 Difficulty attracting high quality candidates**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Asked to identify barriers that inhibit people from pursuing the principalship, nearly all of the Virginia principals identified the stress of the job and long hours as the primary barriers. About two-thirds of the respondents identified low pay and broadened accountability as significant barriers. More than half of the principals cited increasing disrespect by students [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Half the Virginia principals surveyed speculated that the job was unattractive to individuals they knew who held principal licenses but did not hold administrative positions, due to long hours or stress of the job [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Nearly half the principals asked about endorsed individuals they knew who were not employed in administrative positions speculated that it was because the person was not well suited for the position, either due to an inappropriate temperament or because the person exhibited poor judgment and common sense [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Just 52% of superintendents nationally are “happy” with the work of their current principals and 29% say that the quality of new principals has declined [27].
- ☑ Fast Fact: In a national study, principals agreed that the time and responsibilities demanded by the principalship discourage many talented people from pursuing it as a career [27].

### **C-12 Lack of diversity among principal candidates**

- ☑ Fast Fact: In a 2001 study, half of the principals in the state of Virginia were women, up from just 17% in 1988. Only 16% were African American, down from 20% in 1988 [3].

- ☑ Fast Fact: In 1999-2000, of the 405 newly-hired Virginia administrators, 35% were Caucasian women, 21% were African American women, 33% were Caucasian men, and 11% were African American men [32].

- ☑ Fast Fact: Nationally, 61% of elementary principals are male and 39% are female, 83% are White and 17% are Black or another minority [4].

- ☑ Fast Fact: Nationally, 67% of urban districts reported that increasing the number of minorities in management positions had been an issue. It was less of an issue in suburban (44%) and rural (29%) districts [7].

## **POLICY INITIATIVES**

### **I-8 Identification of talent within schools and school divisions**

Universities and local school divisions working in isolation cannot resolve the problem of principal shortages. Both need to work in partnership to identify, encourage and support talented teacher leaders as they pursue administration [1, 24].

The use of assessment centers to assess the disposition and temperament of prospective leaders before resources are invested in training a person who is not likely to have the capability to serve has been recommended [1, 24].

The Douglas School District in Oregon has developed a multi-faceted program in collaboration with Portland State University to recruit and “groom” potential leaders from among current district staff members.

### **I-9 Sponsorship of talented prospective leaders**

Both the cost and personal time commitment required to complete a graduate level program in administration and supervision is substantial. Many school divisions provide only minimal support for the required coursework and

internship. Greater support in terms of funding and guidance would encourage promising administrative candidates to pursue administration.

William and Mary asks local school divisions to nominate promising prospective administrators. The student receives a \$1,000 scholarship and the school division commits to offering the student an enriched internship experience.

### **I-10 Financial support for training in exchange for service commitments**

Given the current approach of self-selection for the principalship and self-support through the preparation process, candidates are often prefer to work in locations based on personal relationships or financial rewards. To attract high quality candidates to more challenging schools will require active recruitment and financial incentives.

North Carolina offers prospective school leaders 2 years of full-time university preparation with a stipend in exchange for a commitment to serve for four years in an underserved area. A similar program has been undertaken by New York City in collaboration with the Bank Street College of Education.

### **I-11 Statewide recruitment efforts for a broad cross-section of educators**

The demographics of school leadership do not reflect the schools they serve. With the sharply increasing minority enrollments, it is important to actively encourage minority candidates to pursue school leadership positions. It is equally important to consider promising women leaders. While 42% of principals are women, they are concentrated in the elementary and middle schools but they offer a rich source of experience and leadership for high schools.

### **I-12 Establishment of a Principal Scholarship Loan Program**

Another possibility for attracting more teachers into administration would be the availability of low interest loans or grants to help offset the \$5,000-\$7,000 cost of completing an administrative preparation program.

### **I-13 Strategies to retain excellent principals**

If school improvement is a high priority, then incentive systems must reflect this instead of seniority [26].

The Douglas County School District in Colorado has devised a performance pay program for principals that takes into account multiple ways in which principals can demonstrate excellence, including the improvement of student performance.

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## **Professional Preparation**

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The primary mission of schools is instruction and principals must be expert in the knowledge, skills and dispositions to foster student learning [2]. The expectations for knowledge of curriculum and instruction may be difficult for principals to meet for those trained before instructional leadership was such a major component of the role. It is even more difficult to meet for those people coming to the principalship from outside the field of education.

Principal preparation programs have been under intense scrutiny and pressure for reform in the last decade. Many of the reforms seek to bring preparation programs in line with professional standards such as the ISLLC Standards [2]. Reforms also seek to make the training of school leaders more relevant to the challenges they will face on the job. These include increased use of problem-based learning, and pressure to make the internship a more authentic and intensive learning experience. Program reforms also seek to prepare school leaders better equipped to deal with an increasingly diverse population, to have a deeper appreciation for and inclination to collaborate with external agencies, and to make better use of technology [13, 15].

Alternate principal licensure programs for professionals outside the field of education are being considered by a number of states as a way to address the shortage of administrators. Yet, these must be structured carefully if we want quality assurance in instruction. A recent study of alternate certification for teachers concluded that student achievement suffered when an alternately certified teacher led the class [20].

Training and experience as a teacher is valuable preparation for the instructional leadership components of a principal's responsibilities. In a national study, nearly 90% of current principals ranked experience

as a teacher as "highly valuable" to their success as principal [4]. Leaders coming to the principalship from other fields need to be well-schooled in curriculum and instruction if they are to be well equipped to foster student learning in their schools. Their preparation needs to include an intensive in-school internship focused on instruction.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **C-13 Leaders must be knowledgeable in the core technology of schools, that of teaching and learning**

- ☑ Fast Fact: High school principals rank personnel matters, curricular leadership, and the establishment of a learning climate as the highest priority tasks of their role and yet most spend less than 5 hours per week in each area [27].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 95% of Virginia principals had been classroom teachers prior to assuming the principalship. Three-quarters had been assistant principals. Two thirds identified their experience as a teacher or as an assistant principal as their most valuable preparation experience [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: On average at the national level, elementary principals have 10 years of teaching experience before they enter administration [5] and high school principals have 12 years [23].

### **C-14 Preparation programs need to link theory to practice**

- ☑ Fast Fact: 69% of principals in a national study stated that typical leadership programs in graduate schools are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's school district [27].
- ☑ Fast Fact: When asked in a national survey for solutions to improve school leadership, 85% of principals suggested overhauling leadership training and education in graduate school programs [27].

- ☑ Fast Fact: 44% of elementary principals nationwide stated that graduate education was of much value to them and 49% said it was of some value [5].

### **C-15 Novices need to complete enriched internship experiences**

Approved programs in Virginia are required to include an internship experience. The Virginia Professors of Educational Leadership is working in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education to create clear standards for what an internship should entail.

- ☑ Fast Fact: 66% of elementary principals nationwide participated in an internship program. 38% stated that it was of much value and 39% said it was of some value [5].

### **C-16 Prospective school leaders need to hone skills in distributed leadership**

- ☑ Fast Fact: When asked about the qualities of a good leader, 76% of superintendents and 71% of principals in a national sample responded that it was absolutely essential to delegate responsibility and authority to staff; 40% of superintendents and 69% of principals said that it was essential to involve teachers in developing policies and priorities [27].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 44% of elementary principals nationwide reported sharing responsibility for instructional improvement with others in their schools [5].

## **POLICY INITIATIVES**

### **I-14 Redesigned university-based preparation programs**

The central focus of administrator preparation must be teaching and learning. At the conclusion of their training, students need to demonstrate:

- Comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement [1]
- The ability to work with teachers and others to fashion and implement continuous student improvement [1]
- The ability to provide necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices [1]

To respond to concerns about relevancy and changing expectation in the role, redesigned programs should include the following features [1, 17, 24]:

- Collaboration between school districts and universities (partnerships) to connect theory and practice
- Expanded curriculum with a greater emphasis on data analysis, school improvement, change process, instruction, curriculum, and student assessment
- Coursework delivery that emphasizes field-based projects
- Required mentored internships that are from six months to a year long
- Experiential leadership opportunities throughout the preparation process

Virginia has made some significant strides in revamping preparation programs. They adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and required the restructuring of university preparation programs to reflect them. Programs are now more closely aligned with a nationally recognized set of standards for professional practice in school leadership that are grounded in a deep knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning.

The University of Virginia partners with school divisions to prepare cohorts of prospective principals at a location and on a schedule convenient to the group.

## **I-15 Standards-based program evaluation**

A useful model of assessment based on the ISLLC standards has been introduced and implemented recently by NCATE/ ELLC [13, 17, 26] as an integral part of the accreditation process. Programs must provide evidence that their students can demonstrate the skills needed to meet the ISLLC standards through performance-based assessments. Eleven of the approved preparation programs in Virginia are accredited using this process.

Prospective principals at William and Mary prepare a portfolio to document their knowledge, skills and dispositions in each of the administrative competencies in the Virginia Uniform Performance Standards, which reflect the ISLLC standards, as a requirement for certification.

## **I-16 Use of performance-based assessments to ensure that program graduates can demonstrate skills**

Just as the seat time measure of student learning is no longer viable, neither is the completion of credits an adequate measure of administrative ability. Many groups are calling for performance-based assessments such as portfolios and field-based projects that demonstrate the ability to orchestrate change and improve student learning.

Georgia and South Carolina require all potential leaders to complete assessments through the Center for Creative Leadership to determine their viability as future administrators.

## **I-17 Multiple licensure routes**

Consideration should be given to the creation of a two-tiered certification system to facilitate career switchers with no experience or expertise in education to move into the ranks of school leadership [1]. But because these people do not possess the full-range of

administrative competencies, their role should be limited until these competencies can be met.

People with management experience could take a “fast track” abbreviated preparation program focusing on just two of the standards in the Virginia Uniform Performance Standards: Organizational Management and Safety, and Professionalism. Coursework would focus on resource management (e.g., facilities, transportation, and food services), school law, and professional standards and ethics. These courses might be offered through alternative delivery systems such as on-line courses, alternative leadership institutes or abbreviated full-time intensives [1, 26]. Upon demonstrated performance of requisite knowledge to meet these two standards, these individuals would be licensed to function as Associate Principals of Operations or Service Coordinators.

Individuals who wished to pursue full licensure would complete their training while employed in a school with coursework directed toward developing competency in the remaining three standards: Planning and Assessment; Instructional Leadership; and Communication and Community Relations. School divisions might facilitate this training through financial incentives, release time, or by partnering with an approved preparation program to provide these courses within the division.

Whatever the route to licensure, it is important that principal candidates demonstrate the full range of administrative competencies outlined in the Virginia Uniform Performance Standards. Performance-based certification decisions could be based on portfolios [2] or demonstrated performance under the supervision of a recognized mentor [1]. Ongoing leadership certification could be linked to demonstrated school improvement [2].

Texas and New Jersey now allow alternative leadership certification. The requirements focus on meeting standards and involve intensive internship experiences.

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## **Professional Development**

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### **CHALLENGES**

#### **C-17 Fast-paced changes in federal and state programs**

- ☑ Fast Fact: 88% of superintendents and 86% of principals nationwide agree that keeping up with all the local, state and federal mandates takes up too much time [27].

#### **C-18 New skills needed to support expanded role expectations**

- ☑ Fast Fact: Over 90% of Virginia principals identified the following instructional leadership challenges as areas where they were in need of professional development:
  - \* Increased student achievement on standardized tests (e.g., SOLs) (92.5%),
  - \* Effective use of instructional time (92%),
  - \* Analyzing classroom practices (91%),
  - \* Faculty and staff development (91%),
  - \* Curriculum alignment with standards (90%), and
  - \* Improving staff morale (90%). [3]
- ☑ Fast Fact: More than 70% of Virginia principals indicated a high or average need for professional development in:
  - \* Using research for educational improvement,
  - \* Data driven decisions,
  - \* Assessing students using multiple criteria,
  - \* Faculty staff development [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 95% of principals in a national study recommended improving the quality of professional development opportunities for administrators as one way to improve school leadership [27].

#### **C-19 Lack of systematic coaching and/or mentoring**

- ☑ Fast Fact: 85% of Virginia principals identified inadequate time to network and collaborate with peers as a major problem [3].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 66% of elementary principals nationwide reported that networking with peers was of much value to their success as principals [5].
- ☑ Fast Fact: 57% of elementary principals nationwide reported participating in a principal mentorship program. 33% reported they were of much value and 42% said they were of some value to their success as principals [5].
- ☑ Fast Fact: Approximately half of the school districts report the use of formal induction/mentoring programs for new principals: 54% of urban, 48% of suburban and 45% of rural districts [7]. Half of urban school districts report the use of aspiring principals programs while 37% of suburban and 22% of rural districts employ them [7].

### **POLICY INITIATIVES**

#### **I-18 Induction year with mentorship**

New principals, like new teachers, are faced with many challenges, including isolation, lack of understanding about the technical and cultural aspects of the job, and a paucity of feedback on performance. Mentors help to bridge the transition from teaching to administration. One promising initiative would be to establish mentor principal/clinical faculty programs for new principals to mirror the work that was done for new teachers in Virginia.

The Ohio Principal Leadership Program is a two-year, portfolio-driven program based on the ISLLC standards. Participants work to develop skills and knowledge of instructional leadership and school improvement. Novice principals are paired with experienced mentors for the first two years [27].

## **I-19 Executive coaching**

One-on-one telephone coaching is becoming a popular model for professional development in the business community. The National Staff Development Council has explored some innovative strategies for capitalizing on this strategy in education.

Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement is sponsored by a multi-agency partnership that provides leadership development for individual education leaders, including assessment, training, and coaching.

## **I-20 Leadership Academies**

Leadership Academies are a strategy to improve skills in key areas through intensive professional development experiences. Twenty-five states have established some sort of statewide leadership academy. These academies typically address skill and knowledge development in data-driven decision-making, using research for school improvement, special education law and procedures, and fostering productive school climates.

North Carolina's Principal Executive Program (PEP) is highly regarded as an effective model for on-the-job professional development for principals with both residential and topical programs focusing on what it takes to lead schools to success.

Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama has developed a professional development program for principals that includes the completion of an improvement project in their home schools that is shared in later training sessions.

The Texas Principals' Leadership Initiative provides assessment opportunities and meaningful professional development for principals. Based on the objective diagnosis of their skills in relation to the state's new standards for the principalship, principals develop a professional growth plan.

## **I-21 Collaborative professional development councils**

The Council of Chief State School Officers has developed a process for collaborative professional development for principals in which principals meet regularly with a group of peers to coach and support one another in individualized professional development plans. These plans are created with the use of a self-assessment based on the ISLLC standards.

The principals in Chula Vista Elementary School District developed and implemented the Peer Group Evaluation Process as a way of ensuring that evaluation serves its core purpose of promoting professional growth and school improvement.

## **I-22 Improved support network**

Professional organizations and school divisions can be encouraged to find means to offer interpersonal support to help principals cope with the time demands and stresses of the job. Most principals establish informal networks of trusted colleagues who can be consulted in times of crisis but these important collegial exchanges need to be recognized and sanctioned as critical safety valves for a highly pressurized job.

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## Conclusion

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The importance of the principal's role has never been greater. Principals have been identified as the "lynchpins of school improvement." The *Virginia Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards* define the role of principal as the person who "must focus the collective efforts of all school personnel on the primary goal of improving student learning" [31, p. 5]. And yet, the data reveal a profession under mounting stress.

The role of the principal has been expanded to include significant responsibilities for the instructional leadership of schools, ensuring that all children meet high achievement standards, and that the needs of children with special learning challenges are met. At the same time principals are spending more time coping with social problems and student behavior problems that detract from a focus on instructional matters. The managerial tasks of principals have also been expanding. Principals report burgeoning paperwork loads. While email has enabled greater communication with parents, teachers, and the community, it has added a significant new time demands on principals.

Principals need assistance if they are to meet the expanded, and often conflicting, demands of their role. They need help with both the instructional and managerial aspects of their job. Principals in numerous studies have indicated that they need more resources, such as assistant principals and support staff, in order to meet the growing requirement of their role. Principals simply cannot personally perform all the tasks currently required of them. Building leaders need to be empowered to reconfigure their leadership teams in ways that best fit their unique set of circumstances and existing expertise. They need the leeway to delegate some tasks while maintaining

responsibility for and overseeing the total school program. By providing strategies and resources, principals could better embrace a model of distributive leadership that would help lessen their individual burden and create a more empowered leadership team [10].

Policymakers can make a significant difference. The leadership challenges are those of both quantity and quality and will not be addressed with a single strategy. The best hope for improving school leadership in Virginia will be for all stakeholders, universities, school divisions, professional organizations and the Virginia Department of Education, to work collaboratively in their efforts to enhance working conditions, problems of shortage, improved preparation, and professional development. The current approach has been well-intentioned but ad hoc in addressing the multiple prongs of the leadership challenge. Efforts need to be made in a coordinated and systematic manner to address every developmental stage of the principalship. Recruitment alone will not address the challenges Virginia faces if there is a lack of meaningful professional development for mid-career principals, just as improved preparation will not solve the problems if the role is not restructured to be more attractive.

Policymakers can begin to address the challenges by making a commitment to increase the resources devoted to all phases of school leadership and define the principal's role more narrowly. It is an investment in the kind of leadership needed to take Virginia's schools to the new high levels of achievement the public demands. Only then will the principalship look attractive to those with the leadership capabilities to move up from the teaching ranks and once again be able to tap the instructional expertise of such talented educators. And only then will the principal's role benefit from the wisdom of potential leaders too wise to believe they can single-handedly do it all.

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