

**Achievement-Centered Leadership Development Program
for Practicing and Aspiring Principals**

Project Abstract

Western Michigan University (WMU) and 14 eligible, high-need school districts in Michigan propose to conduct the **Achievement-Centered Leadership Development Program** for 60 practicing and 60 aspiring principals, with each pair of practicing and aspiring principals recruited from the same school to facilitate the project activities. The proposed project improves participants' leadership and, ultimately, student achievement.

The proposed **Achievement-Centered Leadership Development Program** is research-based, job-embedded, and results-oriented. Based on empirical research on the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement, such as the balanced leadership by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) and more than 30 other high-quality empirical studies, the proposed project focuses on the following six dimensions of principals' work that are empirically associated with higher student achievement: (a) engagement in data-informed decision making, (b) management of safe and orderly school operations, (c) development of teacher leaders, (d) redesign of the organization, (e) development of a coherent and rigorous instructional program, and (f) leadership for continuous school renewal. The six modules, based on each of the six dimensions, will constitute an intensive 30-month program. For each module, participants will attend two and a half days of face-to-face learning activities, receive two days of mentoring, work with the school's stakeholders and the mentor to plan and implement at least one renewal activity for each module, and engage in learning community activities. The activities are job-embedded and take into account theories of adult learning. Therefore, the proposed program focuses on those important leadership dimensions that are empirically associated with higher student achievement. The quality, intensity and duration of the proposed project activities are uniquely designed to have a significant impact on principals, teachers, schools, and student achievements.

The proposed project evaluation will utilize both traditional evaluation activities and an experimental design. For traditional evaluation activities, we will evaluate each module, each participant's Leadership Portfolio and each mentor's log, as well as other evidence. For the experimental design, we will randomly assign 60 pairs of practicing and aspiring principals (each pair from the same school) into two cohorts. The first cohort will receive the treatment during the first 30 months. The strategy of delayed treatment will be used for the second cohort to create the experimental and control groups. The impact of the project will be evaluated by analyzing data collected using four well-established instruments as well as student achievement data.

The proposed project will validate a curriculum to improve principal leadership to enhance student achievement. It will not only benefit the participating districts, but also provide a validated curriculum for Michigan Department of Education's statewide training. The lead applicant, Western Michigan University, is one of the 76 public universities with high research activity. It is one of the top ten producers of both teachers and school administrators in the country. The participating school districts meet the eligibility by having a census poverty rate of 20% or more [(a)(2)] and a high percentage of teachers on emergency, provisional, and temporary certification and licensing [(b)(2)].