SUBJECT: Redesign of Education Leadership Programs

In the spring of 2012, the South Dakota Board of Regents, with encouragement and support from the Bush Foundation, initiated a review of the system’s principal preparation programs. This project was initiated because the Foundation recognized its commitment to strengthening teacher preparation programs would have impact only if South Dakota and the other participating states aligned programs preparing building leaders. In fact, studies support the finding that highly qualified building leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn. Unfortunately, reviews of principal preparation programs nationwide point to common failures, most of which arise because existing programs too often focus exclusively on theory. As a result, graduates rarely have an appreciation for the day-to-day realities of building leadership and, more importantly, of instructional leadership.

This process is being led by an advisory committee, often referred to as the EDAD (Education Administration) Workgroup. The Workgroup was comprised of SD BOR officials, SD DOE representatives, university program leaders and faculty, K-12 practitioners, and external consultants from FHI 360. Jim Parry and Rick Melmer provided leadership and facilitation for the Workgroup activities. The membership of the group includes:

EDAD Workgroup Members
Sam Gingerich        SD BOR
Jill Thorngren, Ken Rasmussen, and Andy Stremmel  SDSU
Hee-sook Choi and Mark Baron    USD
Connie Geier and Craig Kono     NSU
Patricia Simpson         BHSU
Gale Wiedow              DSU
Kym Johnston and Dana Berg   Elementary Principals
Brad Seamer, Melinda Jensen, and Tim Koehler  Secondary Principals
Roger DeGroot        Superintendent
Joe Dominic and Laura Dukess  FHI 360 Consultants
Mary Turman             SDBOR

Accept the recommendations of the working group including the expectation that a proposal for a redesigned program addressing the recommendations outlined will be forwarded for consideration by December 2014.
A bit of historical and contextual information is important. South Dakota’s teacher preparation programs are already in the process of implementing recommendations approved by the Board of Regents which include the incorporation of a year-long residency. Improving teacher preparation is in line with research indicating that the teacher is the most important variable in increasing student achievement. That same body of research identifies the school principal as a secondary but critical variable contributing to increased student achievement. As a result, it is imperative that South Dakota build the capacity of future principals as a support, facilitator, and partner with teachers in accomplishing effective system change resulting in improved student learning.

Also, it is important to note that given our rural demographics, South Dakota faces some unique challenges in developing and retaining effective principals. Principals in rural settings often face the demands of multiple roles. With relatively sparse population, principals often are isolated. And while the rural lifestyle appeals to some principals, more are attracted to communities with additional amenities for themselves and their families. As a result, it is imperative that principal preparation address rural demographics in a creative and responsive manner which equips and supports principals for the realities of rural settings. In part, this reality will be addressed by designing a “blended” preparation program which engages principal candidates in a combination of online and face-to-face experiences.

The EDAD Workgroup based its work on the research and recommendations of the Rainwater Research Alliance which produced the document titled: *A New Approach to Principal Preparation: Innovative Programs Share Their Practices and Lessons Learned*. In particular, this document provided a framework for the Workgroup discussions about considerations for a new program. The research-based components of a program include:

- Program Purpose and Outcomes
- Competency Framework
- Recruitment and Selection
- Coursework
- Clinical Experiences
- Program Completion
- Continuous Improvement

The Workgroup focused its discussion on the design of a shared program that would be implemented collaboratively by the universities as an alternative to their current preparation programs. This program would have a common core of coursework, delivered by any of the partners, and would add a smaller set of courses reflecting the distinctive strengths of the separate institutions. A priority for the new program is the integration of coursework and the internship so principal candidates gain and apply research-based knowledge and skills in a field setting. Implementation of the new program is viewed as a partnership with K-12 so respected practitioners will be involved with co-teaching and mentoring principal candidates. Based on the evidence of the effectiveness of a cohort approach, the program would engage principal candidates in a cohort of 15-25 participants. In order to offer a visual impression of a potential new program, an attachment titled *Potential Scenario for New Program Implementation* is attached. It reflects a scenario that aligns with the output of the EDAD Workgroup discussions.
Further, the working group may propose that the redesigned program be offered by all participating institutions at a common rate since it will be designed as a cooperative program. In addition, the group plans to assess costs and may propose a lower price point.

Finally, a set of Recommendations produced by the efforts of the EDAD Workgroup is included as an attachment. The final page of the Summary of Workgroup Recommendations for a New Principal Preparation Program identifies the next steps in the development process. In addition to those that speak to the characteristics of the proposed program and recruitment and admission of candidates, the group will also be considering fiscal issues. As a note, since this is developing as a program based on a common core of courses that be delivered state-wide, a common tuition rate may be recommended. Further, this recommendation will be based on the costs for offering a school-based program. In sum, the following are the key issues identified by the group that will need to be addressed in the program proposal:

- Develop a fiscal model which reflects the economic feasibility of implementing and sustaining the new preparation program.
- Consider and identify initial resource needs associated with the launch of a new preparation program.
- Identify and address policy implications associated with the initiation of the new preparation program.
- Develop an action plan which operationalizes the recommendations for this new preparation program with a timeline for program approval by December 31, 2014.
Potential Scenario for New Program Implementation

- Candidates participate in a two year cycle of one-week summer institutes and four semesters.
- The coursework, internship, and a special project are integrated into a seven credit experience for each semester.
- The program is a blended learning experience with online as well as face-to-face components.
- A new cohort (15-25 candidates) is initiated each summer.
## Summary of Workgroup Recommendations for a New Principal Preparation Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Component</th>
<th>Research-Based Best Practice</th>
<th>Workgroup Recommendations</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Programs are designed for the express purpose of producing and placing school principals who improve student learning.</td>
<td>Build upon and clarify the proposed program purpose which states: <em>Prepares visionary, transformative school principals who focus on the development of learners and teachers and who lead collaborative learning communities for progressive rural America.</em> Evolve and consider the value of a program motto or slogan such as: <em>Leading rural learning communities with vision, commitment, and caring.</em></td>
<td>The Workgroup perceives the need to focus and brand South Dakota’s new program in a manner which garners attention and responds to an important need in K-12 schools across our state. Whether in a big town or small community in South Dakota, the state’s demographics are primarily rural and benefit from principals equipped to lead a learning community characterized as rural America. Learnings from innovative programs suggest that a short slogan to characterize the program is an effective mechanism for establishing identity and attracting candidates. For example, one innovative program espouses: <em>“Leading with head, hand, and heart.”</em></td>
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<td><strong>Competency Framework</strong></td>
<td>Competencies are clearly defined and all elements of the program are aligned to and designed to ensure that graduates leave with the requisite competencies.</td>
<td>Build upon the initial competency framework stemming from the new standards for South Dakota principals and evolve and strengthen the framework to align with competencies put forth by highly-regarded national entities as well as strong examples of competency frameworks from innovative programs. Give special consideration to competencies which address the unique expectations and challenges faced by principals in rural settings.</td>
<td>The proposed competencies clearly articulate the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions which the EDAD Workgroup associates with an effective principal. Also, the proposed competencies reflect the input and ownership of key groups of South Dakota education stakeholders. It is important to note that innovative programs identify the competency framework as a foundational building block and driver for many subsequent decisions about program development. Equally important, innovative programs continue to revisit and evolve the competencies so over time these programs reflect new realities and learnings as the programs are implemented.</td>
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<td><strong>Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>Strategic and proactive recruitment of high-potential candidates who demonstrate the leadership skills, beliefs, and dispositions needed</td>
<td>Focus recruitment for the new preparation program by capitalizing on relationships with K-12 school leaders in South Dakota’s education community. Develop materials which identify the entrance</td>
<td>South Dakota’s education community is relatively small so there is a strong base of relationships among and between K-12 school leaders and current principal preparation faculty. As a result, a recruitment effort that capitalizes on these personal relationships is considered a prudent approach. Furthermore, based on the experience and advice</td>
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<td><strong>Coursework</strong></td>
<td>Relevant coursework that includes instructional leadership and human capital performance management as well as the opportunity to practice and apply the learning through simulations, case studies, role plays, and other applications of learning. &quot;The delivery of coursework to accommodate and support the reality of candidates in rural settings through blended learning opportunities that include online&quot;</td>
<td>Design a curriculum of rigorous, relevant coursework that aligns with the program purpose and competencies and that is integrated into the internship/field experience for a cohort of candidates. Engage the cohort of candidates for a two-year period (2 summer events and 4 semesters) in relevant and authentic content and practice for the role of principal. Identify and engage respected K-12 practitioners as partners to co-teach selected coursework as appropriate. Deliver a blended program of online courses as well as structured face-to-face sessions so the program is as accessible as possible yet attends to opportunities for cohort members to</td>
<td>Research and the experience of innovative programs confirm the importance and power of program competencies as the foundation and guide for coursework development. Also, leaders of innovative programs emphasize the effectiveness of integrating the coursework into the internship/field experience so theory is viewed and considered through the lens of practice in school settings. Furthermore, it is notable that innovative programs engage K-12 colleagues as collaborators and co-teachers so program participants as well as university faculty and K-12 practitioners participate in a shared professional growth opportunity. Recognizing the rural demographics of South Dakota and based on data from South Dakota practitioners, two other factors are noted as critical to the coursework component of a new program. First, it is imperative that the new program be structured as a cohort model. That is, South Dakota practitioners as well as innovative program participants underscore repeatedly the tremendous value of their shared experience as a cohort of colleagues, that is, a professional network which sets the</td>
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**interaction.**

| Clinical Leadership Experience | Authentic learning experiences in real school settings over a significant period of time (as least six months) with candidates assuming real school leadership responsibilities. | Design an embedded internship/field experience for principal candidates that empowers them to apply and practice theory and knowledge gained through coursework. Equip and engage practicing principals or other school leaders as capable and effective mentors for principal candidates and collaborators with university faculty. | Based on the data and examples from innovative programs, it is crucial to integrate the “coursework” and “clinical leadership” components of an effective principal preparation program. Innovative programs embed much of the content of coursework in the internship/field experience. Typically, the embedded coursework content takes the form of projects implemented in a school setting. For example, the candidate may practice coursework content about “organizational diagnosis” by conducting an analysis of the school where he/she is interning. Thereby, the candidate gains firsthand experience with applying knowledge and developing skills in a supportive environment. Clearly, a productive internship/field experience is contingent on the involvement and partnership with a respected school leader in the role of mentor for the principal candidate. Leaders of innovation programs stress the importance of providing mentors with professional development which clarifies their roles and prepares them to serve as effective partners in the principal preparation process. |

| Program Completion Requirements | Clear standards for completion of the program aligned to the competency framework, including a positive rating from the clinical leadership experience and some kind of overall assessment of competency mastery. | Identify program completion requirements which include the demonstration of knowledge and skills of key competencies in conjunction with compelling evidence of constructive application and practice during the internship/field experience. Develop a rubric and explicit process for gathering data and judging candidates’ demonstration of competencies. | Leaders of innovative programs note an increasing emphasis on the demonstration of competencies through the application of knowledge and skills during the internship/field experience. For example, one highly-regarded program requires principal candidates to complete four major projects which reflect the integration and application of their coursework in the school settings of their respective internships/field experiences. Each project encompasses a themed-collection of coursework which is applied and practiced in the context of school settings. As a
result, the candidates’ demonstration of competencies is authentic and practical. Since a significant portion of the evidence of candidate competence stems from the internship/field experience, it is important that the mentors be valued contributors with judging the candidates’ competence based on the program completion rubric.

| Continuous Improvement Cycle** | An annual, structured program improvement process which includes external data/evaluators leading to the identification and implementation of program changes for enhancing program quality and integrity. | Identify and engage an advisory committee periodically (at least twice a year) to review program implementation and offer feedback and advice about program improvement. Include a broad base of stakeholders including program leaders, university faculty, K-12 practitioners, program completers and participants, BOR officials, and DOE representatives as appropriate.

Establish a data collection system which tracks the career path of program completers and which provides information about the performance of completers in principal roles. | A review of innovative programs supports the concept of engaging an advisory group to serve as a resource and constructive mechanism for ongoing program improvement. While it is important to involve a broad base of stakeholders, it is equally important to establish valid and reliable data sources for making informed judgments about the program. As a result, it is noted that innovative programs implement systems for tracking their completers and engaging their completers in long term relationships as collaborators and partners as they progress through their careers. |

** The program components which serve as the basis for these recommendations were drawn from the work of the Rainwater Leadership Alliance and published in the document titled *A New Approach to Principal Preparation: Innovative Programs Share Their Practices and Lessons Learned*. The EDAD Workgroup added the expectation of some online delivery as part of the Coursework component and the Continuous Improvement Cycle as another essential component. Those additions are noted with italics and asterisks.

**Next Steps**

Key actions associated with moving this work forward in a productive and timely manner include:

- Develop a fiscal model which reflects the economic feasibility of implementing and sustaining the new preparation program concept.
- Consider and identify initial resource needs associated with the launch of a new preparation program.
- Identify and address policy implications associated with the initiation of the new preparation program.
- Develop an action plan which operationalizes the recommendations (presented in this document) for the new preparation program with a timeline for program approval by December 31, 2014.