

An Innovative Program to Prepare Instructional Leaders: David L. Gray, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Education, and Joél P. Lewis, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education, The University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama.

Abstract

Purpose

The purposes of this study are to describe the redesigned instructional leadership program at the University of South Alabama and to evaluate its efficacy in preparing future principals to become instructional leaders.

Research Methods

Three cohorts of students in USA's redesigned program were assigned to mentor principals in local schools for a semester to practice instructional leadership skills. District superintendents paid for substitute teachers. Multiple measures were used to assess residents' performance, including the Leadership Practices Inventory® (LPI), locally-designed surveys, and paired sample *t* tests to evaluate the value of Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®.

Findings

Thirty-three principals and 28 residents evaluated the redesigned leadership program on a 4-point, Likert-type instrument. Mentor principals' evaluations reflected their belief that the residency is effective, but needs some improvement. Residents' responses were similar. Paired sample *t* tests were conducted on the LPI's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. Gains in each practice between the first and second administrations were statistically significant. All residents passed the norm-referenced PRAXIS examination and are eligible for state licensure.

Implications for Research and Practice

Tomorrow's instructional leaders should practice leadership in school settings. Authentic experiences enable new principals to move through the survival stage of leadership preparation.

Key words: Instructional Leadership, Principal Preparation Programs, School Leadership, Principal Training, Educational Administration and PRAXIS Examination