A New Look at TRAINING TOMORROW'S PRINCIPALS
Leadership Development for URBAN Schools

The principal’s job in a public school is like no other. Although many positions contain some elements of the principal’s work, none cover the same breadth of responsibilities or require the same range of skills. This is what makes it so difficult to prepare aspiring leaders for the principalship.

New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) is an innovative model that seeks to foster high academic achievement for all students by attracting, preparing, and supporting outstanding leaders for our nation’s urban public schools. Our principals now serve more than 150 schools across five cities, transforming the academic experience of 75,000 students every day.

The NLNS model is guided by three core beliefs about principal training and development:

- **Balance theory with reflection and promising practices.** Our innovative program draws on a variety of leadership development approaches. While traditional education training programs focus heavily on theory and curriculum, aspiring doctors gain hands-on experience through internships and residencies, and emerging business leaders learn about different facets of their companies by rotating through several company divisions. Our program emphasizes foundational theory, hands-on learning, and coaching by peers and experts.

- **Individualize professional and personal development.** We personalize professional development by having aspiring principals use various tools to assess their own strengths and weaknesses along key dimensions identified as critical to school leadership. They then take an active role in their professional and personal development, with support from coaches and peers.

- **Organize all facets of curriculum, training, and coaching.** A rigorous three-year program gives aspiring urban principals the leadership tools they need to succeed.

Cami Anderson and Rita Louh

IN BRIEF

New Leaders for New Schools is a three-year program that selects, trains, and supports aspiring urban principals. The program balances formal training, a full-time residency, and follow-up support from coaches and peers.

www.naesp.org
The Six Strands of Effective Urban Leadership

**Ensure effective teaching and learning.** Principals focus on high-quality instruction through observation and supervision, the use of high-functioning teacher teams, professional learning communities, and other strategies to support effective instruction.

**Focus on data and outcomes.** Principals understand why and how to use diverse forms of data to align curriculum, standards, and assessment.

**Lead learning communities.** Principals have the skills, perspective, authority, and strategies to lead a school that has high expectations for every child.

**Nurture student and staff efficacy.** Principals have skills and strategies to nurture belief in staff and students of the potential of every child to succeed.

**Build school culture, climate, and community.** Principals need to establish building-wide symbols, rituals, and practices that build positive school culture.

**Manage effectively.** Principals have the fiscal, organizational, and operational skills needed to support high student achievement in a high-quality school.

The NLNS program model has three distinct stages: selection, the residency year, and ongoing support during the first two years of the principalship. Each stage is critical to the success of the others and to the overall program.

**Stage One: Selection**

A rigorous admissions process is critical in order to identify and select individuals with the skills and leadership needed to benefit from our three-year program. We seek leaders with exceptional drive and a belief in the potential of all children to succeed.

**Stage Two: Residency**

The residency year uses several integrated components to gives aspiring principals the academic learning, on-the-job skill development, and guided reflection necessary to prepare them for school leadership.

**Foundations.** This rigorous academic program introduces aspiring principals to the theoretical landscape, relevant research, and practical applications. It begins with six weeks in the summer and continues in four week-long sessions during the year.

**Residency.** In tandem with the demanding academic study in Foundations, the aspiring principals practice hands-on learning through a full-time, full-year residency in an urban public school.

**ing, and support around six content areas.** Research and practice have demonstrated these six areas (see box) to be key traits of exemplary urban school principals.

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school. Each aspiring principal works with a mentor principal as a member of the school’s leadership team, with significant responsibility for instruction and student achievement. During this year, the residents complete several major projects based on their own development needs and the goals of their residency school.

Individual coaching. Our leadership coaches, who are all successful veteran principals, provide individualized coaching and support for aspiring principals at every stage of their training. Guided by individualized learning plans and assessments, the coaches help each aspiring principal define and address his or her strengths and weaknesses.

Stage Three: Two Years of Ongoing Support

Assuming the aspiring principals demonstrate adequate progress in all six content areas through their residency coursework, NLNS helps them secure principalships. However, since we believe new principals continue to learn and grow significantly in their first two years as principals, each new leader continues to receive mentoring during that period from one of our coaches. Principals also meet monthly with peers for group problem-solving and attend training targeted at developing deeper expertise in specific areas.

Measuring the Results

In four short years, the New Leaders for New Schools model has begun to demonstrate impact in several areas:

Principals’ evaluations. Our semi-annual surveys show that our principals find the three years of training and support invaluable in navigating the challenges of their new roles. In fact, many who have completed the program continue to seek the informal support of their coaches and peers.

District adoption. There is growing demand among large urban districts for the NLNS program. Several cities have adopted elements of the NLNS model in creating their own principal development programs.

Student achievement. Ultimately, gains in student achievement are the most important result. Through our internal surveys, we know our principals have already begun to demonstrate some impact on student achievement in a short amount of time. To confirm the validity of these findings, New Leaders for New School is undertaking a large-scale, third-party evaluation to assess the impact of its program on school quality and student achievement.

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WEB RESOURCES

New Leaders for New Schools provides a program overview on its Web site.
www.nlns.org/program/

NAESP’s National Principals Resource Center describes the contents of its Urban Principal’s Toolkit and the seven titles of its Urban Principals Respond series.
www.naesp/nprc/urban.htm

The Education Alliance at Brown University devotes a section of its Web site to urban schools, including a description of its Principals’ Leadership Network.
www.lab.brown.edu/topics/urban/shtml

The Council of the Great City Schools has a site that includes a number of articles on issues related to urban schools.
www.cgcs.org