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# School Leadership Review

The international, peer-reviewed journal of the Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration

**Summer 2012**

*A Case for an Online Educational Administrator Practicum Experience*

*Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration*

*Effective Instructional Tools or Costly Distractions: An Examination on the Effective Implementation of Technology in the Classroom*

*Jonathon Archer, Alison Childs, Sharon Covaciu, and Chad DeYoung*

*Leadership for the Long-haul: The Impact of Administrator Longevity on Student Achievement*

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*Connecting Response to Intervention and Grade Retention: Implications for School Leaders*

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*Principal Preparation Program Redesign: How Universities May Be Required to Redesign Their Programs*

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*Democracy and Education: The Philosophy of Theorist Carl D. Glickman*

*Dina L. Rowe*

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Summer 2012 Volume 7 Issue 2

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**Timothy B. Jones**, *Guest Editor*

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The editorial staff of *School Leadership Review* seeks high-quality, original manuscripts in consideration for the upcoming publication of the journal. The *School Leadership Review* is an internationally refereed journal sponsored and published by the Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration and is designed to offer a publishing opportunity to professors of educational leadership across the country on topics related to school administration. We encourage submissions from new professors as well as those with years of valuable experience. Manuscript guidelines are as follows:

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- ❖ Limit the use of tables, figures, and appendices, as they are difficult to import into the journal text layout.
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## *Educational Leadership Back to the Future*

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There is no doubt that our discipline as well as our programs are under fire and involved in the largest wave of change in history. This issue of *School Leadership Review* offers brief discussion as we work together as a discipline.

In the first article, we celebrate as the **Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration (TCPEA)**, an affiliate of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), takes its first policy position as an organization that enhances its role and influence as Texas contemplates changes in principal and superintendent preparation program over-site policy. Specifically, the position statement outlines how high-quality preparation programs should meet the observation requirements of field-based activities. Several technology formats are advocated such as video conferencing, Google + video chat, Skype, webinars, SMS text messaging. Current policy presents numerous challenges in light of the electronic and information age.

Following the policy discussion, our colleagues offer their latest research:

**Jonathon Archer, Alison Child, Sharon Covaciu, and Chad DeYoung** submit their article “*Effective Instructional Tools or Costly Distractions: An Examination on the Effective Implementation of Technology in the Classroom.*” In it they provide numerous insights they have identified as part of their comprehensive field research.

In *Leadership for the Long-Haul: The Impact of Administrator Longevity on Student Achievement*, **Sean Kearney, Albert Valadez, and Larry Garcia** describe the impact of principal turnover and its relationship to student test scores. They use correlational analysis and find administrators’ longevity highly correlated with elementary students’ success. Additionally, the authors find that teachers’ years of experience, student attendance, and socioeconomic status are significantly related to student achievement.

**Bret G. Range and Dorothy Jean Yocum** offer their article *Connecting Response to Intervention and Grade Retention: Implications for School Leaders*. In it they provide implications for school leaders with an argument that higher quality RTI leads to less need for grade retention. The authors describe different levels of Tiers for RTI and specifically targeted interventions for elementary and secondary level of students. Additionally, they provide examples from two states and three school districts showcasing the effectiveness of RTI. Implementation strategies for the RTI are also provided.

**Ralph Marshall** provides a summary of the principal preparation program redesign as experienced in Illinois in his article *Principal Preparation Program Redesign: How Universities May Be Required to Redesign Their Programs*. He further draws connections with the current redesign in Texas. The author asserts that the new principal preparation programs will need stricter requirements for internships as well as submitting proposed revisions to the Higher Education Coordinating Board in Illinois. The author asserts a majority of redesign requirements were drawn from Wallace Foundation funded research.

Next, **Robert Thiede** produces his study entitled *Student Perceptions of Online Courses for School Administrators* where he discusses the impact of online instruction from a student vantage point.

Finally, the journal presents the winning manuscripts from the 2011-2012 TCPEA Graduate Research Exchange submitted by **Dina L. Rowe**. She honors one of our colleagues in her piece *Democracy and Education: The Philosophy of Theorist Carl D. Glickman*.

We hope you will enjoy this issue of the journal. We are pleased to provide new and insightful research and discussion on the ongoing change in our discipline as we continue Back to the Future!

Have a wonderful new academic year!

Timothy B. Jones, Ed.D.  
Guest Editor

Pauline M. Sampson, Ph.D.  
Associate Editor

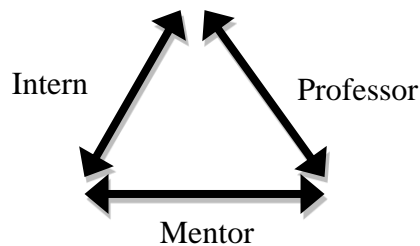
## *A Case for an Online Educational Administrator Practicum Experience*

*Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration*<sup>i</sup>

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The principal and superintendent practicum experiences have traditionally been entirely face-to-face (f2f) between university professors, interns and site mentors – typically a campus or district administrator (Figure 1). Advancements in technology combined with the exponential growth of online graduate programs give rise to additional incorporation of technology into the practicum experience.

Figure 1.1: The Practicum Team



The Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) is moving forward with online K-12 course development using the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) standards for quality and consistency of online teaching and learning. The iNACOL standards include strategies requiring students to take an active role in learning, to have multiple competency-based pathways for learning, and pursue more effective use of experts and resources. The iNACOL standards also seek to “coordinate student learning through the expanded use of technology-based tools and to create a highly flexible schedule, with instruction possible 24x7” (iNACOL, 2012, p. 6). Likewise, those who lead schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must also be literate in online teaching and learning strategies to lead these K-12 schools. The practicum experience provides an excellent opportunity for future school leaders to enhance their use and understanding of technologies for teaching and learning while pursuing their graduate studies in educational administration.

Technology has changed faster than policy – in this case Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Rule §228.35 as applied to the principal and superintendent graduate programs. TAC Rule §228.35 is also problematic when applied to the principal and superintendent practicums. Its language is more developmentally appropriate and practical for the student teacher field experience than for the principal and superintendent practicums. This Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration (TCPEA) white paper examines the use of technology in the practicum experience for principal and superintendent preparation programs.

Hewitt, Lashley, Mullen, and Davis (2012) aptly describe the situation universities and their faculties are confronting when they wrote,

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<sup>i</sup> **Dr. Lloyd Goldsmith** compiled this Position Paper on behalf of the TCPEA Executive Board. He may be contacted at [lloyd.goldsmith@acu.edu](mailto:lloyd.goldsmith@acu.edu).

The traditional model most of us have experienced was a regimen of courses delivered face-to-face over an entire semester and held in a physical building space, such as a lecture hall or conference room. This model of education is quickly becoming anachronistic. The infusion of new instructional delivery technologies and online/virtual configurations for enhanced classroom practice and student satisfaction are game-changing catalysts. A new era of technology learning and proficiency in higher education has been ushered in. (p.3)

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2011) defined practicum as,

a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Practicums give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. (para. 1)

In the Texas graduate educational administration school environment this student is typically a teacher or administrator gaining practical experience and as part of the principal or superintendent certification process. Historically the experience has been normally limited to a series of three physical onsite visits.

Online graduate programs have gained popularity with educators seeking graduate study because they provide flexible access to content and instruction at any time, from any location. Today's practicum, like today's online courses must take advantage of technologies not readily available less than ten years ago and in many cases much recently (Panos, 2005). The efficacy of a practicum experience incorporating technology must be revisited given today's enhanced online learning applications. The wide range of Web resources goes beyond multimedia resources to include Web-based applications and new collaboration technologies. Today's telecommunication tools are radically different from their predecessors that were expensive, difficult to construct and to maintain (Abel, 1960; Hoy & Merkley, 1989).

Technology should be effectively incorporated in the principal and superintendent practicums as it has been in the social sciences and medicine providing a rich and meaningful way of replicating, as well as enhancing processes in the traditional f2f practicum. Technology overcomes the limitations of the traditional f2f practicum process within the rapidly expanding demand for online graduate education.

The traditional f2f practicum team (intern, professor, and mentor) and the practicum team utilizing technology contain the same team members. However, practicum teams using technology, like other virtual teams, have the capacity to operate in a greater geographically dispersed area (Horwitz, Bravington, & Silvis, 2006). Like their f2f counterparts, virtual practicum teams work interdependently, use information technologies, share responsibilities and meet together (Wells, 2006). Not surprising, Karayaz (2006) noted that communication was instrumental in virtual teams meeting with success. Earnhardt (2009) identified speed of execution, reduced cost and adaptability as virtual team advantages.



The practicum provides the graduate student with the opportunity to gain real world experience by integrating the knowledge learned in graduate studies with on the job training and experience. Many tools are available for faculty and staff in the virtual practicum. These tools include but are not limited to: email, instant messaging, Google+ video chat or other audio/visual conferencing software such as Skype, webinars, SMS (text) messaging, and all other manner of virtual communication. These tools assist in building and supporting a community of learners necessary for understanding application of a complex body of knowledge (Bransford, Brown & Cocking 1999; Riel & Polin 2004; Schwen & Hara 2004).

Widespread interest exists in the application of videoconferencing in education, health care, and business (Wilson, Marks, Collins, Warner, & Frick, 2004). It is used in teaching and supervising medical procedures (Miller, Alam, Fraser, & Ferguson, 2008). Videoconferencing is attributed to developing partnerships between peers in educational institutions both on- and off-site (Daley, Spalla, Arndt, & Warnes, 2008; Zerr & Pulcher, 2008).

Videoconferencing is employed successfully in social work field practicums (Panos, 2005). It is an increasingly valuable tool in psychiatry and has overwhelmingly positive reports on assessment and treatment in personal care. Little evidence is reported on a negative impact on rapport between patient and clinicians. The rapid improvement of technology makes videoconferencing more affordable, feasible and accessible (Sharp, Kobak, & Osman, 2011).

A disadvantage of videoconferencing focused on conversations that were sensitive and difficult having “a lack of physical presence might have a negative impact on the degree of sharing” (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009, p. 7). However the researchers concluded overall, “videoconferencing proved to be an excellent medium to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants who were geographically dispersed” (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009, p. 8).

### **Advantages for Interns**

Integrating technology into the practicum contains advantages for today’s graduate intern. These advantages include:

#### **Flexibility**

The online practicum is always open. It provides real time feedback and supports individualized instruction. The asynchronous design of the online practicum provides greater flexibility. Multiple pathways exist for students to complete the practicum while having greater freedom from a rigid calendar.

#### **Low cost**

Eliminating travel costs associated with physical site visits will lower costs, saving students money by reducing program costs. A side benefit of eliminating or significantly reducing the need for physical site visits is a reduction in size of the university’s carbon footprint.

## **Time management**

Using a highly flexible schedule with seamless access to the online practicum offers students greater flexibility in managing their time to meet not only their practicum needs but in other needs in their public and private lives.

## **Communication**

Time and space are diminished as factors impeding communication. Richest communication occurs in the face-to-face medium because verbal and visual cues provide immediate feedback and the use of natural language (Canon & Griffith, 2007; Green, 2012; Hoy & Miskel, 2012; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2011; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Ubben, Hughes & Norris, 2010). Rich virtual oral/visual communication is replicated in the practicum by incorporating such tools as Skype and Google+ hangouts and circles (Skype and Google+ video chat are used as representative software. Other software provides similar services.). Students have greater opportunity for f2f conversations with their university professors in practicum matters.

## **Networking**

Students meeting with their university professors in online practicum groups using applications such as Google+ video chat hangout have opportunity to meet and know students beyond their geographic location. Google+ video chat hangout allows up to ten individuals to hangout in a group with audio and video feeds. All hangout participants see and hear each other on their computer monitors. Participants have the capability of sharing each other's computer screens. Students can readily explore similarities and differences in issues on their campuses with fellow students and others in the field throughout Texas. Students can compare their experiences with graduate students from Texas, the United States and foreign countries providing a broader understanding of educational leadership beyond narrow experiences in a limited community. Skype or Google+ hangouts and circles provide excellent digital forums for online practicum students to network with each other. This social networking enlarges students' professional network.

## **Virtual skills**

Students learn technological skills in the practicum that transfer to the school setting as Texas moves forward with implementing technology in its public schools. These virtual skills align with the TEA stance to use "appropriate Social Media/Web 2.0 technologies to strengthen communication, collaboration and information exchange in support of the agency's mission" (TEA, 2012). TEA maintains "official social media accounts" for Flickr, iTunes U, NCLB Podcasts, Project Share, RSS feeds, and Twitter (TEA, 2012).

## **No geographical limitations**

Public and private universities, as well as many universities throughout the United States are migrating principal and superintendent programs to an online learning environment. This affords students greater geographical choice for graduate work. No longer is the supermajority of students limited to attending a local university within a reasonable

driving distance. Students can now attend any university with an online training program without regard to its geographical location (Harris, 2012). Texas universities enroll students nationally and internationally increasing the richness of the global graduate learning experience. In a time of a dwindling revenue stream from taxes, tuition generated from national and international students add much needed dollars to Texas higher education.

### **Advantages for Universities**

Like students, universities also reap advantages by incorporating technology within the practicum.

#### **Flexibility**

Greater flexibility exists in scheduling meetings between professor, mentor and intern. With travel time eliminated, this time can be repurposed for research, consulting, course preparation, professional responsibilities and teaching.

#### **Larger applicant pool**

Universities, whether they are located in less populated areas of the state or in major metropolitan areas, have access to a larger pool of potential students. This pool of potential students extends beyond the Texas borders.

#### **Time Management**

Time no longer needs to be budgeted for traveling to sites in most cases. Travel time can be reassigned to mentoring and other instructional obligations. Last minute schedule changes are much easier to accommodate when travel is replaced with videoconferencing.

#### **Increased communication**

Using tools such as Google+ video chat encourages professors to have as many f2f conferences as needed. The one-size-fits-all three conferences no longer limits rich oral and visual communication in the practicum. If anything, the online practicum encourages increased communication.

### **Technology Surpassed Policy**

Rapid change along with greater access to rich, multimedia content creates opportunities as well as challenges for schools (*Technology in Education*, 2011). This appears to be the case with TAC Rule §228.35. Before today's advances in technology, students and professors were confined to physical site visits and physical conferences. This system was cumbersome, expensive and time consuming. Time and travel expenses hampered a more robust communication within the practicum, as did unexpected absences and forgotten appointments. Other factors such as inclement weather, congested urban roadways, last minute emergencies and illnesses also posed challenges. Thus typically the student, site mentor and university faculty member were relegated to the three visits defined in TAC Rule §228.35. This would no longer be the case in an online practicum.

Individual student needs could be tailored for those students needing more f2f communication in order to meet with academic success.

Technological advancements combined with the upgrading of school site technological infrastructure supports online practicum visits by offering seamless visual and auditory feeds. Student, faculty and mentor are no longer shackled with cumbersome, time consuming site visits. Using software such as Skype and Google+ video chat creates a practicum site visit with the rich visual and auditory feedback associated with the traditional f2f site visit. Participants hear and see each other, allowing them to pick up audio and visual communication clues associated with face-to-face communication. Google+ video chat also affords participants the ability to view each other's computer screens in a seamless environment.

Technology provides a feasible avenue of communication beyond the three physical site visits allocated in TAC Rule §228.35. Incorporating technology into the practicum experience provides the professor, campus mentor, and the graduate intern the option to easily schedule as many additional virtual site visits needed, schedule regular weekly or biweekly visits, schedule intensive visits for the struggling student, and even assign interns into accountability groups within the practicum. Ritter and Polnick (2008) assert that online learning communities comprised of faculty and students do facilitate cohesive networks to process content at higher levels of depth and complexity. Incorporating multi-avenue communication software effectively in the practicum takes the professor, site mentor, and graduate student to a frequency of contact and feedback not feasible in the traditional f2f practicum.

Having access to technology like Google+ video chat and Skype encourages practicum stakeholders to meet with greater frequency since such meetings are convenient and both time and cost efficient. Employing virtual conferencing takes the practicum experience to a higher level of communication and collaboration in the practicum process.

### **Conclusion**

TCPEA encourages TEA to reconsider its position on TAC Rule §228.35 with regard to the principal and superintendent practicum experiences. Those of us in the field believe the time has come to incorporate today's technology into the principal and superintendent practicum experiences in a meaningful and purposeful way. It is the position of TCPEA that incorporating cutting edge technology will increase and enrich the communication between the intern, professor and mentor beyond the existing f2f system. Incorporating technology will increase the likelihood that residential professors will assume practicum responsibilities as part of their course loads allowing for greater integration of course theory and practicum experience.

TCPEA encourages TEA to move swiftly in considering and adopting the tenets of this paper. TCPEA is ready and willing to work collaboratively with TEA in developing procedures and policies to make the Texas online principal and superintendent practicum experiences a model for the nation.

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# Effective Instructional Tools or Costly Distractions: An Examination on the Effective Implementation of Technology in the Classroom

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Technological advances have proliferated in the workplace, our daily lives, and even in the area of research. With each passing day different forms of technology are becoming increasingly available to people all around the world. The quick influx of technology has resulted in little time for technological professional development in the field of education. Although the majority of today's youth have grown up in a technological world, the adults educating these students have little exposure and understanding of these new advances (Christensen & Knezek, 1999).

The influx of technology into today's society has had several ramifications. From the time of infancy, children are immersed in technology. This exposure has led many students to grasp new technologies quickly, whereas for those who did not grow up in this Digital Era, learning new technology may be time consuming. It is widely believed that the frequent use of technology has affected the attention span of today's youth (Swing, Getile, Anderson, & Walsh, 2010). Quickly answering questions using the Internet and talking with friends anywhere are just a couple examples of how technology has resulted in an increased amount of instant gratification. Technology, however, has also helped to increase learning through Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (McKenzie, 2002). Increasing the use of technology in the classroom could also help students to relate their lives to their education. Between the Internet, cell phones and iPods, students are connected with technology almost every waking moment. Why must this stop just because they enter the classroom?

The extensive availability of resources has led many teacher preparation programs to increase technology exposure to their preservice teachers. Teachers in training are learning which technologies are available and being asked to consider how best to integrate these new methods into their classrooms to both connect with and instruct their students. The purpose of our research was to evaluate the difference in student performance between teacher-centered (TC) and student-centered (SC) technology use in classrooms.

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## Literature Review

The 20th century approached with inventions that radically altered education. Electricity paired with photography, soon brought the world into the classroom with films, overhead projectors and eventually sounds (Cuban, 1986). Broadcast television became available to the schools in the 1950s, and in the 1970s videotape was introduced. These devices enabled teachers to bring concepts from outside the students' immediate world into the classroom to share as a community. Technology now influences education in profound ways and the literature reviewed focused on technology in schools, teacher use of technology, and student use of technology. All three areas form the foundation in which we situate this research.

### Technology in Schools

Over time, the variety of technologies such as radio, television, and the Internet have been introduced to schools, each sparking controversy about its appropriateness for schooling and effectiveness as a teaching and learning tool (Snider, 1992). Despite this debate, technology has been an increasingly influential factor in education. Computers and cell phones are used in developed countries both to complement established education practices and develop new ways of learning such as online education (Bacon & Jakovich, 2001).

Recent emphasis on technology integration in education comes from the United States Department of Education through the 'enhancing education through technology' programs (Fletcher, 2003). As technology revolutionizes the way that we interact with each other and the world around us, it is openly acknowledged that students who are to be prepared for life in the 'real world' will need a strong foundation in the use of technology as a tool. Due to the results of studies like *Apple's Classrooms of Tomorrow*, which have shown the advantages of technology in education, schools are increasing their efforts to integrate technology into education (Apple, 2008).

Today teachers use technology such as PowerPoint, SMART Boards and online depositories to deliver course information (Bork, 2000). In spite of the apparent trend toward increasing the usage of more modern forms of technology in the classroom, the confluence of technology in the classroom is being debated within academia (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Ertmer, 1999). Understanding the relationship between technology and academic performance has taken on new significance as technology use on campuses has expanded. In essence there are two sides to the debate.

On one side of the argument are those who question whether the use of modern technology increases a student's ability to learn and retain more information (Neal, 1998). Some fear the use of technology may lead to the creation of barriers between the student and teacher by fostering an atmosphere not conducive to student-centered interactions (Ertmer, 1999; Hew & Brush, 2007). Others argue that students will become passive and "tune-out" the teacher, thus failing to learn the necessary information (Perkins, 1991). Teachers who adhere to a belief in "learner-centered teaching" as the best method to enhance students' learning also fear that some teachers who turn toward the use of advanced technology will fail to use it effectively, and thereby decrease student



learning. Thus, using technology in the classroom may hinder a student's understanding of course material rather than enhance it (Nickerson, 1995).

On the other side of the argument are those who contend that using modern technology provides both structure to and clarification of material (Pauw, 2002), and these are important to the learning process. Others suggest that the visual component of PowerPoint lends itself even greater value for those students whose learning is improved through the use of visual aids (Brown & Atkins, 1988). There are those who suggest that PowerPoint enhances students' learning by adding variety to the delivery of course material (Bartsch & Cobern, 2003). Teachers who employ various methods of technology integration during classes are able to better keep students' attention, thereby, reducing boredom with the lecture and, consequently improving the overall learning experience.

### **Teacher Use of Technology**

Today, teachers are expected to integrate technology into their classrooms. Often school systems provide workshops introducing various technologies in an attempt to improve technology use in the classroom, only to later find that teachers from those workshops use the technology on a limited basis (Ertmer, Conklin, Lewandowski, Osika, Selo, Wignallet, 2003). The lack of implementation may occur for many reasons. First, teachers may see a demonstration, but may not have the opportunity to use the hardware and software in a hands-on fashion (Cwikla & Morse, 2005; Quinn & Valentine, 2001; Viadero, 1997). As Zehr (1997) argues, "money spent on school technology is wasted without an equal effort to help teachers with its use and integration into the curriculum" (p. 24). Second, technology may not be located in each classroom. If teachers have to make special arrangements to bring the technology into their room, they may lose interest in making it a regular part of their lessons (Middleton, Flores & Knaupp, 1997). Third, many school systems may view technology as superfluous, rather than an effective teaching tool (Oppenheimer, 2003). As Cwikla and Morse (2005) argue, technology should not be viewed simply as an "addition to the curriculum" but rather as a "powerful vehicle for delivering the curriculum" (p. 4).

Teachers may view technology as a way to enhance lesson plans and create a more interactive learning environment, but research shows that technology-assisted learning improves students' acquisition of knowledge (Hui, Hu, Clark, Tan & Milton, 2008). New technologies create additional strategies for reaching different learning styles. Other research has found that "students are more successful in school, are more motivated to learn and have increased self-confidence and self-esteem when technology is present in the educational environment" (SIIA Report, 2000). Frey and Birnbaum's study (2002) found that the majority of students agreed that computer-assisted instruction in class had a positive effect on lectures, especially in helping them take notes and study for exams.

### **Students and Technology**

As reported by Cowan, the role of the computer falls into one of three categories: tutor (teaches student), tool (used for a function), or tutee (performs according to student programming) (2008). Technology had such a strong impact in the world that by about

1980 people were being born into the ‘Net generation’ and are referred to as ‘digital natives’ (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008). Millennial students handle cell phones, iPods, social networking sites, and other forms of technology on a daily basis. New information is readily available to them within seconds. According to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, teenager use of digital media has surpassed television watching – 3.5 hours per day versus 3.1 hours per day (Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 2002).

According to Brown (2005), the Net Generation requires a learner-centered model of education with a shift from the traditional teaching paradigm to a constructivist learning structure. As students see relevance in their daily activities, their interest in learning grows (Brooks & Grennon, 1999). In contrast, a more traditional pedagogical approach involves a teacher-centered learning environment. Technology can be integrated within both of these teaching methods; however, one may be more appropriate for different learning styles.

Integration of technology looks very different within these two models. In a SC learning environment, the learners are in control of the tools. They take an active role in their learning and are able to plan, organize, and synthesize subject content (Wu & Huang, 2007). Within a TC environment, technology is limited to teacher use only in order to model or transmit specific information. This does not suggest however, that students are not actively engaged in a traditional teaching approach. The purpose of this study is to research the impact of specific technology integration (teacher-centered vs. student-centered) on student performance, as measured by use of a student perception survey and the analysis of student assessments.

### **Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-methods approach using survey research and student assessment scores. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through baseline surveys, student perception surveys, and an analysis of classroom assessments. The research was conducted at four public school sites around a Pacific Northwest metropolitan area with over one hundred and fifty students involved in the study. The study began with each student-participant completing a baseline survey about his or her familiarity with various types of technology. The survey also asked students to rank types of technology they thought were most and least useful from a provided list. From that data, each researcher chose types of technology, some student-centered (SC) and some teacher-centered (TC), that were used in the classroom, based on both what the students reported would be beneficial, and what was available at their site. During four different lessons, distinct concepts were taught while integrating either TC or SC technology. After each lesson students took a perception survey that asked four questions about the technology from that day. Responses were rankings on a five-point Likert-type scale. Question one asked students how well they met the daily objective or learning target. Question two asked students to rank their understanding of the material. Questions 3 and 4 asked how well they performed on in-class activities, and if they thought the use of technology helped them understand the material. After four lessons using technology integration, students were assessed on the concept attainment using classroom quizzes or tests. Scores were calculated to find the average proficiency on the concepts taught using SC technology, and average proficiency of the concepts taught

using TC technology at each site. Results of the perception survey questions were grouped by type of technology used that day, TC or SC, and an average perception score between 1 and 5 was calculated for each question.

The one hundred and fifty-one subjects came from families that ranged from very low income to extremely affluent, and had varied levels of exposure to a variety of types of technology. The study went beyond simply looking at the integration of technology versus the absence of it in the classroom. Instead, the researchers analyzed which method of technology integration was the most beneficial to student performance: teacher-centered or student-centered. TC technology refers to any tool used by the teacher to help present information to the students. In contrast, SC technology refers to any form of technology that the students are using or manipulating in order to help them learn or understand a concept. The study did not focus on the types of technology used, but rather the method and effects of integration of various technologies on student performance. The question we sought to answer through this study was: To what extent would student-verses teacher-centered technology affect student performance?

Research Site A was in a rural community southwest of a major metropolitan area. The class consisted of 35 students that ranged in age from 14 to 15 years old. The class consisted of 23 males and 12 females. The students primarily came from middle class families within a 10-mile radius of the school. Of the 35 students in the class, 14 failed the previous semester. Student motivation was the greatest challenge in teaching this group of students.

Students were observed as on task when in class but were not motivated to complete any work outside of the class period. Many students turned in work that was rushed or incomplete. Another challenge for this class was to increase attendance in the students who were often absent. Students with high absence rates were missing much of the instructional time and were forced to understand a concept with limited instruction.

Implementation of technology into the classroom posed challenges. The school was limited in the amount of technology available for integration. Many of the resources available were tools students had used often such as PowerPoint, the Internet and computers. Due to the size of the class having enough resources was difficult and would require many of the integration activities to be done with either a partner or in a small group setting.

Site B included two general chemistry classes, "Chem A," and "Chem B." Chem A was the first trimester of this course, and Chem B was the second. Chem A consisted of 31 students, with a gender ratio of 15 males to 16 females. Ten students were sophomores, 19 were juniors, and two were seniors. Chem B consisted of 32 students, with a gender ratio of 13 males to 19 females. Thirteen students were sophomores and 19 were juniors. The majority of students at this site were highly motivated and the technology available was extensive. The resources that were available and the environment made this an ideal location for this study to take place.

At Site C there were six seniors, 18 juniors and one sophomore enrolled in the retake course of life science. The class consisted of 43% females and 57% males. The vast

majority of these students came from lower-middle class to poverty level in regards to socio-economic status. However, most of the students had cell phones, music devices and were generally experienced with technology. Students were reluctant to try new things and were often hard to motivate. The class was also the last period of the day, which added to the lack of focus. Technology available included a mounted digital projector and SMART Board, 20 digital cameras and 17 netbooks, a computer lab and mobile laptop computers.

In Site D the health class had 28 total students, 12 males and 16 females. Most of the students ranged in age from 15 to 16 years. Technologically, the classroom was equipped with a digital projector, a document camera, a VCR/DVD player, and speakers for instruction. Students came from a wide socio-economic range, where most fell toward the lower end. Despite this situation, many students had cell phones and other personal electronic devices, as was the case at other research sites. Students were accustomed to the use of the digital projector and the document camera as tools in the classroom.

### **Data Collection**

This study used three sets of data collection tools, which were administered in written form. Each researcher gathered the data at their assigned site. The first collection was baseline data, and was gathered through a survey composed of both closed-response and open-ended questions. The survey had seven questions which were designed to show the types of technology students and teachers had used, what students would like to see used more often in the classroom, and finally, the types of technologies students believed were most and least beneficial to their learning. The research team developed all surveys, and the same tools were used at each site.

The second data collection consisted of a Likert-style rating scale comprised of four questions and was designed to measure student perception of meeting the lesson's objective, understanding of the material, performance during class, and whether they felt that the use of technology helped them understand the material. Over the course of two weeks, this rating scale was distributed after TC technology lessons, and after SC technology lessons, for a total of four times at each site. This allowed for comparison of students' perceptions of their performance on SC versus TC technology lessons.

The third data collection was a student assessment. Because the content taught at each location during this study varied extensively, different student assessments were used. These student assessments were scored by the researcher at each site and included concepts that were taught on both TC and SC technology integration days. This data allowed for the comparison of objective assessment data against the subjective student perception of performance as indicated in the perception survey.

Once the initial baseline data was gathered, the information was analyzed and we began implementing both TC and SC technologies that students believed were beneficial to their learning. The second round of data collection was the student perception rating scale following each integrated lesson. Lastly, we scored the assessments. Because only certain types of technologies were available at each site, we were limited as to what was

available to use. Technology which students believed was most beneficial was used whenever possible.

After data collection, all data were combined and analyzed. We coded the responses based on which types of technologies students felt were most beneficial to their learning. After integrating these technologies into the classroom, our interest focused on student response about the technology that was SC versus TC. Finally, we focused on how this student perception compared to assessment of performance.

The goal of this study was to find which type of technology integration method, teacher-centered or student-centered, increased student performance. If the conclusion only relied on student perception of performance, it would not have been a comprehensive study. By completing a triangulation, including assessment of performance, we could compare what students felt was most beneficial and what teachers found to be effective based on assessments. This gave us a stronger basis from which to form conclusions.

### **Limitations**

There were limitations to this study, which included many variables that were uncontrollable. Results could have been influenced by students' own personal familiarity with technology and their own opinions. Participants came into this study with a specific technological language that could have influenced the results. Another limitation of this study was that the majority of data collection was through closed-response questioning. This type of questioning could be considered controlling because students were only given specific options. The process could have been improved by giving participants of the study more options for free-write responses to collect a wider range of data and potentially address limitations caused by closed-responses.

It is vital in research that the data collected throughout the course of a study be accurate, consistent, and substantial. A great deal of effort was put forth to ensure the methods used to obtain data throughout this study adhered to all three of these standards. Research was triangulated so as to ensure accuracy and legitimacy. Although research was collected from four different sites, the data was collected using standardized measurement tools. In order to ensure findings were reliable, one hundred and fifty-one students provided data, which was collected and analyzed to determine general trends.

### **Results**

The results of Site A showed that days with the integration of student-centered (SC) technologies led to higher perceptions of learning as well as increased accuracy on assessments. Students were able to accurately recall 69% of the content learned on teacher-centered (TC) technology days as compared to answering 81.5% of questions correctly relating to content that was presented on SC technology integration days.

On the list of the top three "most beneficial to learning" technologies, according to student survey, the most popular answer was PowerPoint. After the implementation of this TC technology at Site A, students correctly answered 73% of the assessment questions. The second technology on the list of most beneficial was Internet resources. When using a SC form of Internet for research students later scored 93% on the

assessment of that content. When the Internet was used for a virtual fieldtrip, also SC, the students later scored 70% on questions regarding that content leading to an average score of 81.5% on days Internet resource technology was integrated. It appears that the students at Site A believed PowerPoint to be the most effective technology; however, on average the Internet showed to be more effective in accurate recall of information and concepts. Interestingly, in a study done by Tang and Austin (2009), researchers found that students perceived video as having the highest amount of enjoyment, PowerPoint providing the highest amount of learning and motivation, and Internet providing the highest career application for future jobs. This may have been why these technologies were top choices for participants.

As a general trend within Site B, participants showed an increased perception of learning gains after SC technology integration when compared to TC technology integration. Assessments showed that students were able to perform at a higher level on material that was presented on SC days (84.1% accuracy) versus TC days (77.9% accuracy). However, students did not perceive that the technology itself helped them perform better. In fact, based on survey results, an average of 97% of participants said that TC technologies helped them understand the material more effectively, while only 90.5% reported that TC technologies were beneficial. The technology used at Site B included Word, PowerPoint, a document camera, computers, and lab equipment. Teacher-centered technologies used included Word, PowerPoint and a document camera for distributing notes. Students utilized computers for online research and digital balances for a lab activity on SC days.

At Site C, data on the first TC day was collected following a lesson that included direct instruction on cellular transport using a PowerPoint presentation. The second TC day allowed data to be collected based on the use of SMART Board and Notebook 10 software from a lesson on cell organelles. SC technology data from the first set was collected following a lesson where students used netbook computers to progress through an online workshop that focused on macromolecules. The second SC technology use data was followed by the use of microscopes to analyze water samples for microscopic organisms. The combined results of student perceptions on technology use seemed to favor TC technology. These results, however, are over-shadowed by the fact that SC technology produced consistently higher results on assessment scores. Additionally, students overwhelmingly felt that SC technology helped them learn the material more effectively.

Students at Site D performed better on days when SC technology was used as a part of instruction. When Classroom Performance Response System (CPS) technology was used, students performed 19% higher, scoring on average of 87% when compared to the first TC day in which students scored an average of 68% on an assessment over the material. When surveyed regarding their perception of performance, students at Site D rated themselves as performing better on days in which the technology use was SC. This perception on behalf of the students proved to be correct when they were assessed on material. The average score achieved by students on assessments of SC days was 92%, while the average score of students on assessments of TC days was 80%. When PowerPoint was used on the two TC days, students scored an average of 80% on

assessments. The first SC instruction was with the use of CPS and student assessments averaged at 87%. On the second SC day, in which students used online note taking, students averaged 97% on the assessment.

Baseline survey results showed that across all schools the top three technologies used by students were Microsoft Word, Internet resources and PowerPoint; these same three technologies were also seen as the most beneficial to student learning. The top three technologies used by teachers in the classroom were PowerPoint, movies and DVDs, and Microsoft Word; again these same three were indicated as the most beneficial to student learning through TC technology. Interestingly, the technologies suggested most often by students which were perceived to be beneficial to their learning included PowerPoint, movies and DVDs, Internet resources and SMART Boards (Tang & Austin, 2009).

Across all of the sites, the students' perception of performance or comprehension based on the technology in use was relatively high. Their perception of TC technology was greater than it was for SC technology only in Site C. Conversely, in the remaining sites students perceived SC technology to be a greater asset to their learning. The average result of student perceptions across all schools indicated that TC technology was slightly higher than SC technology. While the results are not significantly different between schools, within schools or among all schools, the students consistently believed that the SC technology helped their understanding of the material more effectively than TC technology. Previous research found that different instructional approaches led to significant differences in students' performance on achievement tests (Hui *et al.*, 2008). These findings substantiate our own results. Throughout the four sites in this study, different technological methods (instructional approaches) were used, and data show that participants performed at a higher level on assessment of material that was presented on student-centered instructional days, as opposed to teacher-centered days.

Although data from each site are similar in terms of student perception and actual student performance, the variations in results are due to many factors. First, each of the four sites had a different teacher with a specific teaching style and distinct relationship with their students. Second, the content being taught during data collection periods had varied levels of difficulty and contexts. Third, the socio-economic backgrounds of the schools are highly variable and could have affected the results. Last, the students possess individual characteristics. These factors play a significant role in contextualizing the information gained from our data collection. For example, at Site C, the majority of the students took this particular course for the second time. These low performing students may look more toward the teacher for their learning and may not have mastered learning strategies of their own. As a result, TC technology use was perceived as more helpful to their learning. Similarly, several studies showed that students under a learner-controlled environment performed more poorly on cognitive tasks than on other controlled situations, such as those that were teacher-directed (Chang, 2003). This, however, is contradictory to the fact that these very same students from Site C consistently scored higher on the assessments following SC technology use. In contrast, the students involved from Site A may have been more independent from having grown up using technology in their classroom and ranged from average to high performing.

Analysis of this study shows that students perform at a higher level when they are able to control technologies. With this known, further comparative research could be performed examining SC technology integration by focusing on a broader range of tools. Our study used technologies which students felt were beneficial to their learning, but future examination could be done to explore which SC technologies educators believe are helpful in increasing performance on cognitive and assessment activities. By examining a variety of technologies, we can identify the tools that are most beneficial to learning and construct lessons that increase student performance.

### **Discussion**

The findings of the study strongly impact instruction in American schools due to the fact that methods of technology integration result in significant differences on student achievement. Each site found student performance was higher on days in which instructional technologies were aimed at students use. With pressure on administrators to develop schools where students are consistently increasing their levels of proficiency, these findings are encouraging. These data must be taken into account when classroom teachers are preparing lessons. Ramaley and Zia write, “interactive technologies enrich traditional forms of learning and serve as links between active and passive, individual and group, and transmission and generation of knowledge” (Brown, 2005 p. 142). We found that SC technology benefits students; administrators must encourage and support educators in putting this knowledge into practice. As an administrator, it would be beneficial to ensure classroom teachers understand the importance and impact of SC technology use, are trained in how to use technology in a SC manner, and have the tools to create lessons involving SC technology integration.

Although this study found the use of SC technology enhances student performance, preparation for instruction is imperative. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) found activities involving technology integration must be well designed and have explicit learning targets in order to benefit student comprehension. We found when the use of technology is not seamlessly integrated into the lesson the positive benefits are not attained. Just because technology is integrated does not necessarily mean learning has been enriched. For administrators, it is essential to ensure that classroom teachers are fully trained on the use and integration of technology with a student-centered focus. Almost all types of technology can be used in a student-centered way. However, it is necessary to ensure adequate training takes place for teachers via in-service workshops, professional development days, etc. so technology is not merely used in the classroom, but used effectively. In addition, administrators should observe classrooms to ensure student-centered technological integration is taking place to produce increased student proficiency on concepts.

In this study, reliability of technology was found to be a significant factor in student perception of effectiveness. Issues with technology at Sites B and C affected the way students perceived the lesson, but did not necessarily influence how students performed on assessments. Despite the potential for a given technology to affect student performance, the actual impact may vary depending on any number of factors. Technology being prepared and in good working condition is never a given, but is often times an expectation. When such assumptions occur, there may be negative



effects. Communicating with school media specialists should be a priority. If teachers are unable to integrate technology due to faulty equipment, students do not reap the benefits, and their learning is perhaps even hindered by distraction. Administrators must partner with school media specialists to ensure technology is readily available and in working order.

Administrators aim to shape their schools in ways that will benefit students. Therefore, use of the present findings must be implemented to increase effectiveness of instruction. The use of technological tools by students can further their understandings and allow them to make greater connections with material. However, as has been discussed, there are many factors, which can contribute to the effectiveness of any given technology, as well as student perception of effectiveness.

It is important to note that numerous technological tools were used in this study. Availability of technological resources can vary greatly, as was the case in this research. Despite the particular technology that was used, student performance was higher when the technologies were centered on student use. Similar results were observed by Wu and Huang (2006), who found that students in a SC class reported having significantly higher emotional engagement. Therefore, the findings of this study have implications for all schools. No matter the technology available, schools have the ability to use technologies through SC application, which in turn, will increase student performance as measured through assessments, and enhance the educational experiences of students.

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## ***Leadership for the Long-haul: The Impact of Administrator Longevity on Student Achievement***

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The average turnover of the principal position at public schools in the state of Texas is 3 ½ years (Fuller, Young, & Shoho, 2010). This fact raises a number of important questions. Perhaps the most important of which is also the simplest – So what? Does principal turnover matter? What is the impact of high principal turnover? Does this leadership shuffle lead to lower test scores? This study was conducted in order to find out.

### **Principals Matter**

The role of the principal is important in creating a campus culture that is conducive to student achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood, 1994). While the principal's role is vital, it is also indirect (Borger, Lo, Oh, & Wahlberg, 1985; Bulach & Malone, 1994; Newman & Associates, 1996; Paredes & Frazer, 1992; Winter & Sweeney, 1994). This means that while the principal does not provide direct instruction to students, the principal does impact student success through the overall climate of the campus (Heck, 2007). Quality student performance in schools depends to a great extent on the quality of school leadership (Educational Research Service, 1998). Tashakkori and Taylor (2001) studied data from 9,987 teachers and 27,994 students concerning healthy school climates, and determined that school leadership was one of three major factors that influenced school climate. Other studies underscore the effects of a healthy school climate on positive student achievement (Bulach & Malone, 1990; Newman & Associates, 1996; Winter & Sweeney, 1994; Paredes & Frazer, 1992; Borger, Lo, Oh, & Walburg, 1985).

### **Principals are Leaving**

The current status of the longevity of the school principal (aka retention) is a dismal story on Texas campuses. Young and Fuller (2009) examined principal turnover data on all Texas public school campuses from 1996 through 2008. These are some of their findings:

- 1) Less than 30 percent of newly hired high school principals stay at the same school at least five years

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- 2) The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in a school is a major factor in determining how long a newly hired principal will stay. Principals in high-poverty schools having shorter tenure and lower retention rates
- 3) More than 20 percent of newly hired secondary school principals in the lowest achieving schools or high-poverty schools leave after one year on the job
- 4) Principal retention is somewhat higher in suburban school districts where most students are white and not economically disadvantaged

In a survey of school superintendents conducted by Whitaker (2000), superintendents were asked to describe their perceptions related to principal turnover. Ninety percent of these superintendents responded that due to principal turnover, there was a moderate to extreme problem with a principal shortage. This indicates both a problem with principal turnover and a shortage of qualified replacements.

Similarly, in a study of both elementary and secondary principals in Arizona, school leaders were asked whether (and for how long) they planned to remain in their current position. Their responses reveal a grim picture of principal retention. Approximately one third of the participants indicated they were planning to retire; an equal number indicated a desire to remain in education, but no longer as a school principal; and only 30 percent of these principals indicated they desired to remain in their current position (Norton, 2003).

### **Why do Principals Leave?**

While the cause for the high turnover (low retention) rate of principals is difficult to ascertain (Partlow, 2007), one indicator appears to be prominently displayed: the highest turnover rate is attributable to the most challenging situations on the campus (Young & Fuller, 2009). Kennedy (2000) noted five reasons for the lack of principal retention: 1) the demands of the job are shifting; 2) salary; 3) time; 4) a lack of parent and community support; and 5) a lack of respect. As working conditions become increasingly difficult and with pay lagging for highly qualified leaders, it is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to find and retain good principals (Adams, 1999; Portin & Shen, 1998; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998).

### **Does Principal Turnover Matter?**

In order to find out if (and to what extent) principal longevity impacts student achievement, this study examined a sample of 105 elementary schools and 44 secondary schools in nine districts within the State of Texas. Care was taken to ensure a representative sample of urban, suburban, and rural schools from districts across the south central part of the state. Schools in the sample represented the entire range of socioeconomic status as identified by the National Center for Education Statistics Locale Codes. (NCES, 2007).

Student achievement was measured using both passing rates and commended performance rates in Reading and Math over a 3 year period (2007-2009). (Texas Education Agency, 2010). It should be noted that success on achievement tests is only

one small measure of overall student success. The authors acknowledge that there are many other success indicators such as graduation rates, college acceptance, attendance, SAT scores, ACT scores, and others.

Administrator longevity serves as one of the five independent variables in this study. It is important to include social and demographic variables within regression analyses on school climate factors so as to provide a more accurate picture of the factors contributing to school success (Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009; Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002). Accordingly, this research includes the following additional independent control variables: attendance rates; socioeconomic status; school size; and teacher experience, based on their previously demonstrated impact on school success (Bevans, Bradshaw, Miech & Leaf, 2007; Edmonds, 1979; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991).

Correlational analyses revealed that administrator longevity was, in fact, highly correlated with elementary level student success ( $r=.195$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and approached significance with secondary level student success ( $r=.341$ ,  $p=.06$ ).

Regression analysis was then employed. The first regression examined the effect of administrator longevity upon the dependent variable of elementary school success. Variables were entered into the regression model via simultaneous entry. The results formed a linear combination that explained a significant portion of the variance in elementary school success ( $R=.790$ ,  $p<.01$ , with an adjusted R Square of .604). In other words, the model explained 60% of the variance in elementary school success. The results demonstrated that socioeconomic status ( $\beta = -.672$ ,  $p<.01$ ), percent of teachers with 0-5 years' experience ( $\beta = -.145$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and administrator longevity ( $\beta = .227$ ,  $p<.01$ ), each made statistically significant and independent contributions to the variance of the dependent variable.

The second regression analysis examined the effect of administrator longevity upon the dependent variable of secondary school success. Variables were entered into the regression model via simultaneous entry. The results formed a linear combination that explained a significant portion of the variance in school success ( $R=.945$ ,  $p<.01$ , with an adjusted R Square of .872). The results showed that attendance ( $\beta = .536$ ,  $p<.01$ ), socioeconomic status ( $\beta = -.557$ ,  $p<.01$ ), school size ( $\beta = -.370$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and administrator longevity ( $\beta = .375$ ,  $p<.01$ ) each made statistically significant and independent contributions to the variance of the dependent variable.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

It is no surprise that socioeconomic status showed up as a significant variable in this study. This confirms the findings of a number of previous school climate studies (Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002). In a recent report, the Education Trust (Conan, 2012) found that the wealth achievement gap has grown over the last 50 years. Without question, researchers and practitioners who are confronted with this information must make the decision to either accept this information

as normative, or explore ways as to how the challenges of educating students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can be overcome. In fact it is precisely this information that prompts principals to ask the question – what can be done to overcome the effect of socioeconomic status on student achievement?

Fortunately, there are campuses that perform at very high levels regardless of socioeconomic status. Douglas Reeves (2004) coined the phrase “90/90/90 campuses” to identify campuses that have at least 90% of their students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, at least 90% minority students, and student achievement in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests. It is important to examine these campuses and find out what they are doing that leads to their success. Kearney, Herrington & Aguilar (2012) conducted a study of six 90/90/90 campuses in Texas. What they found was that one of the biggest factors common to 90/90/90/ campuses is principal longevity. By implication, policy makers wishing to close the wealth achievement gap may be well served to consider the role that increasing administrator longevity may play toward this end.

### **Attendance**

The impact of student attendance upon secondary schools is clear in this study. As students attend more instructional days, their test scores increase. Perhaps that statement alone is not surprising. What may be more important for administrators to realize is the impact of relatively small increases in attendance. When all the secondary schools involved in this study were ranked from top to bottom based on their attendance rates, it was discovered that the top quartile of schools with highest attendance had an average attendance rate of 95.7%. Meanwhile, schools in the bottom quartile of attendance had an average attendance rate of 92.4%. Thus the difference between these groups was a mere 3.3%, and with an effect size of .536 ( $p < .01$ ), attendance clearly makes a significant independent contribution to the variability in student scores on statewide achievement tests. It would appear that secondary schools in particular would be well served to maximize their attendance rates in order to capitalize on the potential yield these efforts can produce in regard to student achievement.

In Texas, as in many other states, funding is directly tied to WADA (weighted average daily attendance), which means that when students are absent, schools receive less money for education (Walsh, Kemerer, and Maniotis, 2010). By implication, then it is in the school’s own financial and educational interest to invest money in efforts that increase attendance. One strategy used commonly by attendance clerks is to have parent phone calls made on the same day of the child’s absence. If this contact is made early enough, there may be a chance to recapture this student before the student misses an entire day of instruction. Other strategies may include hiring an attendance specialist or community liaison who takes responsibility to coordinate parent contacts and home visits. This communicates that the school is aware of the absence, and cares about having the student back in school as quickly as possible. If there is a legitimate reason the student is absent, there may be an opportunity for home learning so that the child misses as little instruction as possible. The principal plays a vital role in creating a positive campus climate where students feel safe and want to come to school, but creating this positive campus climate

takes time. As administrator longevity is extended, the opportunity for the principal to make the campus feel like a place students want to be is extended as well.

### **Percentage of Teachers with 0-5 Years' Experience**

An interesting statistic that the State of Texas makes available in its Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) is the percentage of teachers who have 0-5 years' experience. In this study, teachers with 0-5 years of experienced made a negative contribution ( $\beta = -.145, p < .05$ ) to student success at the elementary school level. This confirms the notion that it takes a number of years for teachers to hone their craft. Ironically, one third of teachers will leave the profession within their first three years, and one half will leave teaching after five years on the job (NCTAF, 2003). Thus campus and central office administration may do well to consider teacher retention strategies so that they are able to retain quality teachers beyond the first 5 years of their careers.

Because the research indicates that so many educators are leaving the teaching profession entirely within their first 5 years, the competition for these teachers is not simply with other districts, it's with other industries. The way to compete with other industries may begin by providing a salary that is legitimately competitive in order to retain individuals who have the intellect and ability to succeed in a variety of professional roles. However, money is not the only useful tool in retaining quality teachers. Research indicates that employees are more likely to be loyal to their organization when they have a boss that they want to work for (Tope, 2003). The implication in regard to principal longevity is that if a teacher is hired by a principal, buys into that principal's vision for the campus, and then sees that leader leave, there is one less reason for the teacher to remain committed to that school. It seems logical to conclude that increasing principal longevity may have a direct effect on increasing teacher retention which in turn impacts growth in student achievement.

### **Administrator Longevity**

Schools that experience a rapid turnover of principals report a lack of commitment to the organization, a lack of shared purpose, and an inability to attain meaningful change (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Teachers can become cynical and resistant to change because of the revolving door syndrome and the perception that the new leader was a servant to the school system rather than an advocate of the campus (Reynolds, White, Brayman, & Moore, 2008). When school leaders are promoted to the central office too quickly, it leads to the perception that the principal is more committed to career advancement than to the long-term welfare of the school and community (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). This corresponds with the literature on organizational change. Researchers have estimated that school reform normally takes between five to seven years to implement (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996). Similarly, Fullan (1991) posits that change takes at least six years at the secondary level. Thus the research indicates that change takes time and in Texas principals facing the greatest need to affect change often have the least amount of time in which to do so.



Administrator longevity provides an important point by which policy makers can impact school level success. This is an intriguing phenomenon, especially when the average principal tenure on a given campus in Texas is 3 ½ years (Fuller, Young, & Shoho, 2010). This incongruity provides an important consideration point for policy makers, superintendents and principal preparation programs. Principals are facing numerous challenges, such as heightened media attention, insufficient parent involvement, and increased job time requirements (Kennedy, 2000). Each of these contributes to job stress. Therefore the question must be asked as to what can be done to address the turnover rates of principals.

### **What Can be Done to Help Extend Principal Longevity?**

Lovely (2004) has identified six actions that can be taken to improve the retention of quality school leaders that may help to make a school district a great place to work: 1) organize the school district as a learning community, 2) train supervisors to identify true talent, 3) do not be hesitant in building relationships with principals, 4) celebrate both milestones and successes, 5) maintain a clear focus, and 6) help principals experience a sense of achievement (Lovely, 2004). In other words, principals are people too. The same psychological drivers that influence teachers, students, parents and community members also impact principals. People want to feel valued and supported.

Webb & Norton (1999) have found that Peer Assisted Leadership Programs (PALs) have proven to be effective in enabling principals to learn from their colleagues, thus reducing the turnover rate for these principals. A similar strategy is the assignment of one veteran (and respected) principal within a district as the “lead principal,” who then acts as a non-evaluative mentor for her fellow administrators (Hoffman, 2004). Having an experienced school administrator as a mentor can be a great tool particularly in a profession that is prone to professional isolation. As the only principal on a campus, school leaders can often feel as if the weight of the world is on their shoulders. To contact a fellow principal (who is busy taking care of their own campus) may seem like admitting weakness. However, if the principal mentor is a retired school leader whose primary function now is to mentor current principals, they may be more able to have both the time and the credibility to engage in meaningful conversations in a safe environment.

Mentorship is not the only way to engage principals with one another. Peer accountability can be just as valuable. Professional learning communities allow principals to leverage their problem-solving strategies through a broader group of their peers (DuFour, 2002). Similarly, mentoring and coaching have been utilized in a variety of settings. These strategies have demonstrated results such as improved work-place relationships with colleagues, increased job satisfaction, greater commitment to the organization, and increased employee retention (Sketch, 2001). Regardless of the model chosen, it is important that principals not remain in isolation. Opportunities must be created to foster conversations and collegiality among principals so that they do not burn themselves out.

In regard to burn-out prevention, there have also been many models of work-integrated wellness that have been used in the private sector that have proven not only to be cost efficient, but also have reduced employee absenteeism and improved overall health of staff members (Devries, 2010; Haines, Davis, Rancour, Robinson, Neel-Wilson, & White, 2003; Wattles & Harris, 2003). Education may be well served to look to private industry for models that help reduce employee burnout. For example, Devries (2010) identified a number of risk factors which have been associated with lost productivity in employees, absenteeism, and overall job dissatisfaction. These are: poor eating, poor exercise, obesity, high stress, depression and high blood pressure (Devries, 2010). The idea of an exercise requirement has been tried successfully with college faculty and staff (Haines, Davis, Rancour, Robinson, Neel-Wilson & White, 2007). In this study, faculty members used pedometers to monitor walking progress. As employees exercise increased, so did their job satisfaction and workplace productivity. Employees who engage in self-care are not only more fit, they also appear to have increased job satisfaction. Wattles & Harris (2003) demonstrate that job productivity and morale are increased when employers implement formal wellness programs for their employees. Thus, the area of self-care or principal wellness may be fertile ground for future research if school districts and principal preparation programs should choose to attempt to extend the longevity of the principal position in the State of Texas.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

This study began with a simple question – does principal turnover negatively impact student success? The answer is yes. By comparing the length of time in the Principalship with test scores on their corresponding campuses, we have demonstrated that in the aggregate, the longer a principal serves as leader of a campus, the better the student test scores on that campus are likely to be. Of course, principal longevity is not the only factor that impacts upon student success. Teacher experience, student attendance, and socioeconomic status all contributed significantly to student achievement for the schools within this study. We believe that each of these factors are interconnected with one another. We further believe that this research has implications for educational policy makers.

School board members, district superintendents, and other stakeholders presented with this data may determine that it is in their students' best interest to extend the tenure of their campus administrators. Increased pay is certainly one tool they can use to hold on to high performing principals, but it's not the only one. Just as students and teachers need positive feedback, principals do as well. Providing veteran principals as mentors and initiating opportunities for increased collegial relationships among campus leaders can reduce the feeling of isolation and increase principals' shared commitment to their campuses and their district. Principals feel so responsible for their teachers, staff, and students that they often forget to take care of themselves. It may be incumbent upon the district to step into this role and intentionally prioritize principal self-care. As this study has demonstrated, the longer a principal can stay on a campus, the higher the student achievement on that campus is likely to be.

More research is needed on how organizational and individual factors interact to create longer or shorter tenure among school leaders (Yee & Cuban, 1996). Complicating this research is the acknowledgement that every school is unique, having its own contextual factors that influence principal turnover (Kowalski, 1995). It is important therefore to understand the context within which principal turnover occurs (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Hart, 1993). It would be of great interest for future research to follow up with individual campuses to examine the factors which influence principal retention.

It is hoped that this research can serve to further validate the importance of having consistent leadership in place as one factor that promotes student achievement. As a greater understanding of principal turnover is achieved, principal preparation programs, school districts, and state agencies can begin to take steps to reduce principal turnover.

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## ***Connecting Response to Intervention and Grade Retention: Implications for School Leaders***

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Within all classrooms of public schools, teachers greet general education students acknowledging broad differences in their learning readiness and social skills (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010; Martin, 2010). The needs of some students may be so diverse that educators find implementing differentiated instructional strategies with integrity extremely difficult. Many individually research-based strategies have been implemented to provide helpful instruction to all learners. This paper presents the concept of a merger between two of these strategies: Response to Intervention (RTI) and grade retention. As a result, the conceptual framework for this manuscript is anchored within the RTI and grade retention literatures, highlighting their reported effectiveness on student outcomes.

RTI can be implemented in any public school system or building (Baker, Fien, & Baker, 2010; Harlacher, Walker-Nelson, & Sanford, 2010; Johnston, 2010; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008). Grounded in general education and federal laws, RTI seeks primarily to support students who are struggling with reading and math; catching and helping these children in the early grades. RTI's systematic and preventive orientation toward identifying students who are at risk encourages teachers and administrators to shift their thinking from the "wait to fail" model currently in use, to a more proactive, formative, and positive approach to learning.

Conversely, grade retention is a summative decision, typically initiated by the school site or required by policy or statute (Bonvin, Bless, & Schuepbach, 2008; Greene & Winters, 2006; Penfield, 2010) with lasting consequences (Range, Dougan, & Pijanowski, 2011). Conceptually, grade retention is used because practitioners believe low performing students need more time to mature (Biegler, 2000; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Range, Yonke, & Young, 2011) and should not be socially promoted (Brophy, 2006; Greene & Winters, 2011). Others speculate the application of grade retention ensures low performing students do not progress which might make instruction easier because classrooms would be more homogeneous (Ehmke, Drechsel, & Carstensen, 2010).

Both RTI and grade retention are interventions used to help underperforming students meet proficiency standards and as a result, they are connected. Yet little literature attempts to determine how grade retention fits into the intervention framework laid out by RTI (Rogers, 2010). There is a need to consider how these two interventions fit with one another. In sum, this paper puts forth the proposition that RTI, when implemented with fidelity, may diminish or lessen the need for grade retention.

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## Response to Intervention

The current growth of RTI has its roots in public policy and federal laws (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), 2004; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; No Child Left Behind (NCLB), 2002). The overall concept within these policies and laws encouraged the joining of general and special education. Instead of continuing to approach them as two separate systems, RTI addressed a process for general and special education to work together (Wedl, 2005). A second concept within these policies and laws continued the recommendation from IDEIA (2004) that reliance on the IQ test as a qualified indicator of a learning disability needed to be replaced (Wedl, 2005). The requirements of *significant discrepancy* were changed to offer states an alternative to IQ testing utilizing instead the process of RTI. These changes were promoted to develop a more systematic screening process and provide support to students with learning disabilities (Carney & Stiefel, 2008; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008). Due to flexibility in implementation, the framework for RTI is modified from school-to-school due to variances in cultures, student demographics, and school personnel (Ehren, Ehren, & Proly, 2009; Mellard, McKnight, & Jordan, 2010).

RTI begins in the general classroom environment with the practice of assessment and then offers specific interventions for individual students. These interventions will look very different in each school. The most common list of consistent RTI principles includes: (a) research based instruction, (b) fidelity of implementation, (c) universal screenings, (d) multi-tier levels of interventions, and (e) progress monitoring (Dorn, n.d.; Pearce, 2009; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008). There are numerous variables which can lead to increased instructional intensity such as the amount of time for instruction, how often instruction is given each day, how quickly feedback is given to students, differences in requirements to achieve mastery, and requirements for mastery at each level.

The most notable characteristic of RTI is its foundation within general education as a tiered process of interventions (Carney & Stiefel, 2008; Harlacher et al., 2010). Three tiers is the most common number but some RTI designs include up to eight tiers (Carney & Stiefel, 2008; Fuchs et al. 2010; Stepanek & Peixotto, 2009). Briefly, as students move through the tiers, the interventions provided become more individualized, specific to the needs of each student, and time intensive (Mellard & Johnson, 2008).

Tier 1, or universal interventions, are implemented school-wide within the general education classroom and all students receive this instruction (Pavri, 2010). For example, routines such as differentiated instruction, high-order thinking activities, cooperative learning, and assertive discipline are common Tier 1 interventions. Typically, 80-90% of students in Tier 1 receive the appropriate instructional and behavioral interventions and do not move on to Tier 2 (Fuchs et al., 2010; Pearce, 2009).

Tier 2 is often referred to as providing targeted interventions; these interventions are more specifically concentrated for students than those in Tier 1 (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008). Tier 2 interventions are designed to supplement the core program and are typically administered within the general education classroom (Ehren et al., 2009). Five to 10% of students in Tier 2 receive the appropriate intervention and do not move to Tier 3.

Tier 3 interventions, which are the most intense, are instructional strategies that are highly individualized and time consuming (Sailor, 2009). Approximately 1 to 5% of students require Tier 3 instruction (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008) such as intense small group tutoring or one-on-one instruction. Some schools place the process of referral for special education in Tier 3; other schools place special education after Tier 3 (Fuchs et al., 2010; Pearce, 2009; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008).

Throughout the literature on RTI, there is a tremendous amount of emphasis concerning the importance of fidelity of implementation (Ehren et al., 2009; Mellard & Johnson, 2008; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2008; Sailor, 2009). Fidelity refers to the ability of educators to remain consistent in the implementation of RTI from classroom to classroom (Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008). This concept is critical because, as with any educational reform model, change can create fear and as a result, RTI implementation can be misapplied (Sailor, 2009; Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008). Most importantly, fidelity ensures that effective RTI interventions are the authentic source of student progress (Harlacher et al., 2010).

### **Effectiveness of RTI**

RTI has been described as a promising endeavor that has created an opportunity for schools to expand support models to assist struggling students (Pavri, 2010; Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008; Sansosti, Noltemeyer, & Goss, 2010). Moreover, some researchers argue that RTI has replaced the need for educators to rely so heavily upon remedial and special education (Simmons et al., 2008). According to Dorn (n.d.), RTI is the primary method by which students can be helped before they are referred for special education. This identification starts once students enter kindergarten, where developmental and social needs are diverse (Fuchs et al., 2010).

The primary mode of measuring RTI effectiveness is by conducting frequent observations and consistent data collection from those observations. However, Ehren et al. (2009), questioned whether school administrators could identify the breadth of implementation by observations alone. Therefore, the logical place to determine the effectiveness of RTI is to study the performance of students within Tiers 2 and 3 of the model. Relevant research describing the effectiveness of the RTI process at the elementary and secondary levels is briefly addressed.

**Effectiveness in elementary.** Because one of the aims of RTI is early identification, most of the published literature describes the RTI process at the elementary level (Sansosti et al., 2010). In sum, this research base has reported positive trends. For example, Simmons et al. (2008) found that RTI interventions significantly increased the reading achievement of 41 kindergarten students over a four year period. Specifically, these students received repeated bouts of intense, small group instruction throughout the extended study. Furthermore, the authors concluded not only did RTI interventions move students to reading proficiency levels, but also supported them in maintaining that status.

In two related studies, Wanzek and Vaughn (2008) and Duhon, Mesmer, Atkins, Greguson, and Olinger (2009), explored both the intensity and breadth of interventions within the RTI framework (Harlacher et al., 2010). Wanzek and Vaughn focused on



interventions applied after students had already been provided previous Tier 2 interventions and found students who received double dosed interventions did not perform significantly better than those who received a single dose intervention. However, students within the treatment group who received some sort of tiered intervention showed larger gains in reading achievement than those in the control group. In a similar study, Duhon et al. (2010) attempted to determine if varying intervention intensities impacted the math skills of at-risk students. Initially, all students received the same intervention once per day and interventions were increased up to five times a day for students who were initially non-responsive. Results of the study found that increased frequency of interventions led to “improved functioning of the entire group” (p. 114).

Finally, O’Conner, Fulmer and Harty (2003) and Koutsoftas, Harmon, and Gray (2009) sought to uncover the effectiveness of Tier 2 and 3 interventions on the reading performance of elementary students. O’Conner et al. (2003) focused solely on the effectiveness of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions on the reading achievement of 92 Kindergarten through second grade students and found that tiered interventions increased the reading achievement of students and also reduced rates of special education identification. Koutsoftas et al. (2009) studied Tier 2 interventions on the phonemic awareness of 34 pre-school students. Results showed that 71% of students benefited from Tier 2 interventions, remained in the general education classroom, and were able to progress to benchmark level.

**Effectiveness in secondary.** Limited research exists describing the effective implementation of RTI at the secondary level, especially at the high school (Duffy, 2007; Vaughn et al., 2010). Brozo (2010) argued that RTI implementation at the secondary level is more challenging because students have difficulties with content driven text. These difficulties have little to do with remedial reading problems or learning disabilities, and more to do with content vocabulary instruction.

Moreover, Fuchs et al. (2010) stated that the theory behind RTI is based on presumptions which are more ambiguous at the secondary level. Specifically, a universal screening instrument that measures the complexities of literacy at the middle and high school levels has yet to be produced (Duffy, 2007). Despite these barriers to implementation, Duffy (2007) stressed the importance of RTI at the secondary level because students who arrive in secondary settings with learning problems have less time to catch up to grade level peers. Fuchs et al. (2010) argued that parts of RTI could be modified at the middle and high school levels. For example, because RTI at the secondary level is more concerned with eliminating academic deficits quickly, the need for universal screenings is not vital. As a result, secondary students who are considered at-risk during their first year in middle or high school should be moved immediately to Tier 2 and 3 interventions (Fuchs et al. 2010).

Vaughn et al. (2010) reported on the success of RTI at the secondary level and followed the reading achievement of 241 middle school students supported by Tier 2 interventions. These Tier 2 interventions were year-long and were administered by trained tutors in groups of 10-15 students for 50 minutes each school day. In sum, gains in reading achievement were positive, but small. Vaughn et al. (2010) attributed these findings by

utilizing a large sample which might have skewed effect size and variances in both the fidelity of interventions and instruction.

### **Grade Retention**

Grade retention, the practice of requiring students to repeat a grade, is a prominent debate in early childhood education (Biegler, 2000; Lorence, Dworkin, Toenjes, & Hill, 2002; Penfield, 2010; Wu, West, & Hughes, 2008, 2010) because educators and policymakers believe retaining students in grades earlier, rather than later, is best for their academic, social, and emotional well-being (Abbott, Wills, Greenwood, Kamps, Powell-Heitzman, & Selig, 2010; Eide & Showalter, 2001; Range et al., 2011b; Xia & Kirby, 2009). Similar to RTI, both policy and legislation fuel the argument for grade retention (Bowman-Perrott, 2010; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; NCLB, 2002) which have blamed lack of rigor as the primary reason for student underperformance within US schools (Allen, Chen, Willson, & Hughes, 2009). In response to this scrutiny, some states (Florida, Missouri, Texas) and school districts (Chicago, New York City) have adopted retention standards as proof of increased student accountability (Greene & Winters, 2004, 2007, 2009; McCombs, Kirby, & Mariano, 2009; Range, 2009; Roderick & Nagaoka, 2005).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009) predicted that by 2007, about 10% of students in kindergarten through eighth grade had been retained at one time. Yet, a closer look at these retention numbers shows that its administration exhibits gender, cultural, and socioeconomic bias. For example, a greater percentage of male and African American students are retained and the majority of retained students come from poverty (Bowman-Perrott, Herrera, & Murry, 2010; Haberman & Dill, 1993; Nagaoka & Roderick, 2004; NCES, 2009; Willson & Hughes, 2006).

Despite these findings, K-12 practitioners, policy makers, and the public at large believe retention benefits immature students by providing more time to learn (Beswick, Sloat, & Willms, 2008; Cannon & Lipscomb, 2011; Chen, Chengfang, Zhang, Shi, & Rozelle, 2010; Penfield, 2010; Range et al. 2011b; Xia & Kirby, 2009) and reduces the skill variance between students (Xia & Glennie, 2005). These beliefs do not align with the majority of research findings (Bonvin et al. 2008) concerning the effectiveness of grade retention and Witmer, Hoffman, and Nottis (2004) described this gap between research and practice by stating, “teachers alter their personal beliefs [about retention] based primarily on their own experiences or through shared experiences of their colleagues rather than through the acquisition of knowledge derived from current research” (p. 186).

Literature on retention focuses on retention’s impact on both short term and long term outcomes for students and is either designed in a *same-grade* or *same-age* format. A *same-grade* design compares the performance of retained students, although now older due to retention; with the performance of students who are in the same grade (Ehmke et al., 2010). The results of such studies might be skewed because retained students are receiving instruction for a second time. *Same-age* retention studies compare retained students to promoted peers and provide a description of how the achievement between the two groups differs (Ehmke et al., 2010). Yet, this design does not take into

consideration the fact that promoted peers might perform better because they have access to more difficult curriculum.

Regardless of design, many studies are speculative because of extraneous variables which are difficult for researchers to control (Wu et al., 2008). The main flaw in retention research is making causal inferences without randomized experimental design (Greene & Winters, 2011) which forces researchers to attempt to control for pre-existing, extraneous variables (Allen et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2010). Additionally, because some occurrences of grade retention are initiated by teachers' recommendations as opposed to policy, the reader is not explicitly told how retained students differed from promoted students making it difficult to predict whether their future struggles in school are caused by grade retention or other variables (Greene & Winters, 2004, 2007, 2009, 2011). To alleviate this problem, Greene and Winters (2006) recommend objective standards, discussed previously, as a way to differentiate who and who should not be retained. Such standards "might significantly change the effects of retention in ways that previous research could not anticipate or measure" (Greene & Winters, 2006, p. 67).

### **Retention and Student Outcomes**

Critics argue that student outcomes as a result of grade retention are compellingly negative (Burkam, LoGerfo, Ready, & Lee, 2007; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Jimerson et al., 2006; Siberglitt, Jimerson, Burns, & Appleton, 2006). For example, Martin (2010) found that grade retention negatively impacted the academic self-concept of students, homework completion of students, motivation of students, and increased students school absences. The most prevalent negative outcome associated with grade retention is its connection to dropping out of school (Jimerson, 2001; Nagaoka & Roderick, 2004).

However, researchers have challenged the creditability of retention studies that report negative outcomes based on methodological limitations (Hughes, Chen, Thoemmes, & Kwok, 2010) and retention's positive impact on student outcomes in US schools (Greene & Winters, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011; Lorence & Dworkin, 2006; Lorence et al., 2002; McCombs et al., 2009; Southard & May, 1996; Wu et al., 2010) and internationally (Ehmke et al., 2010; Bonvin et al., 2008) can be found within the literature.

### **Retention Based on State Mandates**

To remove teacher bias from retention decision making, some states and school districts have adopted promotion policies based on performance on a standardized reading test. Both Florida and Texas banned social promotion by requiring all third grade students to pass the state's reading test before they moved on to fourth grade, clearly holding parents and students accountable for learning (Ladner & Burke, 2010).

**Florida.** Greene and Winters (2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011) explored the impact of retention on student performance one and two years after Florida students were retained and found positive academic increases in student achievement the year after retention and substantial increases in gains the second year (Greene & Winters, 2007). In fact, Ladner and Burke (2010) concluded that "retained students learned how to read, while the [low performing] promoted students continued to fall behind" (p. 12). However, Chatterji

(2010) disputed these findings and stated Ladner and Burke (2010) did not account for over-age grade repeaters and did nothing to provide information on how the policy impacted students over time. Additionally, Briggs (2006) argued the Greene and Winters (2006) analysis did not account for other interventions, like summer school, that were applied to students before they were retained.

**Texas.** Lorence et al. (2002) found that Texas third grade students who had low reading scores and were retained, increased their scores about 18 points when they retook the reading assessment a year later. Similarly, Lorence and Dworkin (2006) found that socially promoted pupils reading scores were worse than retained students and Hughes et al. (2010) concluded that students who were retained in first grade were more likely to pass the third grade reading and math tests than similar, low performing but promoted peers. Wu et al. (2010) found retained students benefitted from grade retention due to decreased teacher rated hyperactivity, decreased peer-rated sadness, and increased teacher rated student engagement. Conversely, Wu et al. (2008) matched retained Texas students with low-performing promoted peers and compared their growth on mathematics and reading scores and found grade retention had a negative impact on mathematics scores but had no impact on reading scores two years after the retention year.

### **Retention Based on School District Mandates**

Following the lead of some states, individual school districts have also implemented promotion policies based on student performance on standardized tests (Ou & Reynolds, 2010; Roderick & Nagaoka, 2005). The policies are typical in large urban school systems, like Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles and are initiated because administrators are faced with the issue of “how to motivate teachers and students to set high expectations while dealing with the problem of persistent poor student performance” (Roderick & Nagaoka, 2005, p. 310).

**Chicago Public Schools.** Jacob and Lefgren (2002) concluded grade retention had positive academic impacts on Chicago students’ math and reading at the third grade and found summer school and grade retention increased student achievement by 20%. After the second year, the effect was not as large but was still significant, yet findings for sixth grade students were not significant for any year analyzed. Jacob and Lefgren (2002) found evidence “that summer school and grade retention have a modest but positive net impact on student achievement scores for third grade students” (p. 27). Additionally, Jacob and Lefgren (2007) concluded grade retention in the sixth grade had little effect on the probability of dropping out of school, yet eighth grade retention did increase the risk of dropping out.

Yet, Roderick and Nagaoka (2005) did not concur with these positive findings and found retention in third grade did not increase the reading achievement for students two years after retention and sixth grade retentions were associated with decreased reading achievement. Additionally, because of the policy, the authors reported that teachers, frustrated with the fact they had perpetually low performing students with little plan for remediation, turned to special education for help. In sum, Roderick and Nagaoka (2005) stated that in order to get around the retention policy, more students qualified for special education than in the past.

**New York City Public Schools.** McCombs et al. (2009) reported on the impact of a fifth grade mandatory retention policy on student academic and socio-emotional outcomes and found that retained students' performance the subsequent year improved drastically in pass rates on the promotion test and proficiency levels. Most importantly, proficiency rates on the state test continued to increase in sixth and seventh grades and students who had been retained outperformed promoted students in their cohort on the same-grade assessment. Additionally, the emotional well-being of retained students was not negatively impacted by retention, even four years after the retention year.

**Los Angeles Unified School District.** Cannon and Lipscomb (2011) found that mandatory retention in the Los Angeles public schools benefited both first and second grade students concerning reading skills on the California Standards Tests. Specifically, retained first grade students scored 64% higher the second year and retained second grade students were more likely to be proficient on the state test and retained second grade students were more likely to be proficient on the third grade state assessment. Additionally, retention aided students from various sub-groups (minority and low income) in becoming proficient.

### **RTI and Grade Retention Link**

When educators encounter students who are underperforming, they are faced with a choice of either applying interventions to build their skills or retain them in grade (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2011). Research has shown that retention is detrimental to a host of student outcomes (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Martin, 2009, 2010), yet scholars argue that some of these studies do not provide a clear view of its effectiveness because of faulty research designs. Although many studies highlight the short term benefits associated with retention, the primary rebuttal to these positive findings is that student performance is not tracked longitudinally making short-term gains only a temporary solution for student performance (Briggs, 2010; Chatterji, 2010). As a result, it is important to understand how grade retention fits within the context of RTI.

Limited research has been conducted attempting to link RTI and grade retention (Rogers, 2010). Haught (2007) found little relationship between the frequency of students retained in kindergarten through third grade before and after the implementation of RTI. In a significant study, Murray, Woodruff, and Vaughn (2010) found that retention rates of first grade students decreased by 47% after the implementation of RTI. Additionally, Kovaleski, Gickling, Morrow, and Swank (1999) and Hartman and Fay (1996) found that Instructional Support Teams (IST), a process similar to RTI, reduced the number of students who were retained.

Bowman-Perrott (2010, p. 1) argued that early intervention, the kind "that is focused, intensive, and implemented by knowledgeable, skilled practitioners" is the key to preventing grade retention. It seems plausible to view grade retention, the most extreme intervention that can be applied to struggling students, as the last resort intervention (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2011). Research has shown that once students are retained, the intensity and duration of interventions provided are too weak to remediate student learning, therefore "it is the responsibility of school administrators to provide some type of system [e.g. 3-tier] by which to move students into appropriate instructional

placement" (Abbott et al. 2010, p. 22). Based on this evidence, if schools would implement a more proactive, tiered intervention approach with fidelity, like RTI, the need to administer grade retention should be diminished (Bowman-Perrott, 2010).

### **Strategies for School Leadership**

The most effective strategy for a successful RTI program is to involve the administration often and early in the process. Strong administrators can be invaluable in order for RTI to be implemented with consistency and collaboration. Further, building administrators are essential to providing leadership which supports RTI (Consistency and collaboration, 2010); in short, building administrators must support and be involved if RTI is to work (Batsche, n.d; Harlacher et al., 2010; Johnston, 2010; Mellard et al., 2010; Response to Intervention – Idaho, 2009; Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008; Sansosti et al., 2010). To further highlight the role of administrators in the importance of RTI, numerous educational administrators contributed to a list of Six Strategies for Effective RTI Leadership:

1. Have a vision – a vision is a bridge from the present to the future.
2. Be unexpected – take actions that are unexpected. For example, personalize communication about struggling readers and follow up with team members.
3. Be concrete – advocate for RTI. Leaders need to be perceived as working consciously and consistently on behalf of struggling students.
4. Be credible – promote situational interest and commitment to students by honoring all data at the RTI table. Carefully analyze how and why interventions are working or not working.
5. Encourage emotions – feelings inspire people to act. Emotional discussions encourage RTI team members to view struggling reading as humans (as opposed to numbers on tables or trend lines).
6. Share stories – invite discussions that bring a wide range of data to the table (Consistency and collaboration, 2010, p. 37).

Once school leadership teams make the decision to adopt RTI, they need to establish how their philosophical view of grade retention fits within the school's RTI framework. This begins by connecting the school's philosophical view about retention to the district's or state's stance. Is grade retention mandated, and if so, at what grade level(s)? Are grade level promotion gates established by board policy or state statute? Once this connection is made, school leadership teams need to also answer:

1. How does grade retention fit within the RTI tiered intervention system? Is it a Tier 3 intervention or is it completely separate from the tiers?
2. Who initiates grade retention recommendations? Is it a single individual's decision or does the RTI team make the decision?
3. What specific interventions made the most impact on a struggling student's academic outcomes? Should these interventions be delivered with more intensity and duration to keep the student from being retained?
4. What data should be collected to determine if a student will be retained?

5. If a student is retained, how can schools ensure they are prepared to give him/her a different educational experience (Allen et al., 2009)?

### Conclusion

Both RTI and grade retention are interventions utilized to aide low performing students in meeting proficiency standards. RTI, the more proactive approach, makes more sense in light of the mixed research findings behind grade retention, the more summative approach. In short, returning retained students to the same environment in which they struggled the first time sets them up for failure once again (Abbott et al., 2010). Early screening and prevention using a tiered intervention system is the best answer to providing struggling students with better quality instruction. Hopefully, as RTI continues to expand and practitioners understand its value, the need for grade retention should be lessened (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2010). Most importantly, teachers and administrators must advocate for policies that expand tiered intervention services, like RTI, as opposed to policies that mandate grade retention (Murray et al., 2010).

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## ***Principal Preparation Program Redesign: How Universities May Be Required to Redesign Their Programs***

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With the advent of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) there has been a greater emphasis on the quality of those individuals who lead the efforts within each of our school buildings across the country. Even more so than district level leadership, an effort has been made to research the effectiveness and improve the quality of the principals who lead school level reforms that are being promoted by business leaders and mandated by legislatures throughout the country. Legislators at both the national and state levels have encouraged these efforts and have even passed legislation that have increased requirements and promoted a redesign of programs for those institutions of higher education which choose to offer coursework leading to their particular state's certification as a campus level administrator.

One such example of these efforts is the recent legislation which is now being enacted in the state of Illinois through the passage of Illinois Public Act 096-0903 (II P.A. 096-0903). This legislation which re-wrote 23 Illinois Administrative Code 30 covering the preparation of aspiring principals includes a requirement that institutions of higher education must show how they will document outcomes of both knowledge and leadership skills that must be demonstrated by graduates of their principal preparation programs prior to the institution sending a student's application to the state for certification.

These new requirements to revamp university preparation programs have been added to some already stiff sanctions that can come upon the principals themselves if the students within their schools continue to be low performing. One of the most notable of these sanctions within the four acceptable remediation plans approved for NCLB is the removal of the building principal as the first step of this process of reconstituting a failing campus. Thus with these high levels of punitive actions that can be taken against a principal in continually low performing schools, it is apparent legislative policymakers are concentrating on the quality of the preparation of aspiring principals in order to better assure their success in the position.

### **Key Research Behind The Illinois Initiative**

A great deal of research on what outstanding principals know and do has been completed since the early 2000s. Much of this research was funded by the Wallace Foundation as part of their effort to improve the achievement of all students within the public schools across this nation. During a February 2012 review of a website developed by the Wallace Foundation designed to bring to a single source a number of these studies, it was identified that there were twenty-seven studies funded by the Foundation since 2000. This body of research has been referred to as the Learning from Leadership Project:

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Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning. These studies, completed by different researchers in the field of education, dealt with the issue of quality principal leadership that leads to higher student achievement. In addition, several of these studies reported on actions that state policymakers could take to improve the quality of principal preparation programs offered by universities within their states. The Foundation's efforts were designed to assure the quality of each state's program. An important aspect of all these successful programs was that their graduates could demonstrate both the knowledge and skills to be able to lead campus level reforms geared towards increasing the achievement levels of all students.

Initially, many Illinois university principal preparation programs and member professors of the Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration were utilizing a 2007 report completed by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (SELI) entitled "Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs" (Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007), as the research base to begin their redesign efforts of their principal preparation programs. This study reported five major findings from their work:

1. Exemplary pre- and in-service programs share many common features
2. Exemplary programs produce well prepared leaders who engage in effective practice
3. Program success is influenced by leadership, partnerships, and financial support
4. Funding strategies influence the design and effectiveness of programs
5. State and district policies influence program designs and outcomes (p. 5).

Within the executive summary of their report SELI presented the following implications for policy and practice:

1. First, recruitment and selection are central to program design, not incidental activities. The knowledge and skills of those who enter a program determine to a great extent what kind of curriculum can be effective and what kind of leader will emerge.
2. Second, professional standards provide an important tool for strengthening a program's focus on instructional leadership and school improvement.
3. Third, durable partnerships between districts and universities, as well as state supports, facilitate consistent, coherent professional development.
4. Fourth, while specific program features can be important, most critical are how features are integrated and how the program reinforces a robust model of leadership.
5. Fifth, effective programs require significant resources, especially human resources, to support learning embedded in practice (p. 21).

The Stanford team also presented two implications for policymakers:

1. First, the design, quality, and impact of principal preparation and development programs can be significantly shaped by purposeful state and district policies.
2. Second, state and district financing policies are critical (p.23).

As the Illinois State Board of Education began drafting legislation and delivering presentations on their efforts, it became clear that ISBE was utilizing research reports created by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Two reports from the mid-2000s supported by Wallace Foundation funding, appear to have served as the basis of the principal preparation redesign legislation in Illinois. The first report dealt with the status of the internship or practicum courses that serve as a culminating experience within most university preparation programs. This report by the Southern Regional Education Board Leadership Institute (SREBLI) entitled “The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?” (Fry, Bottoms, & O’Neill, 2005) discussed the current status of such experiences for most students completing a principal certification program. SREB president at the time of this study, Mark Musick, in the preface to this report stated,

Responsibility for getting the internship right cannot be laid solely at the door of the educational leadership department, the university or any of the various state agencies responsible for higher education, program approval and licensure. They require simultaneous, aligned actions across the leadership preparation system (p.2).

Musick went on to list the important actions that needed to occur if we can expect the structure and content of educational leadership to make any significant changes to their programs in order to better prepare aspiring or current practicing principals. These actions included:

1. States must develop strong policies and procedures on leadership preparation and licensure that make it impossible to continue licensing graduates based on completion of a program inadequately designed for the needs of today’s students and schools.
2. University presidents must be challenged to make leadership preparation a priority of the institution and to confront the need for new resources required for redesigning programs to incorporate high-quality internships.
3. Departments of educational leadership must develop stronger relationships with local school districts that involve working together to select the most promising candidates and design and deliver programs that prepare leaders who can meet district needs for improved student achievement.
4. Local school districts must take on new responsibilities for recruiting aspiring leaders and then providing the support and conditions necessary for them to succeed in the preparation program (p.2).

The same 2005 SREB report on the status of principal internships related educational internships to those in other professional fields. The report stated that such courses will “expand the knowledge and skills of candidates.” It went further to state such experiences by principal candidates will identify their ability to apply what they had learned in their program in real-world situations. SREB’s view of the status of most of these internship programs was described as follows, “Today, in far too many principal preparation programs, the internship ‘vessel’ is leaky, rudderless or still in dry dock” (p.3).

As a follow up to their 2005 report, SREB concluded there needed to be more study of the content and structure of the courses being taught to principal candidates prior to beginning their culminating internship. This conclusion led to the release of a second study entitled, “Schools Can’t Wait: Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs” (Fry, O’Neill, & Bottoms, 2006). As part of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) presentations on efforts to re-write Illinois administrative code concerning requirements for university principal preparation programs, representatives of university principal preparation programs in Illinois were given a copy of the SREB report in an effort to garner support from university professors to support the legislative initiative undertaken by IBHE/ISBE. These early initiatives eventually led to the requirement that all principal preparation institutions submit a newly redesigned program that would require approval from both IBHE and ISBE. In many ways, the piece of legislation passed by the Illinois Legislature mirrored the recommendations in the SREB publications.

In a message presented in the preface of the 2006 SREB report by the organization’s president at the time the report was released helps to explain the premise behind the Illinois policymakers’ forceful actions to change principal preparation programs. President Dave Spence stated,

1. Current state policies and strategies intended to promote redesign of principal preparation programs have produced episodic change in a few institutions but have fallen short in producing the deeper change that would ensure all candidates master the knowledge and skills needed to be effective school leaders today.
2. There is a lack of urgency for refocusing the design, content, process and outcomes of principal preparation programs based on the needs of schools and student achievement and little will happen until there are committed leaders of change at every level — state, university and local school district.
3. States and districts cannot depend on universities to change principal preparation programs on their own because the barriers to change within these organizations are too deeply entrenched.
4. The issue is not whether principal preparation programs need to change, but how states can plan and carry out a redesign initiative that gets the right results (p.4).

Concerns presented by various stakeholder groups in Illinois were extensive, even from professor groups who were actively involved in the study of the need to redesign principal preparation programs. Several institutions within Illinois were actively involved in the process of redesigning their preparation programs at the time IBHE/ISBE began its legislative initiative to require the redesign of principal preparation programs. Several leaders of these institutions’ educational leadership departments were actively involved on a committee created by IBHE/ISBE for the purpose of making recommendations as to how the state should move forward on this issue. Without



previous notice, this committee was dissolved by IBHE/ISBE staff and they began to move forward with their legislative proposals. Reasons for the professors' concerns expressed to IBHE/ISBE's eventual proposed legislative initiatives were many, but it appeared that the strongest objections from university professors came from their feelings that the IBHE/ISBE did not follow a number of the recommendations made by its own organized advisory group and that the proposed legislative administrative rule changes were too prescriptive, concentrating on only one body of research, thus appearing to leave out a greater body of research that was available to be considered. Even with the objections by many university professors and certain universities led by their departments of educational leadership, the combined IBHE/ISBE legislative initiative was approved by both legislative chambers in the form of II P.A. 096-0903 signed into law by the governor in early 2011.

With the passage of II P.A. 096-0903, all universities that desired to continue or begin offering a program leading to certification as a principal in Illinois needed to meet a number of requirements, many of which were not already included in current principal preparation programs. All programs to be offered after July 1, 2014, were required to be presented to a joint committee of IBHE/ISBE to demonstrate that the newly redesigned program met all the requirements set forth in the legislation prior to final approval by both state education agencies.

Section 30.30 of the Illinois legislation established some basic principles that must be contained in each newly redesigned principal preparation program within the state. These include the creation of formal partnerships and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) by the university program with school districts and non-public schools in order to meet the 2008 ISLLC standards. These partnerships then work together to design curriculum that emphasizes the importance of student learning and school improvement including the special needs of all students

The influence of the initial 2005 SREBLI report entitled "The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?" (Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2005) can be seen within Section 30.40 of the bill that required university programs to develop internship experiences that will assure all principal candidates will be, "exposed to and participate in a variety of school leadership situations in school settings that represent diverse economic and cultural conditions." These internship experiences may take place in one or more public or nonpublic school so that the candidate will have an opportunity to meet the goal to interact with a variety of school stakeholders from the previously mentioned diverse economic and cultural conditions.

Section 30.45 of the legislation continued to stress the importance of the internship experience. This section established three statewide assessments that must be confirmed within each university's program in addition to separate institutional assessments that will ensure that each candidate understands the requirements for the development of individual education programs for students. Finally Illinois legislation included in this section a requirement that each university program will include a means to ensure that its

candidates meet “Critical Success Factors” which were identified as the thirty-six activities listed in SREB’s *Critical Success Factors for Principals* document.

More descriptive requirements for course content were also included in the IBHE/ISBE initiatives that were eventually included within the final approved legislation. These requirements included course components that cover more on school law, issues related to students with disabilities and the applicable school laws, the use of technology in teaching, learning and administration, utilizing a process to determine how children respond to scientific, researched based interventions, an understanding of age appropriate literacy and numeracy skills across various grade levels, issues of bullying, and finally the evaluation of certified staff.

Due to concerns brought forth by faculty from more traditional university programs that utilize primarily a face to face structure for course delivery, the state of Illinois included some additional requirements that must be met by those principal preparation programs that utilize primarily an online distance learning or video-conferencing technology to deliver 50% or more of their program. In addition, such programs must require at least two full days of internship site observations by full-time tenure track faculty per semester and at least twenty days of such observations through the entire program. Each candidate is also required to spend at least one day per semester in a facility located within Illinois, attend in person four meetings per year with a supervisor to discuss the candidates performance, and attend three in person seminars to discuss issues they have encountered during their internship experiences related to student learning and school improvement.

In an effort to assure the high quality of a university’s principal preparation program and to avoid concerns that some institutions might be using these programs simply to generate larger student numbers and thus related tuition dollars, requirements were included in Section 30.60 of the bill for student/faculty ratios. Each program must appoint at least two faculty members on a full-time basis for a program of 100 or fewer students. Once a program enrolls over 100 students on a full or part-time basis, the university must allocate on a full-time basis for each increment of 50 or fewer students. This means that when a program reaches a student enrollment of 101, the program will need to add one more full-time equivalent faculty member. “Enrolled” was defined as a student’s enrollment in one or more courses required for completion of the program. IBHE/ISBE clarified the intent of “full-time basis” for faculty members to include time the faculty member may spend teaching courses in the area of superintendent or school business official programs.

Section 30.60 went on to create additional requirements for staffing principal preparation programs. No candidate can receive more than one-third of his/her coursework from the same instructor, no more than 80% of the coursework in the program shall be taught by adjunct faculty, any faculty supervisor of student internships may not have more than 36 candidates at the same time during a 12-month period. Onsite mentors shall have no more than two candidates assigned to them during a 12-month period. However there is an exception where a mentor could be approved to supervise a third candidate during this

same time. Finally, each full-time faculty member and each faculty internship supervisor shall participate in the training required for the evaluation of certified personnel.

In order to increase the quality of candidates who enter into principal preparation programs, more specific candidate admission standards were also included in Il P.A. 096-0903. These requirements require an in-person interview of every potential candidate by no less than two of a program's full-time faculty members. In addition, part of the candidate selection process will require that a candidate has a valid and current Illinois teaching certificate, has passed the Illinois Test of Basic Skills, and has submitted a portfolio which presents evidence of both teaching proficiency and leadership experiences during the candidate's teaching experience.

University principal preparation programs leading to state certification after July 1, 2014, must follow all the procedures set forth in Illinois statute 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.145 and specify how their program will meet all the designated requirements. A request for program approval will be submitted to the State Superintendent for consideration. The State Superintendent will then provide a completed request to the Principal Preparation Review Panel for its review and recommendation for approval by IBHE/ISBE.

These revised legislative rules show an emphasis on increasing the importance of the internship experiences for principal candidates including an increase in the number and length of internship observations by university personnel, new requirements for program course content, limits on the staffing for these programs, and the formation of more formal, documented, ongoing relationships with PK-12 public and non-public schools.

Several requirements in the Illinois law created concerns by university faculty and administrators due to the potential financial costs related to their implementation in relation to their current programs. Some of these include:

1. Increased need for university supervisors travel and time at internship sites.
2. Possible stipends needed for internship site supervisors due to increased demands and qualifications for site supervisors.
3. Need to add additional credit hour courses to the program to meet the increased curriculum components above their current programs.
4. Mandated student to full time faculty numbers.
5. Limit of no more than one-third of a candidate's coursework received from the same instructor.
6. No more than 80% of the coursework taught by adjunct faculty.
7. Limiting the number of candidates one site mentor may have to only two may force students in larger schools to have to travel to other sites.
8. Full-time faculty in the program and each faculty supervisor must participate in the training to evaluate certified personnel.
9. Increased time needed to complete candidate selection process which will include an in-person interview with no fewer than two of the program's full-time faculty along with the reviewing of each candidate's portfolio.

## **One University's Initial Step**

The Illinois legislative administrative rules changes followed very closely the SREB recommendations of what state policymakers should do in order to assure that major revisions would be implemented in all principal preparation programs throughout the state. At the early stages of the redesign process, educational leadership faculty at Eastern Illinois University (EIU) began to take steps to expand their already established formal and informal relationships with the public and private PK-12 schools within the university's southeastern Illinois geographical area. It was apparent within the discussions, presentations and documents presented by IBHE/ISBE during the initial phases of the redesign process, seeking and documenting a strong effort to seek input from the educational leadership's partner schools and practitioners who were both graduates and non-graduates of the EIU program was essential.

### **Methods**

In an effort to capture the perceptions of current practicing administrators regarding the topics currently covered within the core courses in the Eastern Illinois University (EIU) principal preparation program, a nineteen question survey seeking the respondent's perception of the importance of each primary topic as listed within the Department of Educational Leadership approved curriculum guide to be taught within each of the eight courses was developed. The respondents also had the opportunity to share their perceptions of other topics that should be taught within each class through the use of an open-ended question for each course. The survey engine program, Survey Monkey, was utilized to collect responses to the survey questions.

An invitation to participate in the survey and a link to access the survey was distributed electronically to all current district and school level administrators currently listed on the EIU Regional Offices of Education partner administrator email network. This network has been used on a regular basis to communicate information to practicing school and district level administrators from the Department of Educational Leadership at Eastern Illinois University.

The survey asked administrators, who chose to respond, to record their perceived level of importance for each topic by indicating the level of importance being "Very Important", "Important" or "Not Important." In addition respondents had the opportunity to respond to an open ended question for each course which stated, "Please list other topics that should be taught in this course." The final three open-ended questions in the survey gave respondents the opportunity to share their thoughts on either entire courses that might be added to the required program of courses or topics that should be included existing courses in a future redesigned program, any topics or courses that should be eliminated or no longer taught as part of the program, and to give their overall opinion of the Eastern Illinois University Principal Preparation Program.

The survey was available to potential respondents for a thirty day period after it was sent to the EIU Regional Offices of Education partner administrator email network for

distribution to all educators who were included on this email list. The data collected from the survey were reviewed and analyzed by members of the EIU Department of Educational Leadership, including this author. Percentages for the level of importance for each course's topics listed were calculated to determine which topics gained the greatest level of importance within each course and which topics respondents perceived as less important to be included within each course. An analysis of the open-ended responses for each course was also completed in an effort to determine any major themes that might exist for the need of new or revised topics within each course or any completely new courses that should be added within the redesigned program.

## **Findings**

A total of sixty-four (64) individual educators from the EIU Regional Offices of Education partner administrator email network responded to the survey request. Of this total the largest number, twenty-four (37.5%) of individuals responding identified themselves as "Elementary Principal." The next largest group of respondents, fourteen (21.9%) identified themselves as a "Superintendent" with the remaining respondents by number and percentage of total respondents being "High School Principal" nine (14.1%), "Middle School Principal" nine (14.1%), "Other" four (4) (6.3%), "High School Assistant Principal" three (4.7%), and "Teacher" one (1.6%).

The state of Illinois has three types of school districts. These are Unit Districts which include students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade twelve, Elementary Districts which educate students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight, and High School Districts where students are in grades nine through twelve. Of the sixty-four educators who responded to this survey forty-one (64.1%) worked in Unit School Districts, sixteen (25%) were from Elementary School Districts, and seven (10.9%) were employed in High School Districts.

The greatest number of respondents, twenty-nine (45.3%) had been in their current position for one to five years, eighteen (28.1%) were in their current positions six to ten years, eleven (17.2%) were in their first year, five (7.8%) were in the eleven to fifteenth year in their current position, and one (1.6%) respondent was in his/her current position for over twenty years.

Sixty-three educators responded to the question of how many total years including their current year had they been in administration. Eighteen (28.6%) had been in administration for six to ten years, sixteen (25.4%) had one to five years of administrative experience, thirteen (20.6%) had eleven to twenty years in administration, seven (11.1%) were in their sixteen to twentieth year, six (9.5%) had more than twenty years of administrative experience, and three (4.8%) of the respondents were in their first year as an administrator.

Sixty-three of the respondents also answered questions concerning their relationships as students with the EIU administrative preparation programs. Forty-one (66.1%) of the respondents were graduates of the EIU Principal Preparation Program, twenty-two

(34.9%) had graduated from the EIU superintendent preparation program, three (4.8%) were currently enrolled in the EIU principal preparation program, and four (6.3%) were currently enrolled in the EIU superintendent preparation program.

According to the 2009 – 2011 online graduate catalog for Eastern Illinois University (EIU, 2009), there were eight core courses within the department of educational leadership that were required to be taken by all students who complete the Masters level degree program that leads to principal certification in the state of Illinois. These core courses did not include the practicum course hours or three other elective courses that were required to be taken from other departments. The core required courses in the EIU Principal Preparation Program included School Law (EDA 5410), School/Community Relations (EDA 5420), Introduction to Organization and Administration (EDA 5600), The Principalship (EDA 5630), Supervision of Instruction (EDA 5700), Personnel Administration (EDA 5870), Introduction to Research (EDA 5900), and Management and Analysis of Data (EDA 5960).

A summary of the results of the quantitative data and selected qualitative responses for each of the eight required courses included in the EIU program as listed in the 2009 – 2011 Eastern Illinois University Graduate Catalog included:

#### **School Law (EDA 5410)**

The topics judged most important within the School Law course with a response of “very important” by eighty percent or more of the respondents were Teacher Rights and Responsibility (87.5%), General Legal Principles (85.9%), and Student and Parent Rights and Responsibilities (81.3%). The three lowest rated “very important” topics were Church and State (21.9%), The Legislative Process (31.3%), and Law-Making Agencies Effecting Leaders and Educational Institutions (50.0%).

Issues that needed greater emphasis in this course from the responses to question number 9 of the survey highlighted the importance of special education legal issues and rights, developing issues related to social networking, and the growth of issues related to bullying within schools.

#### **School/Community Relations (EDA 5420)**

The three highest ranked course topics for the School/Community Relations course were Parent/Community Communications (89.1%), Public Relations During a Crisis (84.4%), and Aspects of Positive/Negative School Community Relations (75.0%). The three lowest ranked topics as to “very important” in this course were School/District Public Relations Audit (29.7%), Community Involvement in Planning and Policy Development (46.9%), and School Publications and Documents (47.6%).

The open ended responses suggested strategies for handling conflicts such as between parents and teachers, relating the school’s mission and vision more to the school improvement planning documents, and proper communications to school board members.

### **Introduction to Organization and Administration (EDA 5600)**

The “very important” identified course topics for the Introduction of Organization and Administration course were School Culture (82.8%), Intro to School Improvement Planning (76.6%), and Change Process (73.4%). The three lowest rated topics for “very important” were Development of American Schools (10.9%), Review of NCLB (28.1%), and Structure of Schooling and Legal Basis of Education (43.5%).

Only two respondents expressed issues in the open ended response for this question. One commented that NCLB will be greatly modified or eliminated. Another respondent stated that there was a need for students in the principal preparation program to learn more about the core curriculum standards that were recently approved by the state of Illinois.

### **The Principalship (EDA 5630)**

Some of the highest rankings for topics being considered “very important” were in the Principalship course. The highest of these were Principal as Instructional Leader (95.2%), followed by Roles of the Principal (92.2%) and School Improvement Planning (84.4%).

Four issues that were suggested for more coverage in the Principalship course were again core curriculum standards and special education issues along with master scheduling and utilizing data for school improvement.

### **Supervision of Instruction (EDA 5700)**

The three highest ranked for “very important” in the Supervision of Instruction course were Supervision versus Evaluation (87.3%), Analysis & Strategies/Conferencing Marginal Teachers (76.6%), and Roadblocks to Effective Supervision (75.0%).

The area of concern expressed by one respondent regarding this course was how to best hold an effective pre and post conference, especially when the evaluation was for a marginal or low performing teacher.

### **Personnel Administration (EDA 5870)**

The Personnel Administration course’s top three topics identified by respondents were Conflict Resolution (82.8%), Collaborative Decision Making (74.6%), and Team Building (73.4%). The lowest rated topics were Leave of Absences (15.6%), Substitute Services (17.2%), and Personnel Compensation and Fringe Benefits (32.8%).

Areas also considered important to be included in a personnel course were the procedures for releasing teachers under a reduction in force process, development of a teacher or

support staff seniority list, and any changes in the evaluation process due to new legislation.

### **Introduction to Research (EDA 5900)**

The Introduction to Research course had only one topic covered in the course that over fifty percent of the respondents considered “very important” to be included in a principal preparation program. This single topic that was identified by over fifty percent of those responding to the survey was Understanding Basic Statistics and Graphic Representation of Data (54%).

In the open ended responses for this question, one respondent mentioned the need to include more information on research based interventions, but was not specific if that meant student, program or curriculum interventions.

### **Management and Analysis of Data (EDA 5960)**

The final required course within the EIU principal preparation program also had a number of topics that were rated relatively low compared to other courses. The top three rated topics for Management and Analysis of Data were Needs Assessments (75.0%), Time Management (71.9%), and Types of Data (62.5%). The three lowest topics were Six Files to be Assessed on WebCt (22.2%), Word Processing (25.4%), and Web Page Construction (26.6%).

There were several comments concerning one general area for this course. All the comments dealt with the feeling that Microsoft Office types of applications should not be taught in a graduate course. Respondents felt that these skills should be taught in undergraduate courses or individuals should take some form of a workshop type course to learn these skills.

## **Conclusions**

It was apparent from the further review of the Wallace Foundation website that the movement to encourage state school boards and legislatures to pass new rules or revisions of current rules that will require university programs to either totally redesign or at least make changes in their principal preparation program will not be going away soon. As mentioned at the beginning of this article there has been a number of research studies and reports funded by the Wallace Foundation to create a body of research referred to as the Learning from Leadership Project: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning. As recently as January 2012, the Wallace Foundation released a report entitled, “The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning” (Wallace, 2012) which stated the five key functions that all principals must be able to do in order to be effective in their schools in efforts to increase student achievement. These five key functions were:

1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students.



2. Creating a climate hospitable to education.
3. Cultivating leadership in others.
4. Improving instruction.
5. Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement. (p. 2)

Another current addition to the Wallace Foundation funded project was published in August, 2011, titled, “NASBE Discussion Guide: School Leadership: Improving State Systems for Leader Development.” This discussion guide was specifically directed to state level policymakers. In the introduction to the guide, author Sun (2011) stated:

This NASBE School Leadership Discussion Guide, developed with support from The Wallace Foundation, is designed to give boards the tools to:

- Create a brief inventory of current leadership policies and supports;
- Assist board members in developing state-specific questions to work through on school leadership; and
- Help boards use these tools and questions to craft policy directions for the state. (p. 3)

With research such as this being supported by a foundation with the size and stature of Wallace, the movement to improve the quality of those who lead our schools will continue. Some other factors that will influence state level policymakers to mandate the redesign of principal preparation programs could include: (1) an increase in the amount of research that is being done related to the effectiveness of building principals; (2) greater accountability for all areas of local school districts, especially of those in leadership roles at the building level; (3) new technologies for communicating with all stakeholders will increase the demand on principals to do so; (4) the change of majority/minority populations in many school districts throughout the United States will require principals to lead schools through such changes; (5) the business community will continue to demand that schools make significant changes in order to increase student achievement while at the same time being more efficient in their operations; and (6) continued expectations that all children will learn at high levels.

The results of the survey of Southeastern Illinois administrators support some of the specific rule changes made in the recent redesign of principal preparation programs as advocated by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and State Board of Education. Specific areas of agreement are found in Section 30-50 of the Illinois Administrative Code which deals primarily with the curriculum to be included within a principal preparation program. These include: (1) more emphasis on school law for principals; (2) specific laws related to students with disabilities and ELL laws; (3) new uses of technology in teaching, learning and administration; (4) use of a process that determines how children respond to scientific, research-based interventions; (5) understanding age-appropriate literacy; (6) numeracy skills across the grade levels; (7) bullying; and (8) evaluation of certified staff.

It will take time to see how successful the redesign of Illinois principal preparation programs will be for meeting its primary goal of increasing student achievement. The first principals to graduate from the new program will not do so until August of 2014 under the current plan by those designing the Eastern Illinois University program. This will be as soon as any principal preparation program in the state will be able to graduate its first candidates after implementing their newly approved principal preparation program.

Other states such as Texas have begun to make changes in rules related to its universities' principal preparation programs. Recently the passage of Senate Bill 1383 (2011) has placed requirements on the Texas Commissioner of Education to establish a comprehensive appraisal and professional development system for principals within the state and allows the Commissioner to establish a consortium of experts to assist in researching and developing the comprehensive appraisal and professional development system that will align with new leadership standards that will align to training, appraisal, and professional development programs.

Senate Bill 1383 requires the Commissioner "not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year" (p. 3), to submit a written report that includes: "1) any action taken under this section during the preceding two years; and 2) any recommendations for legislative action concerning the training, appraisal, professional development, or compensation of principals. (p. 3)

From recent presentations by staff members of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), it is appears that TEA has already begun to discuss the establishment of rules similar to Illinois. Two of these are: (1) an increase in the quality of the principal internship including mentor training and a requirement that university supervisors will make at least three site visits for a period of at least 45 minutes in length to observe the candidate performing principal related duties and conferencing with the site supervisor/mentor; and (2) the creation of an advisory board made up primarily of practicing building level administrators who give regular input on program improvements and suggestions of areas where the program could be improved. This mandated advisory board would meet at least two times during each academic year.

The opportunities to research principal preparation programs under the redesigned format will be many in the years to come. Whether the purpose of these studies were related to increasing student achievement, cost effectiveness of programs, types of delivery of courses or any number of other characteristics of the current or newly redesigned programs, researchers will have opportunities to complete numerous studies of university principal preparation programs. The emphasis on improving these programs will continue to be high as long as the business community and state policymakers continue to have a high interest to be involved through the passage of legislation which is designed to influence the direction that newly redesigned principal preparation programs will take within the improvement process of each state.

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## *Student Perceptions of Online Courses for School Administrators*

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Online courses are the fastest growing student enrollment at the university level during the last decade. Between the time period 2003-2009, the number of students who had taken online courses doubled to 3.9 million which outpaced the growth in traditional college settings by a 12% margin (Mashable/Tech,2010). However, this online programming movement still remains in its early stages of development. Thus, faculty members and designers of online education need to know more about online courses. Momin (2003) stated that this growth, in online education, has been accompanied by increased questions about the effectiveness of online courses. More research needs to be conducted regarding how student experiences differ in online course environments and how outcomes are developed and measured. Specifically, faculty members and administrators need to understand how students perceive online education and courses because these perceptions and attitudes can be a direct link to student motivation and learning. Koochang and Durante (2003) further suggest that elements of e-learning and student motivation are critical.

This study examines the perceived viewpoints and effectiveness of online courses with EDAD graduate students during the last year. The results provide future considerations and recommendations regarding the design and instruction of university online courses. Gaining knowledge about the process and outcomes of online education, especially as compared to traditional face-to-face environments, will help educators and researchers make more informed decisions about future online course development and implementation (Momin, 2003)

### **Literature Review**

Online programs and courses in the schools are some of the most dominant forces to come on the educational scene in the last two decades. Since the inception of online education just over a decade ago, the number of students participating in these courses has dramatically increased. At the university level, administrators direct the design of online courses, faculty members develop these types of courses, and students request these courses. Even though there is a strong movement for online education, it is still relatively new and foreign to many university administrators and faculty members.

Research concerning online courses has somewhat lagged behind this rapidly increasing educational movement. As Schardt and Garrison (2008) stated that there is little literature evaluating how well professionals learn in this online environment, and specifically when compared to the traditional face-to-face classroom. A good amount of the research in online education has not concentrated on learning and academic performance.

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Several studies identified the issues found in online courses or reviewed the shortcomings of teaching online. Berg (1998) focused on the obstacles such as policy statements, as well as a list of the advantages and disadvantages of online education. Furthermore, D'orsie and Day (2006) offered a list of ten suggestions to teach a course online. Also, several books have been written that provide information on facilitating online learning. (Collison, Elbaum, Haavind, & Tinker, 2000).

Menchaca (2008) examined the importance of the use of multiple technologies to appeal to different learning styles and facilitate online learning. In addition, McCroy, Putman, and Jansen (2008) looked at teaching and learning in online courses with a focus on discussion and the impact of online dialogue. Tuckman (2005) studied the motivation patterns of online students, while Waltonen – Moore, Stuart, Newton, Oswalk, and Varonis (2006) discussed the development of collaborative online learning environments. Other research studies seem to be based on Holmberg's (2007) thinking that personal relationships promote student motivation and online learning.

Over the past decade, a few researchers have started to examine online courses and their effectiveness. Some research has concluded that online students learned as well as, or better than, face-to-face students (Kretovics, 2003). The purpose of Kretovics' study was to test learning outcomes, and how well online learners mastered the theories in comparison to the face-to-face classroom students. Kretovics (2003) summarized that the online environment fosters independent learning. He believed that online students are not directly guided by professors in a face-to-face classroom to pick up some of their biases, thus the students have a tendency to form their own observations and conclusions in applying theories.

Several medical and health-related studies of online students vs. face-to-face classroom students have reported no significant differences in learning achievement (Buckley, 2003; Leasure, Davis, and Thievon, 2000; Olmsted, 2002). Other studies (Herman and Banister, 2007; Phye, 1997; Neuhauser, 2002) not in the medical/health fields, also, shared no significant differences in learning outcomes, test scores, participation, and/or final grades. In a more recent study Derwin (2008) showed that there were no significant differences between face-to-face and online learners for the California Critical Thinking Skills Test score gains or the grades on the final assignments. Results are consistent with previous "no significant differences" studies. The research adds to the literature by specifically addressing outcomes in critical thinking.

In one study, Anstine and Skidmore (2005) revealed statistically significant lower examination scores of MBA students taking statistics classes online. But, the investigation showed online learner outcomes fared the same as face-to-face learner outcomes. In Johnson, Aragon, Shaik, and Palma-Rivas (2000) study, a comparison of graduate online students with students in a face-to-face class environment, revealed that face-to-face students had slightly more positive perceptions about the class instructor and overall course quality. Although there was no difference between the two course formats in learning outcomes. Some research articles that focused on online learning had limited sample sizes or examined subject areas not related to education. For example, Schutte's (1997) study included 37 undergraduate students that were randomly assigned to the online class or the in-class group. He compared the two groups in terms of learning

through the use of exams. Both groups took the exams in class. His results revealed that the online group scored 20% higher than the traditional group. McCollum's (1997) review of Schutte's work further supported these findings.

In another study, Schardt, Garrison, and Kochi (2002), compared students' knowledge retention six months after the end of the course (the course was taught in two separate formats- one online format and one face-to-face format). The online students answered 80% of the test questions correctly, while the face-to-face classroom students only answered 40% of the test questions correctly. The authors attributed the differences in knowledge retention to three factors: additional practice and attention with test questions, additional time for learning, and increased student motivation and involvement with the online learning processes.

Students' perceptions of the two different course formats, online and face-to-face, when surveyed have also shown mixed results. Zhanga and Perris (2004) research concluded that students in a study by Ryan (2000) that compared student survey responses in a University of Oklahoma course produced no evidence of quality differences between direct instruction and online instruction classes. A survey in both course formats enrolled in a gerontology course in the University of Pittsburgh Dental Hygiene program agreed that either method of instruction chosen by students was effective and beneficial (Gallagher, Dobrosielski-Vergona, Wingard, and Williams, 2005).

An and Frick (2006) results indicated most students in their study preferred face-to-face discussion rather than online discussion, but preferred online work and learning activities over face-to-face activities. An analysis of students' responses showed key factors that predicted those students who preferred online for discussion. The rate of speed in the completion of classroom work and the convenience of online learning appeared to be most important to students in this study.

Momin (2003) wrote in her study of students' perceptions with online versus face-to-face courses that satisfaction related to perceptions of being able to achieve success. Some studies have reviewed student satisfaction with online programs (Debourgh, 1998; Enockson, 1997; Johanson, 1996; McCabe, 1997). For example, Enockson (1997) in a study assessing online education in a university setting, found that students were satisfied with online instruction because it provided flexibility and responsiveness to their learning requirements and expectations. Similarly, Johanson (1996), based on her study of an online classroom, concluded that students' satisfaction is positively impacted when (a) the technology is transparent and functions both reliably and conveniently, (b) the course is specifically designed to support learner-centered instructional strategies, (c) the instructor's role is that of a facilitator and coach, and (d) there is a reasonable level of flexibility.

Clearly there has been a wide variety of works and views on the issue of teaching and learning online. But a majority of the studies focused on the types of instructional methods used when teaching online. This focus is problematic due to the fact that some faculty members are suspicious of online courses and have significant reservations about the loss of face-to-face contact.

To address the limited research regarding students' perceptions of online education, this study focused on student attitudes and viewpoints toward the online course format, learning outcomes, instructional tools, and needed changes.

### **Methodology**

Participants in this study's survey were former students of online educational administration (EDAD) courses. A total of 89 students who had taken the EDAD courses within the last school year were emailed the survey instrument. These graduate level students were part of the Master of Education degree program or were seeking the principal's license. Thirty-nine students completed the survey.

The survey instrument was developed by the author of this paper and the instructor for these EDAD hybrid courses. The design and questions found in the survey were generated from discussions with EDAD faculty members and EDAD students currently enrolled in the principal preparation program. Through these discussions, topical areas that emerged to generate questions were the students' attitudes toward online courses, the learning results and outcomes, the most beneficial instructional tools and activities and most productive educational format.

This online survey consisted of three parts. The first part contained 13 forced-response questions concerning the online/hybrid course while the second part of the survey was 2 open-ended questions regarding thoughts and opinions pertaining to the course. Students were asked to provide thoughts and opinions in a narrative format to respond to these open-ended questions. The final part of the survey focused on questions asking demographical information (gender, position, job level, experience level) on the part of the respondents. The forced-response questions were set up on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree-agree-neutral-disagree-and strongly disagree.

The survey was e-mailed to former EDAD students who had taken online courses within the last school year. Included with the survey was a cover letter explaining the reason for the survey. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of their responses. Survey results were submitted through Zoomrang.com. Zoomrang.com compiled and set up the students' responses according to the survey questions. A total of 39 surveys were completed for a 44% return rate.

### **Results**

Of the 39 EDAD students who responded to the survey, 59% were female and 41% were male. A majority of the respondents were teachers with an aggregate of 69% of the total sample population, while 26% were in educational administration, and 5% in other positions. The breakdown of educational levels for this sample population was 51% at the high school level, 8% at the middle school level, and 41% at the elementary level. Finally, the years in education were also fairly varied. The breakdown of years in education was 18% of respondents had 1-3 years of teaching experience, 51% of the respondents had 4-10 years of teaching experience, 18% of the respondents had 11-20 years, and 13% of the respondents had 20 plus years.

The purpose of the survey was to retrieve a variety of students' perceptions and opinions regarding their attitudes toward online courses, the learning results generated from the course, the instructional tools used in the online course, and what changes should be made in the course. Some of the questions asked for an opinion of the online course, other questions wanted students to compare online courses with face-to-face courses, and another set of questions desired some open-ended responses.

To understand the distribution of responses to the survey items, frequency tables were set up to organize and summarize data. Frequency distribution results in Table 1 show the variety of responses to the survey questions relate to students attitudes, feelings, and opinions of online courses.

*Table 1: Attitudes Toward Online/Hybrid Course*

Survey Item	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I was apprehensive at first, with taking the online course	39	37%	21%	8%	38%	31%
2. At the conclusion of the course, I felt comfortable and positive about the online course	39	69%	23%	8%	0%	0%
10. I would take another online course in the future	39	69%	21%	5%	5%	0%
11. I would recommend an online course to a fellow student	38	68%	21%	5%	5%	0%

*Note: SA=Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree*

Table 1 reveals the students' feelings and attitudes were accepting of the online format before actually taking the course. These results were somewhat surprising with 69% of the respondents indicating they were not apprehensive in enrolling in the online/hybrid course. Only 24% agreed that they were apprehensive about the course. Even more surprising results were shown in survey item #2 regarding feeling comfortable and positive at the conclusion of the course. Ninety-two percent felt comfortable and positive. To gauge their feelings toward taking another online, 90% strongly agreed/agreed that they would take another online course, according to survey item #10. Furthermore, in survey item #11. 90% strongly agreed/agreed that they would recommend an online course to a fellow student.

Another set of survey items in table 2 showed the learning results coming out of the online courses.

The respondents' perceptions of the learning results generated from online courses are shown in table 2. In most every survey item in this table, a majority of the students indicated positive learning results. It was the perception of 85% of the students that they put in more time and effort, conducted more research, and did more analytical thinking in the online course. Only 3% thought they did not exert these learning outcomes with the online course.

Four questions asked students to compare learning results with online versus face-to-face courses. Survey item #4 was a general question related to learning outcomes with an



online course versus a face-to-face course. The results were: 51% of the respondents chose a “neutral” response, while 31% selected an affirmative response, and 18% noted that they had learned less in an online course than a face-to-face course.

*Table 2: Learning Results*

Survey Item	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. I felt I learned a considerable amount of knowledge and skills in this online course	39	49%	36%	13%	3%	0%
4. I learned more in the online course than in a traditional face-to-face course	39	8%	23%	51%	18%	0%
5. I put more time and energy into doing the work with the online course assignments than a face-to-face course	38	32%	26%	26%	13%	3%
6. I conducted more research for the assignments in the online course than in a face-to-face course	39	31%	41%	21%	5%	3%
7. I did more analytical thinking and work for the assignments in the online course than in the face-to-face course	39	23%	41%	26%	10%	0%

*Note: SA= Strongly agree; A=Agree; N= Neutral; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly disagree*

The next set of survey items (#5, #6, and #7) pertained to more specific learning results. In item #5, 58% thought they exerted more time and energy through the learning process in the online course, while 16% thought they exerted less time and energy. Twenty-six percent were neutral on this item. Item #6 asked the students if they conducted more research in the online course versus the face-to-face course. Seventy-two percent stated they conducted more research in the online classes. In contrast, 21% chose a “neutral” response, and 8% disagreed that they conducted more research.

Item #7 was another specific learning area, analytical thinking. The survey asked the respondents if there was “more analytical thinking and work” for the assignments in the online course than in comparable face-to-face course. The results were: 64% agreed that they did more analytical thinking and work; 26% provided neutral responses; and 10% disagreed.

There was a set of survey items centered around the use of various instructional items (tools, format, and activities) in the online course. Table 3 outlined the instructional tools. Survey items #8 and #9 dealt with the Narrative/Analysis/Research (NAR) rubric which is an assessment tool to evaluate an online assignment.

*Table 3: Instructional Tools*

Survey Item	n	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. The Narrative/Analysis/Research (NAR) rubric helped to provide direction in completing the assignments	39	28%	59%	8%	3%	3%
9. The assessment feedback received on each assignment through the NAR rubric was beneficial	39	28%	49%	13%	5%	0%

Note: Sa= Strongly agree; A=Agree; N=Neutral; D=Disagree; SD= Strongly disagree

Item #8 asked the respondents if the NAR rubric provided direction in completing the online assignments. An overwhelming majority of students (87%) marked that this assessment tool did provide direction in completing the assignments. Furthermore, 82 % of the respondents indicated that the assessment feedback through the NAP rubric was beneficial.

When the respondents were asked about which instructional format, Table 4, they preferred, 79% marked a “hybrid” response (mainly online course with 2 or 3 face-to-face classes). Thirteen percent wanted purely a face-to-face course format and 8 % desired a purely online course.

*Table 4: Instructional Format*

Survey Item	Hybrid	All Face-to-face	Purely Online
12. I would prefer the following course format:	79%	13%	8%

With survey item #13, Table 5, the students thought the NAR rubric was one of the most meaningful and helpful tools used in the online/hybrid course; it was the second most helpful tool listed among the survey instructional tools. Only case study assignment was listed above the NAR rubric as the most helpful.

*Table 5: Instructional Activities*

Survey Item	Case Study	N/A/R Rubric	Discussion Board	Videos	E-Portfolio	Power Point	Other
13. What were the most meaningful and helpful learning activities in the online:	74%	49%	41%	21%	21%	18%	5%

In the open-ended responses (survey item #14 and #15), participants expressed what they liked least about the online/hybrid courses and what changes they would make in these courses. The most commonly reported response in #14 was the limited amount of face-to-face networking and communications between students and between students and the instructor. One participant stated, “I am old school, I like having interaction and

networking with others. I enjoy hearing other peoples' reactions to items in a discussion format." While another student wrote, "I think you do miss out of some of the face-to-face communication pieces, such as quest speakers and networking with colleagues."

The second open-ended question, item #15, sought to identify the changes that could be made with the online course. The most frequent response was to build in more interaction with other students through activities, such as wimba and discussion boards.

### **Discussion**

During the last decade, online courses have increased dramatically at the university level. Even though there has been this tremendous growth, studies are just starting to gauge how effective these types of courses are in meeting the students' needs, interests, and learning outcomes.

To retrieve and seek information on how students' perceive the effectiveness of online education, this study's survey was conducted with EDAD students who had taken the online courses. In analyzing these students' perceptions of the online courses, the results from the survey generally showed positive attitudes, viewpoints, and feedback, especially when comparing the online courses to the face-to-face courses. First, the students' attitudes toward taking online courses were quite positive. Whether enrolled in the course initially and/or finishing up the course, the students surveyed felt comfortable and positive about the course. The surprising results of these attitudes and feelings were how many students were not apprehensive at the beginning of the course. Only 24% felt apprehensive at the start of the course. Any apprehensive feelings toward online education seem to be changing because more and more students are taking these types of courses and, in turn, the universities are offering a more extensive slate of online courses. Online education is no longer one of those new and unfamiliar instructional formats for today's generation of students. These results suggest that today's students who have more experiences with online education will feel better about these courses and perceive them in a more positive perspective. The greater the amount of experiences that students have with online education, the higher the levels of users' satisfaction in learning with online courses and technology (Gerfen, Karahanna, & Staub, 2003; Martins & Kellermanns, 2004; Stoel & Lee, 2003; Wober & Gretzel, 2000).

Second, positive attitudes could be shown in survey items #10 and #11. These two questions' results generated the "true test" of respondents' positive attitudes regarding the online courses when students willingly recommend such a course to a fellow student and/or friend. By an overwhelming percentage of 90% for survey item #10 and 89% for survey item #11, students would take or recommend another online course. These high percentage results indicated a real positive attitude towards this type of course and how it meets their educational needs, interests, and desires.

Some of the most intriguing results of the survey are brought out when comparing online courses with face-to-face courses. Four survey questions, items #4, #5, #6, and #7, asked respondents to contrast the two instructional formats. A large majority of respondents indicated they did more research work and analytical thinking in the online course than in the traditional, face-to-face course.

This additional research and analytical work in the online format, also generated the need for more time and energy on the part of the student to complete the assignments as illustrated in survey item #5 with 58% of the students responding in agreement that they put in more time and energy into the work with the online course (versus the face-to-face course).

The results in survey item #12 concerning the preferred course format clearly showed that students would prefer hybrid courses which meet 2 or 3 times face-to-face. The “purely online” and “all face-to-face” formats were definitely in the minority choices at 8% and 13% respectively.’ This research indicated that students still see some advantages and opportunities to meeting face-to-face a few times during a course’s term, rather than all online. In the hybrid courses, the two or three face-to-face classes can clarify issues and questions, breakdown the more complex content, and allow for interpersonal contacts and work on some assignments.

Research from the survey showed that the Narrative/Analysis/Research (NAR) rubric and the case study assignments were the two most meaningful learning activities in the online courses. The NAR rubric is an assessment tool for the online assignments, and provides the direction for students in completing the written assignment. Because of the realistic content found in a case study assignment, the case studies were perceived as the most meaningful learning activity.

As revealed in the open-ended responses for survey items #14 and #15, students generally perceived the online courses as positive and beneficial to their learning. However, some comments were made related to what students liked least about the online course that being the limited interpersonal contact and communications among students and/or students and instructor. This issue has been confirmed by other research. Smart and Cappel (2006) expressed that though there is great potential for heightened interaction within the online course format, their survey’s participants did not experience increased student or student -to-instructor communications.

Many of this study’s students over the years have been involved in the face-to-face teaching and learning processes, and did not want to completely give up the interpersonal relations developed with face-to-face classes. As one respondent wrote, “I am old school, I like having interaction and networking with others. I enjoy learning from other people through a discussion format. It makes me ponder issues in different lights other than one-sided”. Or, as another student stated, “some of the most important things I learned came up in conversation”.

Regarding the open-ended question (#15), “What change would you make with the online/hybrid course, the responses were less telling.” Generally, the students seemed satisfied with the online courses. The few changes suggested were: more opportunities to use wimba, additional online videos, and more time devoted to discussion boards.

In the open-ended questions, the suggested need for change and improvement was fairly limited. These results suggested that students generally want the online courses and like the current design and setup.

## Conclusions

As universities continue to develop more online education, a more extensive and deeper awareness of student needs and perceptions of online courses may reveal key factors in future student recruitment, enrollment, and retention. This study's results provided insights regarding the students' perceptions of online courses and learning needs, and, in turn, generated an increasing need to modify courses for online education. Overall, the results indicated that online courses are perceived as effective teaching and learning formats. Similar studies have suggested that online education can be as, or more, effective when compared with traditional, face-to-face classroom formats (Smart & Cappel, 2006; - Momin, 2003; Kirtman, 2009; Derwin, 2008; Johnson, Aragon, Shaik, and Palma-Rivas, 1999).

A conclusion that may be drawn from the results is that students have a positive attitude and feeling for online courses. A large majority of students desire online courses and adapt comfortably to the teaching and learning activities and assignments embedded in them. University administrators and faculty members cannot ignore the growing desire for this type of course. They must understand that current and future generations of students will want online education; they must seek out and study what students are thinking and saying about online courses. Most higher education institutions' future student enrollments may be predicated upon whether they keep with these online course desires and demands. An overwhelming number of the survey respondents (90%) stated they would take another online course and would recommend an online course to a fellow student.

The research in this study centered around student perceptions of work load, research activities, and analytical thinking in an online course. In addition, some of the survey items compared online courses and face-to-face courses. A significant number of respondents agreed that time and energy spent on course/assignment work in the online course were greater than in the face-to-face course format. A conclusion may be drawn that the larger number of assignments required many times in an online course causes a student to perceive that there is an increased work load. Moreover, students perceived more research work and analytical thinking being exerted to complete the course/assignment work in online courses. Consequently, this study concluded that students perceived the work load, research efforts, and analytical thinking were greater in online courses when compared to face-to-face courses.

This research was not just about assessing the difference between online versus face-to-face courses; rather, this study was more about student perceptions on how online courses can provide the best technological-related practices, instructional tools, course formats, and assignment assessments. Online course designers need to continue to modify the instruction and assessment of these courses, in order to enhance student attitudes and overall learning efforts. This study's results showed that students still want some face-to-face contact with the instructor and other students by 79% desiring the hybrid course format (an online course with a few face-to-face classes). In contrast, only 8% of the students wanted purely online courses. Thus, the hybrid course format seemed to provide the desired advantages when compared with purely online or face-to-face formats. Future

research in this area needs to be conducted in order to detect the underlying reasons for students preferring the online course format.

Two special elements which benefit learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century seem to be found in the online courses. They are the students' desire for this type of course format and the students additional energy, time, research, and analytical thinking levels being expended in online education, rather than the traditional face-to-face education. Online courses need to be developed by instructors that involve students in 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching and learning. Smart and Cappel (2006) state, "specifically engaging students actively in learning, providing real-world contexts for learning, and promoting critical thinking and deep learning."

While the results of this study seemed compelling and straightforward, it must be noted that the results are limited by a small sample size and the fact that students were from only one discipline...Educational Administration. More research is needed across the disciplines to conclude if these results apply to other student populations. Also, researchers need to use additional survey items to focus on students underlying reasons for certain perceptions pertaining to online education.

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## ***Democracy and Education: The Philosophy of Theorist Carl D. Glickman***

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Dr. Carl D. Glickman started in education as a Teacher Corps intern in the south. He went on to become a principal and university professor. Over his career, Glickman has won many awards including the faculty career award from the University of Georgia. He has served in a leadership capacity on many university, state, and national organizations focused on improving education. He founded The Georgia League of Professional Schools and has served on the National Commission on Service Learning. Among his accomplishments he has authored numerous books and articles on educational renewal and school leadership (Glickman, 1993). Glickman's life and career have been concentrated on the democratic and moral imperative of education and educational leadership. He described himself as a progressive constructivist with a focus on the democratization of classrooms and schools (Glickman, 1991). This paper is an overview of Dr. Carl Glickman's philosophy and vision of democracy and education and how the two are dependent upon each other.

### **Great Schools and Democracy**

“The challenge is clear - improving education and improving democracy go hand in hand... We need to give them tools to live respectfully and collaboratively with others, building communities that can tackle the challenges that lie ahead” (Glickman, 2008, p. 28). Glickman (2002b) believed democracy is the fundamental issue in education. He defined democracy as the confidence that people have the ability to educate and govern themselves through participation in problem solving. He believed that the quest for truth is the way to educate and be. Additionally, when education is guided by public resolve, people will use their education to further the ideology of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for all (Glickman, 2002b, p. 374). Democracy is a practice and not a belief. Democracy is a way of learning in addition to a way of governing (Glickman, 1998b). People have to get involved and do their part. Democracy is not an efficient mechanism and at times it results in terrible decisions but democracy is the core ideal that unites us as a people (Glickman, 2002b).

Glickman described democratic education as attaining the essential academic knowledge that allows each student to have greater opportunity for personal and professional advancement, achieving the necessary responsibilities of a citizen, and using that education to contribute to building a “better home, community, and society” (Glickman, 2003a, p. xvii). At a time when civic involvement is at an all-time low, Glickman believed this form of education is the duty of schools. Schools should balance education between individual goals and societal duties. The result of moving away from these ideals has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of adults that participate in civic, public or community issues and government (Glickman, 2003a). Glickman believed there are things great schools can do to promote a resurgence of democracy in America.

Glickman asserts that democratic education is conditioned on three domains and can occur in any size school. The first domain is knowledge. Knowledge includes the content, understanding, and skills with in and across disciplines. The second domain is relations. Relations refer to the dignity and respect shown to and between the students and faculty to listen and learn from each other. Relations are also the confidence, care, and expectations that faculty and students have for each other. Finally, the domain participation refers to the interaction between the knowledge and the learner that defines the learning experience (Glickman, 2002a).

Great schools do many things to teach democratic ideals (Glickman, 2002b). These schools nurture a democratic feeling by displaying democratic ideals throughout the school. Examples of such displays include student work showcases, service learning projects, and the language utilized in publications and discussions. All these public displays reflect the conviction that academic goals and contributions to society are essential to each other (Glickman, 2003b). Great schools also challenge students to think about and demonstrate how they can use their education to serve the community, connecting the ideals of democracy with the practices of education (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002).

Another important characteristic of great schools is the symbols, traditions, words, and events that symbolize what is important to the school community (Glickman, 2003b). These traditions show that students and adults have utilized their education to make a society a better place for everyone (Glickman, 2003b). These symbols are passed on to the next generation to carry forward. The philosophy is school stays with you always; it is carried forward into and throughout one's life. Schools are not just classrooms and teachers but also an attitude and purpose founded on democratic ideals. Symbols can take the form of songs, pledges, rituals, service learning projects, and community partnerships. Rituals and special events become predictable ways to construct the relationship between the community and the school. Each event reflects and builds on the past as well as appreciating the present. These ritualized events come in many forms, including academic, intellectual, and personal; they seek to unite everyone (Glickman, 2003b).

Glickman's philosophy of creating great democratic schools included great leadership. Preparing for change in advance minimizes the chance of failure and supports success of renewals and reforms going forward. Preparation allows school leaders to expect and respond to the daily problems that will arise along the way (Glickman, 2002c). Great schools begin by putting in place an internal set of procedures and beliefs. This framework includes a covenant of beliefs, a charter or governance structure, and a critical study process. By establishing a framework that expects obstacles, leaders can create conditions that enable the school to maintain reforms and attain their goal of promoting the power of student learning (Glickman, 2002a).

## School Renewal

A philosophy of democratic education includes a process for school renewal. Individual public schools are accountable to the community and the state but, more importantly, educators are also accountable to themselves (Glickman, 2003a). When beginning the renewal process, schools often can move too quickly and without a clear picture of the issues. Reform will fail if a plan is not well thought out in advance. Renewing schools begins with establishing the framework; the covenant, the charter and the critical study (Glickman, 1993).

The covenant's purpose is to describe the principles of learning that are derived from the definition of democracy and education (Glickman, 1993). It communicates good education and student learning expectations. Writing a covenant begins by including all impacted stakeholders. The document is derived through a democratic process and no one person makes the decisions. The covenant's focus is solely on teaching and learning and how it looks in the school. The covenant serves as a manual for all upcoming decisions regarding the school's priorities. Glickman (2002b) likened this document to The Declaration of Independence. The covenant provides structure for renewal. Once a school has a covenant it can precede to the formation of the charter (Glickman, 1993).

The next step in the school renewal process is the formation of the charter. The charter is the Constitution, the agreement of how decisions are going to be made and that the students belong to all (Glickman, 2002a). It breaks down and assigns responsibilities. It explains the composition of the decision making body. Finally, the charter describes the decision-making systems to be utilized. Glickman had three guiding rules in this process. First, everyone can be involved and is invited. Second, no one *has* to be involved. Participation is voluntary. Finally, once decisions are made, everyone supports the implementation. Glickman (2002a) believed that the time to make one's opinions known is during the decision making process, not after. This process is deeply rooted in democratic philosophy (Glickman, 1993).

The charter only governs the things it has control over (Glickman, 1993). The charter does not concern itself with issues outside its ability to change. Schools need to focus on knowledge and learning and not spend time planning on things like crime, health, housing social services and welfare. These are issue for the community as a whole and the agencies designed to address these issues. Schools cannot address every aspect of a student's life. The focus of the discussions, when forming a charter, should always be centered on the covenant and how to enhance school-wide teaching and learning. Glickman (1993) believed that the charter process should be open to any member of the group. Additionally, teachers should always have the majority voice in matters that affect their professional work and the principal should always be viewed as an important member of the process. The charter group, as a whole, should also reflect the diversity of the community. Once formed, the charter is a living document, and along with the covenant, should be revisited occasionally (Glickman, 1993).

Glickman's (1993) final step in the school renewal framework is the critical study or action research phase. Critical study utilizes the covenant and the charter as the foundation. Critical study provides a systematic way of gathering and examining data in order to set learning priorities for the school. Organizations need to act only on things that can be studied. There must always be a conscious method to determine if the action being implemented is getting the desired result. Democracy is powered by information, varying points of view, and critical reflection about differing perceptions and competing priorities. Data have to be used to determine whether the charter is on track with the covenant. If critical study does not show results it would be suggested to revisit the decision with the charter committee and adjust (Glickman, 1993).

The process of school renewal is the internal, analytical process of examining one's own school (Glickman, 1993). This involves looking at the covenant, raising critical questions about the educational practices, and then assessing where the priorities are in preparing students to become contributing citizens of democracy. Renewal is not a national undertaking, it is a local responsibility. Reform and renewal take time and there will be disagreement: that is what democracy is. It takes vision, courage, and perseverance to sustain school renewal (Glickman, 1993).

### **Instructional Leadership**

Glickman has authored multiple books on supervision. For schools to be successful, they must include a community of professionals working toward a vision of teaching and learning that goes beyond the individual classroom, grade level, and department (Glickman, 1980). Principals are not the instructional leaders, they are the coordinators of instructional leaders and they are working toward learning that demonstrates particular characteristics (Glickman, 1993). Learning should be an active process, it includes individual and cooperative endeavors, it has goals and they are linked to the real world: it is personalized, it is documentable, it is diagnostic and reflective, and it provides feedback in a comfortable physical setting in a supportive and respectful atmosphere. These characteristics of learning develop the covenant of learning that begins the renewal process and instructional leaders ensure that it occurs. By committing to this description of learning the leadership is saying they will support the process and implement the decisions (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005).

Instructional leadership needs to focus on the development of teacher thinking. Glickman (2003a) believed developing teacher thinking should be the aim of staff development. Things that historically have inhibited a teacher's professional growth are isolation, poor support of new teachers, invisibility, no professional dialogue, and restricted choices (Glickman, 2003a). Utilizing the framework for renewing teaching and leadership means, using observation, peer coaching, communal groups, critical friends, action research teams, and study groups to break poor historical patterns and develop teacher thinking. Great schools understand that improvement of teaching and learning happens through the efforts of individuals and groups who take on a variety of programs and proposals. The staff members of a great school are always challenging the current instructional practices and do not blame failures in achievement on external causes. Staff

members work in collegial, critical ways with each other on a common purpose. The problem in average schools is the problems always lie with someone else. Good schools start from within (Glickman, 2002c).

Glickman supported several different styles of leadership (Pajak & Glickman, 1989). Non-directive leadership style facilitates thinking in developing a self-plan. The instructional leader has low control and the teacher has high control. This style is very effective with master teachers that are very self-directed. Some behaviors exhibited by a leader using this style of leadership are listening, clarifying, and encouraging. The leader does not need to be directive in any way, the teacher is self-directed (Glickman, 2002a).

The collaborative style of leadership shares control between the leader and the teacher. This is generally the most desired style of leadership (Glickman, 2002a). The leader and the teacher share information and possible practices as equals arriving at a mutually agreed upon plan. Some leader behaviors seen here include problem-solving and shared control. The leader and the teacher are free to share thoughts, ideas, and suggestions in the process (Glickman, 2002a).

In the directive informational style the leader provides the focus and parameters (Glickman, 2002a). The leader lays out the plan and a variety of choices. The teacher can freely choose from presented choices. Some characteristics of this style of leadership include standardization and formalized timelines presented by the leader (Glickman, 2002a).

The final leadership style is called directive control. This style involves the leader telling the teacher directly what to do (Glickman, 2002a). The leader pushes the teacher for change and reinforces consequences. The choices are predetermined by the leader and the teacher has little or no input on the decision. This style is used mostly with beginning teachers and incompetent teachers. The goal is to move toward less leader control and more teacher autonomy (Glickman, 2002a).

The goal of leadership is to provide every student “with what should be his or her educational birthright; access to competent, caring, qualified teaching” (Glickman, 2002a, p. 81). Leadership styles should be fit to each individual teacher by assessing the level of their commitment and abstraction (Glickman & Gordon, 1987). In schools full of self-starting, resourceful, curious staff, school renewal is taking place through non-directive leadership. In a school with common goals but a history of failed efforts to improve and little visible collaboration among teachers would be best served by the collaborative leadership style. In a school with a lack of common learning goals across grade levels and teachers working mostly in private, a directive- informational approach would be appropriate in order to move a faculty toward sharing ideas across classrooms and grade levels. In a school marked by a decline in achievement and resistance to individual or collective change, directive control leadership requiring faculty to participate in a continuous improvement program is necessary. Instructional leaders start where they are and move toward a more collaborative, democratic process of leadership as possible. Competent teachers and powerful schools know that when it comes to

education, one must always learn to do better no matter where they are starting (Glickman, 2002a).

To create a professional environment in schools, instructional leaders need to provide more opportunities for teachers to make choices, observe others, discuss their work, and help beginning teachers ease into their responsibilities (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004). Removing obstacles for teacher improvement includes increasing responsibility for beginning teachers, increasing visibility among teachers, and encouraging teachers to share their instructional plans, insight, and ideas. Great leaders encourage teachers to work in groups and give them partial control over their schedules, materials, and curriculum (Glickman, 1985). All major research studies on effective schools have reported that they all have in place the organizational behavior of collective action. This agreed upon purpose and confidence in realization Glickman calls *ethos* or a “cause beyond oneself” (Glickman et al, 2004, p. 38). Leaders that understand this concept contribute to building great schools.

### **Teaching, Learning, and Service**

Consistent with his democratic focus, Glickman (2005) outlined his principles of democratic learning. First, students have a degree of choice as an individual and in a group within the limits set by the teacher. Second, students work with people, problems, and ideas as they learn skills and knowledge. Finally, students are held to a high degree of excellence in both academics and contributions made to society (Glickman, 2005). The goal is to teach students to think independently as they learn to contribute in a democracy. Education must work to create a generation of citizens more intelligent, caring, and committed than the generation before. To achieve this, schools and programs must employ a pedagogy of learning that demonstrates to students the power of democracy as the most powerful way to learn to live together (Glickman, 2003a).

In a democracy, differences are respected and there is a respect for the right of each person to participate, consider, explore, and form their own educated point of view (Glickman, 2005). One cannot form an educated point of view until they reconcile differences in perspective, belief, and purpose by first understanding the views from their own perspective. Teachers need to model for students what they wish for them to demonstrate; respect for differences, engagement of others, and deliberation over what is right (Glickman, 2005). Students learn by what they see as well as by what they do.

Glickman (1998a) pointed out that democratic education does not mean students and teachers have the same or equal authority. The teacher has the moral duty to establish educational conditions that guide student learning. Teachers assert control to ensure that learning occurs from interaction between academic knowledge and the natural interest of the students. Schools use governance through the school charter to implement learning that results in informed and participatory students (Glickman, 1998a).

Glickman (1998a) also believed in the importance of listening to students. He believed that if they are asked, students will express what is engaging and what is boring about

teaching and learning. Teachers may not always want to hear what the students have to say but, if they listen, students will teach them how they learn. The student's responsibility is to press the issue of influence with the teacher in an effort to improve learning (Glickman, 1998a).

Glickman (2003a) pointed out the difference between education and schooling is schooling has been intended to continue and maintain existing power relations and instructional structures in society. On the other hand, education is the process of transmitting the knowledge of values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and cultures from one generation to another. Public schooling is the institutional practices and administrative structures that guide how a school operates to educate its students. Public education is the knowledge base, epistemological perspective, and teacher, parent, and community modeling that gives students the tools they need to participate in society (Glickman, 2003a).

The debate about educational change ignores the original mission of public education, preparation of educated citizens to participate in a democratic society (Glickman, 2003a). Good education ensures that all students appreciate and utilize freedom of speech and accept the responsibility to demonstrate respect for the rights of others. Good education also makes sure students understand the key importance of separation of church and state and know, and are dedicated to, the due process step prior to being denied of "life, liberty, property or the pursuit of happiness" (Glickman, 2002b, p. 374). Students who receive a good education also are knowledgeable and conversant about the issues of our society. They know how to reason and consider a variety of points of view. Students would test viewpoints, shape informed opinions, and would practice and convey the acceptance of the value of all people. Students who do well in school recognize how school and learning will help them and those who do not do well in school will never perform better until learning is connected to a real democratic future (Glickman, 2003a).

With regard to pedagogy, democratic education believes in a core curriculum that everyone receives without specified tracks. However, Glickman (1998b) also pointed out that democratic education understands that there are times when students need something different. Not a different track, but attention to a particular characteristic. For example, gifted students would receive some intensive support to encourage the growth of that talent. Students with behavior issues that are harmful to others would not be able to stay in class with other students. Special education students would receive time with specialists. Finally, all students would have ten percent of their day devoted to activities for which they have shown special interest, aptitude, or talent. Individual characteristics and interests are considered (Glickman, 1998b).

### **Standards, Policy, and Authority**

Glickman (1990) discussed in his writings the two recent reform movements: legislative and empowering. The legislative movement added more laws, regulations and accountability at the state and federal levels. This movement included high stakes testing and common curriculum. Teachers and principals became passive workers and morale

declined across America (Glickman, 1989). The empowering movement aimed to give back some autonomy to the local schools and school boards. Glickman believed the policymakers need to learn to involve teachers in their collective work on reforming schools. Educators need to have a reform process that includes their ability to make knowledgeable decisions about their teaching, and allows educators to take responsibility for implementing and accepting the consequences of their choices (Glickman, 1990).

Standards policy is a substantial issue in education because it affects every student, faculty member, and school. Standards have a direct influence on how America defines the following; the curriculum to be taught, well-educated students, and the fundamental purpose of schools (Glickman, 2001). Glickman believed there are some good aspects of standards. For example, the expectation that every student, regardless of race, wealth, or gender, will achieve at higher levels than ever before and the equalization in funding are seen as positives. However, Glickman also identified the faults in standardization. For example, states exercise of total control over schools, enacting narrow standards, and making no allowances for innovation in schools are negative for schools. If democracy is going to be furthered it will only happen when it protects the diversity of ideas and variety of viewpoints (Glickman, 2002b). What Glickman believed is necessary is special protection for classrooms and schools that have different perspectives and alternative concepts of education and schools without grade levels. Glickman suggested that educators consider the following options in responding to the ever increasing standardization of education: rebel openly, suggest changes in the accountability system, accept state testing but develop community based project or assessment as a cultivating project, accept state standards and make them work by involving students in finding ways to teach them, mainly ignore the test and do a quick preparation close to the date, or resign and find a school that practices democratic beliefs (Glickman, 1990). Standardization results in the loss of imaginative and creative thinking used to explore new possibilities that encourage students to pursue their natural interests (Glickman, 2006).

American education should be built on a foundation that is more than the opinions of any one individual or group. America should respect and support any concept or innovative idea that is willing to be tested publicly. It should involve enthusiastic and non-discriminatory participation of all stakeholders (Glickman, 2001). Glickman believed that absolute ideological truths have no place in education. Absolute truths only attempt to crush each other and education is comprised of many intricacies that will ultimately overcome any singular certainty. Additionally, any single truth will be full of contradictions, as seen throughout history. The real concern of any one-reform effort is the endorsement of one definition of a well-educated citizen (Glickman, 2001). Individuals should be allowed to define that for themselves.

Some standards and assessment are necessary to the idea of equity for and the capacity of all students. However, the freedom of a school to control its own resources and use the best of learning practices is essential to school success and the attractiveness of the profession. Schools can and do determine what is necessary for students through the utilization of their framework. The work of renewal and innovation is going on in



individual schools and districts that challenge current standards and assessment. This has to be integrated into a larger systemic policy (Glickman, 2001). “There is not tragedy in reaching for the stars and failing short; the greatest tragedy is never reaching at all” (Glickman, 2006, p. 690).

### **Democracy and the Future**

Schools in America are no worse and no better than they have been on the past. America is in a precarious position, but, it always has been (Glickman, 2006). The greatest experiment of human kind is democracy. Even though, in the beginning, and some would argue, even today, it did not apply to all, the conviction that each person was equal and having absolute right to “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness” was at least possible (Glickman, 2002b, p. 374). Education, to date, has been unable to finish the work of the revolution. The primary reason schools exist is to prepare all people to take their just position as respected and valued citizens in the democracy (Glickman, 2006).

Citizen education is not just a narrow understanding of how the government works (Glickman, 2008). Citizen education focuses on the more thorough comprehension of freedom. Through participations, deliberations, judgment, and choices of economic, social, and intellectual life, students are prepared for their roles as American citizens (Glickman, 2008). This comprehensive view is what is missing in education today (Glickman, 2003a).

Glickman (1988) continually brought his focus back to the educational theory of democracy. Democracy is best created and progressed by a community that defends and safeguards freedom of speech, separation of church and state, universal distribution of knowledge, free press, and the unencumbered search for truth. The basic idea is that all people are able to educate themselves when provided with an atmosphere that encourages them to interact actively with the information (Glickman, 1998). This results in the individual gaining knowledge and eventually forming one's own judgments and conclusions. Citizens are then able to govern themselves individually and collectively in a way greater than all other forms of governance (Glickman, 2003a).

What is democratic learning and what is it not? Glickman (2006) stated it is students working actively with problems as they learn and have a high degree of choice within the limits of the teacher. Students are responsible to use their educational time wisely and share their learning with those in class and those outside of class. They also decide how to make their learning a gift to their society and assume growing responsibility for acquiring materials for projects. Further, students demonstrate what they know publicly by sharing with and working in the community. Children work cooperatively and challenge and learn from each other. Democratic learning is not students deciding for themselves what they will learn or if they will learn. Nor is it learning the same thing at the same time. It is not passively listening or getting categorized into ability groups. Democratic pedagogy is resolute. It builds toward increasing participation and responsibility for one's own learning. Teachers do not allow students to just be *free*. Teachers guide student to learn how to be *free* (Glickman, 2006).

Glickman (1999) pointed out that democracy has never been implemented perfectly and many have been marginalized along the way. To assume that democracy only belongs to white people is to marginalize all of those of citizens, white and of color, who have worked and fought to improve democracy by promoting ideals that give all people hope. Retreating from democracy is dangerous to minority groups and everyone (Glickman, 1999). “Thus, democracy is as much an educational theory as a political theory; one rests upon the other. The task...is only for the courageous educator who... is willing..., to serve as a beacon of that which is indeed possible” (Glickman, 2003a, p. xx).

In the long haul, progressive education re-centers schooling on intellectual inquiry and public engagement while respecting the student’s capacity to come to his or her own conclusions resulting in a concrete contribution to others (National Commission of Service-Learning, 2002). The belief in democracy and education leads America on. Education can re-invigorate democracy but educators have to sustain the progressive dream. “We cannot possibly imagine what this wiser, healthier, more caring world might look like, but the next generation will learn from our efforts and pick up our dream and remake it their own” (Glickman, 2003a, p. 322).

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