# Characteristics of Teachers Nominated for an Accelerated Principal Preparation Program

*Steve J. Rios, Florida Atlantic University, USA*

*Daniel Reyes-Guerra, Florida Atlantic University, USA*

## ABSTRACT

*This article reports the initial evaluation results of a new accelerated, job-embedded principal preparation program funded by a Race to the Top Grant (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a) in Florida. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, and chi-square analyses were used to describe the characteristics of a group of potential applicants nominated to the program by their principals. Demographic and education-related variables for the group were compared to a group of self-selected students enrolled in an existing educational leadership master's program at the same public university. Initial statistical analysis revealed that more than two-thirds of the nominated teachers belonged to a minority group and had not majored in education as undergraduates. These findings have immediate implications for this new program and for research related to the identification of potential future educational leaders.*

*Keywords:    Educational Leader Preparation, Graduate Education, Job-Embedded Training, School Leaders, Selection Practices, Tapping*

## INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, a consistent stream of government reports, conference proceedings, research studies, and issue briefs have sounded a clarion call for education reform, including changes related to how educational leaders are being prepared to lead American schools (Grossman, 2011; Levine, 2005; Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010; UCEA, 2011). The central importance of school leaders to improving student outcomes has been known for many years (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Hallinger, & Heck, 1996; Miller, 2003). Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) cited evidence from dozens of empirical studies, analyzed in meta-analysis, and determined that leadership explains between 5% and 7% of the difference in pupil learning and achievement. Although that percent seems small, it is one-quarter of the total difference across schools (12%-20%). During the past decade the debate on the effect of strong administrative leadership has developed, with most research clearly indicating important potential positive (or negative) effects of principals (headmaster,

school director, etc.) (Herrington & Wills, 2005; McGuire, 2002).

In July, 2009, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), United States President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced $4.35 billion in competitive funds for an initiative titled the *Race to the Top (RTTT)* (White House, 2012). This major new educational initiative leveraged the availability of hundreds of millions of new funding dollars to encourage states to demonstrate their openness to substantially change their educational laws and policies to advance a specific Federal government-backed educational agenda. Some of the long-term outcomes of the agenda would directly impact systems in place, mostly at colleges of education, to train educational leaders – principals and assistant principals. By August of 2010, the U.S. Department of Education had awarded Race to the Top (RTTT) grants to 11 states and the District of Columbia. Florida received $700 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b).

RTTT emphasizes the following reform areas: designing and implementing rigorous standards and high-quality assessments, attracting and keeping highly-effective teachers and leaders, supporting data systems that inform decisions and improve instruction, using innovation and effective approaches to turn-around struggling schools, demonstrating and sustaining education reform. The "sustaining education reform" aspect of the initiative includes plans to promote "other conditions favorable to innovation and reform" (White House, 2009, p. 1). This initial study is focused on the leadership reforms promoted by the RTTT initiative.

This focus on leadership reform in schools is not new to the profession. Critics and reformers have been paying increased attention to improvement needs in educational reform. The critics contend that college and university-based educational leadership programs are too time-consuming, too theoretical and are out of touch with the day-to-day realities faced by front line educators and school leaders (Levine, 2005). Furthermore, the critics state that the recruitment of applicants is faulty, with few effective systems in place to assure that high-quality candidates are recruited to apply for advanced educational degrees that lead to certification and entry into educational leadership positions. Along with the federal government, national organizations such as the National Governors Association and the Chief State School Officers have challenged school district human resource professionals and their college and university colleagues to work together to fundamentally alter existing pre-service and in-service programs for current and future teachers and educational leaders. This article is about the first stage of evaluation of a new and innovative partnership between a state university and a large urban school district that have received a $3.5 million grant to create a new kind of educational leadership preparation program, one that has been structured to respond to Federal and state requirements and to conform with what research indicates are effective methods with which to train educational leaders. Information derived from this report can serve not only to inform local program improvement efforts, but may provide helpful information to developers or prospective developers of educational leadership programs in other parts of the country and the world.

## PURPOSE OF STUDY

This paper discusses the results of an initial evaluation of a leadership development program named PROPEL. PROPEL, which stands for Principal Rapid Orientation and Preparation in Educational Leadership, is a partnership between Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), the sixth-largest school district in the United States. PROPEL was conceived to meet an urgent need for qualified school leaders in South Florida and was developed using research-based concepts regarding how principal education programs should be developed and implemented. The purpose of this mini-study, the first step in a comprehensive program evaluation of this multi-year program, is to examine the initial

results of PROPEL's applicant recruitment process by discovering the characteristics of PROPEL's first pool of applicants and comparing them with the characteristics of conventional program candidates.

The first objective of PROPEL is to create a process that streamlines the district's and university's program admissions process and creates a process of selection based on principal nomination as opposed to self-selection of applicants. The process of recruiting students into educational leader certification and graduate level programs has garnered specific attention, with analysts contending that a major barrier to increasing the quality of principals is the high numbers of self-selected students (Grossman, 2011; Levine, 2005). The results of this analysis of PROPEL's applicant recruitment process, therefore, may provide valuable information for program improvement.

## THE PROPEL PROGRAM

In December of 2011 the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology (ELRM) and BCPS's Human Resource Development Department (HRD), also known as the Division of Professional Learning and Continuing Education, were awarded a $3.5 million RTTT partnership grant by the Florida Department of Education to establish PROPEL.

PROPEL is a state-of-the-art educational leadership program that aims to improve student achievement by implementing research-based strategies and concrete evaluative measures centered on a job-embedded experience. It aims to strengthen and improve the recruitment, selection, preparation, evaluation, and support of aspiring and novice principals. This will be achieved through: 1) creating a well-structured, standards-based, job-embedded model designed to develop effective leadership for schools with high percentages of students who are not meeting standards; 2) reforming and fusing ELRM and HRD educational leadership certification programs to ensure rigor and relevance for aspiring school leaders resulting in full educational leader certification; 3) redesigning, streamlining, and aligning the partnership's recruitment, selection, preparation, and evaluation systems to create an accelerated program for teachers aspiring to be principals; and 4) building internal capacity of both partners for mentoring, training, evaluation and implementing sustainable systems that will be viable into the future and replicable in other districts.

PROPEL aims to equip BCPS's aspiring and novice principals with the knowledge and skills to effectively respond to the challenges faced by urban school leaders as they skillfully and strategically strive to increase student achievement. This project builds on ELRM's and HRD's existing infrastructures using an innovative set of reforms and collaboration designed to address the research-based factors shown to enhance the development of school leaders. Not only will this program meet BCPS leadership needs, but through these reforms it will provide a model - using research and evaluation - of enhancing student learning through the design of programs of best practice for aspiring principals focused on turn-around leadership in urban school districts in the United States and possibly other countries as well.

### Project Vision, Mission and Goals

The vision of PROPEL is to maximize student learning gains through a focus on instructional and "turn-around" leadership, resulting in leaders who have demonstrated knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practice to improve the lowest-performing schools. PROPEL's specific goals include (a) collaboratively developing and implementing a rigorous academic program to develop fully-certified school administrators; (b) creating a system for identifying, recruiting, and selecting educators with the greatest potential for effective leadership; (c) annually producing approximately 30 effective school leaders to meet the needs of BCPS most challenged schools; (d) increasing the capacity of both partners by creating a cadre of skilled, qualified trainers to continuously build leadership at all levels and in all related programs; (e)

focusing the job-embedded program on real-life, hands-on activities and tasks that target high-need BCPS schools; (f) providing participants with adequately trained mentors; (g) evaluating the effectiveness of completers using participant and school performance data and BCPS administrator evaluation tools; and, (h) linking program elements to the District's criteria, Florida Principal Leadership Standards, and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. PROPEL development and implementation began in December of 2011. It is expected that the first cohort of completers will graduate by June 2013. A second cohort will be finished by the final year of the grant, and new cohorts finishing every year thereafter.

The ability of school districts to provide a job-embedded preparation program is extremely difficult due to funding and the need to keep outstanding teachers in the classroom. Nationwide, inadequate internships through university and district programs have resulted in beginning administrators who spend inordinate amounts of time trying to learn management and the operational functions and lack focused training as instructional leaders. Little hands-on practice, especially practice focused on challenging learning environments, creates a shortage of qualified candidates able to improve instruction and student achievement.

The project's purpose is, therefore, to prepare leaders to meet these BCPS needs by: 1) inviting experienced BCPS principals to nominate, or "tap", highly-effective teachers with strong leadership potential as potential candidates for PROPEL; 2) engage those outstanding teachers in accelerated, challenging and high-quality coursework and internships where they can expand on their knowledge, and add knowledge, skills, and dispositions under the supervision and evaluation of an effective principal through internships and clinical experiences; 3) evaluate their performance through traditional and innovative formative and summative assessments tied to student achievement; and 4) provide them with the opportunity to focus on and experience instructional leadership at high-need schools. While future

evaluations will address other aspects of the program's progress, this mini-study evaluated initial results, in terms of potential applicant pool, of the program's invitation to BCPS to tap teachers about whose effectiveness they have direct knowledge.

## The Recruitment Process

Florida's Race to the Top (RTTT) Grant Request for Proposals (RFP) Job-embedded Principal Preparation Program was posted on Aug. 12, 2011 and submitted by ELRM on September 30, 2011. In competition with 10 other applicants, on December 1, 2011 ELRM was notified that it had been awarded one of the two grants contemplated in the RFP, and that one of five other institutions would be selected for an award a month later if they made substantial reforms to their original proposals.

The RFP required almost immediate implementation; the first cohort of students is due to finish the year-and-a-half-long program by June of 2013. Therefore, as soon as the award was announced, the partnership formed the PROPEL Steering Committee and began the planning and implementation process. The latter process was divided into four phases, the recruitment, nomination, admissions, and selection phases. While describing the four phases, this paper reports on the results of the first two phases leading to the selection of the program's first cohort.

The first phase, recruitment, became a very abridged version of the recruitment that will take place for future cohorts. Unlike other programs where recruitment is aimed at informing and enticing the participant, the central role of mentoring and coaching by the participant's sponsoring principal necessitated that recruitment be centered on the district principals. PROPEL's intensive experientially-centered program is designed to have as mentors only those principals willing to commit to their own training and mentoring provided by the program while also being committed to mentoring and coaching for the success of their "tapped" teacher.

Because of the short time span involved, a single email bulletin was sent out district-wide to all BCPS principals informing them about the program. The bulletin contained a description of the requirements that would be made of the nominator-mentor as well as the participant if they were accepted into the program. The bulletin was not just an email but resided in the informational system of the district, allowing principals to view it as a news item on a daily basis. Principals were informed that (a) teacher nominees who are selected and admitted to the program would be involved in an intensive academic program that requires at least one night a week for classes and Saturday classes for the program's duration; (b) tuition would be free; (c) nominees could not be enrolled in any other school leadership program, or hold a Level 1 Leadership Certificate or Master's degree in School Leadership; and (d) participants would be required to meet all FAU admissions requirements as well as program admissions requirements, including taking and reporting GRE scores, writing samples, letters of recommendation, undergraduate transcripts, letter of commitment from nominating principal, and other program-administered assessments. Principals were given one week to discuss the program with their teachers and nominate one for the program.

The second phase, the nomination phase, was facilitated by providing a link in the recruitment letter that allowed the principals to submit the name of the teacher on-line. As a way to help develop a personalized professional development plan for nominees, and in an attempt to provide more information that could be used to determine a potential students' suitability for the program, principals nominating teachers were asked to take a survey developed using the new Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS). These standards were adopted in November 2011 as a part of the RTTT reforms required by the federal award to the state. Nominee demographic data and formative evaluation data were collected from these principal nominations submitted on-line.

The third phase, the application phase, began with a mandatory information session for all nominees interested in applying. The nomination session was inaugurated by the assistant superintendent in charge of HRD for BCPS and the department chair of ELRM. It was hosted by the PROPEL Program Director and the HRD Director of Leadership and Non-Instructional Development programs. Of the 63 nominees, 61 attended (96.8%). Nominees registered for the event as they entered the auditorium and received a packet that included slides of the PowerPoint of the presentation, admissions documents and checklists, and a registration form. The PowerPoint presentation presented information including the need for the program, the vision of the project, the specific goals of the project, a description of the academic program, participant requirements, participant evaluation and continuation decision points, program eligibility, costs to the participants, and the application process and specific procedures. This was followed by a question and answer session. All question and answers were recorded, and the registration form was collected as the nominees exited. The form included a place for nominees to ask questions that they did not feel were answered or that they preferred to ask individually. Several BCPS and FAU officials were in attendance, along with six nominating principals.

Applicants were given four days to hand in their application packets, either via email, fax, or in person. The application included a three-page essay, asking them to show how they have improved student learning in their classrooms over the last three years. Of the 61 registrants at the informational session, 42 (69%) applied and 19 (31%) chose not to apply. The final phase of the application process will take place when applicants, after an initial application review by the Admissions Committee, will be invited to an interview with two members of the six-member PROPEL admissions committee.

The interview teams each will have one university faculty member and one BCPS administrator, either a principal or an HRD administrator. During interviews will be sched-

uled and the applicants will be asked to go to on-line link and take the Profile XT Assessment, developed by Profiles International, Inc., which will be used for program evaluation and personalized learning plans (Profiles International Inc., 2003). The Profile XT, which has been validated with more than 140,000 individuals, assesses an individual's thinking and reasoning style, as well as interests and behavioral traits.

## SAMPLE

The overall sample for this study totaled 84. The first group consisted of 57 individuals who attended the PROPEL information session. Of the 55 who reported their gender, 10 (18.2) were male and 44 (80%) were female. Of the 43 who reported race-ethnicity, 28 (65.1%) are either Black or Hispanic and 15 (34.9%) are non-Hispanic Caucasian. Their years of experience as a teacher ranged from 1 to 26 ($M = 9$, $SD = 5$) and their ages ranged from 23 to 54 ($M = 36$, $SD = 7$).

The second group was comprised of 27 individuals who had begun their spring 2012 internship class as students in the regular master's degree in ELRM's K-12 Leader's Master's Degree Program. Eight (30%) of the students in this class were male and 19 (70%) were female. Fourteen (51.9%) are minorities (Black, Hispanic and other) and 14 (48.1%) are non-Hispanic Caucasian. Their years of experience as a teacher ranged from 2 to 21 years ($M = 8$, $SD = 5$) and their ages ranged from 26 to 55 ($M = 34$, $SD = 8$).

## PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this evaluation study was to compare and contrast the academic qualifications and basic demographic information of two distinct groups of individuals related to a master's degree program in educational leadership. More specifically, this study sought to answer the following major evaluation question:

In what quantifiable ways are a group of principal-nominated educational leadership graduate students different from and similar to a cohort of graduate students who self-selected into the college's tradition program?

There are three specific sub-questions that the evaluation sought to answer.

1.  Is there a significant difference in demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, minority status or undergraduate preparation) between the two groups?
2.  Is there a significant difference in academic qualifications (i.e., undergraduate grade point average, years of teaching experience and undergraduate preparation) between the two groups?

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In spite of the fact that educational preparation leadership is a topic that has received considerable research attention during the past few years, few studies exist related to participants and existing knowledge or the best ways to prepare and develop highly-qualified principals. Since principal shortage problems are particularly relevant among schools that serve high numbers of minority students, some attention has been paid regarding ways to increase the development of educational leaders from and for those schools (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010). One recent study in Miami-Dade County, the county immediately south of the county in which the present evaluation study is taking place, discussed the potential value of principals encouraging teachers to pursue principal positions. This invitation process is called "tapping" (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011).

The researchers contend that principals are in the best position to recognize leadership potential in teachers. Myung, Loeb, and Horng (2011), who conducted a study in Miami-Dade County, the nation's fourth-largest school district, found that "principals are capable of effectively identifying and encouraging teachers with strong leadership potential to enter the

principal pipeline" (p. 696). These researchers asked more than 8,000 teachers if their current principal ever approached them "to suggest that you eventually become a principal or assistant principal" (p. 701). Among the most interesting of their numerous findings is that while only 9% of the sample reported being tapped by a principal, 72% of the more than 300 principals who answered a similar survey indicated that "they were tapped by a former principal and 52% of assistant principals were tapped by a former principal" (p. 704).

These researchers found that teachers with leadership experience of any kind, except union leadership experience, are "significantly more likely to be tapped than teachers lacking such experience" (p. 710). They indicated that tapping "appears to have a significant impact on teachers' interest in school leadership as well as their probability of actually becoming principals" (p. 722). They encouraged district leaders, however, to try to encourage principals to tap subordinates "based more on teachers' leadership competencies than personal traits such as race or gender" (p. 723).

The lack of leadership experience is attributed to deficits in preparation in educational leadership programs that aspiring leaders graduate from to prepare for the assistant principalship or principalship. The literature points to inadequate internship experiences that have resulted in beginning administrators who spend inordinate amounts of time trying to learn management and the operational functions of the district and school rather than spending their time as instructional leaders (Bottoms, 2001; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005). This lack of hands-on practice also creates a shortage of qualified candidates able to focus on improved instruction and student achievement (Davis et al., 2005; Fry et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005, Murphy, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004; Norton, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2002; Tucker, 2003; Young, 2002).

Reyes-Guerra and Mountford (2009) researched the impact of an extended pilot internship program on its participants, and found that the pilot program had significant positive impact on student learning of district-specific knowledge and that there was a perception, among students and their mentors, that they had better leadership preparation than their traditional counterparts. The program relied on principal sponsorship and a rigorous university-district process of participant selection. Yet, there was no study of this program's longitudinal outcomes upon student learning of the schools these participants went on to lead. This is a commonality with most educational leadership programs studied in the literature. Immediate participant learning outcomes are usually reported, but correlations and statistical analysis between specific program elements, especially the variable of recruitment versus self-selection of participants, have yet to be empirically studied.

This initial program evaluation effort was conducted to examine and describe the characteristics of a group of teachers nominated for a new kind of principal preparation program, and to determine what can be learned, within the program's situational context, from even it's very first stage of implementation.

## METHOD

This initial evaluation study sought to answer one major question and three secondary questions about the effect of a recruiting process that solicited nominations of outstanding teachers, from principals, for an accelerated job-embedded educational leadership master's degree program.

Since answers to the secondary questions will provide the answer to the major question, our approach began with answers to the secondary questions. Data from both surveys were entered into IBM SPSS Version 19 for analysis. Since the first question asked about non-parametric (categorical data), namely gender and race/ethnicity, Chi-square analyses were used to check for significant difference between the expected and observed frequencies related to gender and minority status in each of the

two groups. Because there were only four individuals who classified themselves as Hispanic, and only four who classified themselves as something other than White/Caucasian, Black/African American or any other minority, two groups were created, minority and non-minority. The development of these categories allowed for the use of Chi-square analysis and avoided the potential of decreased power due to small sample sizes, in addition to the already small overall sample size.

For the second question, T-tests for independent samples were run to compare the two groups on teacher characteristics, namely overall years of experience as a teacher, years teaching in Broward County, age and self-reported undergraduate grade-point average. Since so few of the teachers were in graduate school, or had even planned on going to graduate school before being presented with this experience, not many had taken the GRE so that score was not available for analysis.

## RESULTS

Question 1: Is there a significant difference in demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, minority status or undergraduate preparation) between the two groups?

A chi-square test revealed that there were no significant differences between the groups related to either gender or minority status. Regarding gender, the result was $X^2$ (1, $N = 83$) = -.134, $p= .066$) which indicates that neither the number of males nor females in each group was significantly different than what was expected. For instance, in the principal nominated cohort of 56 respondents, 44 was the expected count and 46 was the observed count for females. Twelve (12) was the expected count for males the same cohort, and 10 was the observed count. In the internship group, 21 was the expected count for the females and 19 was the actual number. For the men, six was the expected number and eight was the actual number. Given that the actual p-value for this directional test was close to p=.05,

it is not unreasonable to contend that the results were approaching significance, which indicates that there may be more to these results that may be revealed with further analysis.

The results of the chi-square analysis of minority status also were not significant $X^2$ (1, $N = 70$) = .132, $p= .270$) which indicates that the number of minorities in each cohort is what was expected. For instance, in the principal-nominated cohort of 43 (the number that provided race/ethnicity data)), 25.8 was the expected number of minorities and 28 was the observed count. Seventeen and one-half (17.5) was the expected count for non-minorities and 15 was the count for the same cohort. In the internship group, 16.2 was the expected count for the minority group and 14 was the observed number. For the non-Hispanic White (non-minority) group, 10.8 was the expected number of 13 was the actual number.

A G-power analysis conducted for both of the chi-square analyses indicated that the respective sample sizes ($N = 83$ for gender and $N = 70$ for minority status and) provided sufficient power (.83 and .88) to detect an effect size as small as .3. This increased our confidence to say that there truly is no significant difference, related to gender or minority-status, between the two groups.

For this initial study, it is important to look beyond levels of significance (p-values) for these variables. For instance, the percent of minorities was 68.4% in the nominated group as opposed to 31.6%. In the self-selected group, the percent minority was 51.9% as compared to 48.1% for the non-minority. For both groups, such a high percent of minorities bodes well for the potential of these programs, both the PROPEL program and the traditional master's program, to help school districts in Florida Atlantic University's service areas increase the number of minorities in school leadership roles.

Question 2: Is there a significant difference in academic qualifications (i.e., undergraduate grade point average, years of teaching experience and undergraduate preparation) between the two groups?

T-tests for independent samples were conducted to compare mean grade point averages and mean years of teaching between the two groups. Regarding years teaching, it was determined that there was not a significant difference in terms of the number of years members of both groups worked as teachers $t(81) = 1.23$, $p = .221$. The same can be said regarding undergraduate GPA, there was no significant difference between the two groups, $t(65) = 1.23$, $p = .546$. A post hoc G-power analysis was conducted for both of these analyses to determine if there was sufficient power to make a decision regarding significance. Given the overall small sample size (83), there was insufficient power to detect a difference if one exists. While an eye-ball analysis shows that the principal nominated group had an average of 1.4 years more in the teacher profession (a difference which may have proven significant with a larger sample size) a visual comparison of the two mean grade point averages (M=3.42, SD=.42 v. M=3.48, SD=.41) indicates that there truly is no meaningful difference between the two means.

To capture data on participants' undergraduate major, the variable used to determine "undergraduate preparation," respondents simply were asked to write in their undergraduate major in response to an open-ended item. An analysis of frequencies of responses revealed a major difference between the two groups. Teachers in the internship group had majored in 11 different undergraduate programs, with only six (22%) having majored in education. The others majored in biology (2), criminal justice (2), as well as one each in business, exercise science, management information systems, political science, psychology and visual arts. In stark contrast, 32 (56%) of the group of nominees held an undergraduate degree in education, with the rest having majored in 13 different undergraduate fields, such as design, vocal performance, management information systems and finance.

Major evaluation question: In what quantifiable ways are a group of principal-nominated educational leadership graduate students different from and similar to a cohort of graduate students who self-selected into the college's tradition program?

The findings indicate that the two groups analyzed are more alike than they are different. No significant differences were found related to gender, minority status, years of teaching experience, and grade point average. However, they are very different in regards to what may be a critical variable for success as an educational leader – undergraduate preparation. Considering this study is being used as program evaluation, it would have been a source of concern had the percent of minorities or non-minorities been significantly different than expected. Furthermore, had either group been shown to have significantly lower GPA or years of teaching experience, that also may have been a source of concern. A major difference between research and program evaluation is that while researchers often dismiss non-significant results, program evaluators must ask what even non-significant results imply for program development. That question will be addressed in the next section.

## DISCUSSION

These initial data indicate that the composition of a group nominated by principals has no significant difference in terms of candidate demographics. This calls into question the idea that program participants picked by leaders are going to be significantly different in terms of the demographics studied here. We will discuss here the individual findings and the possible relevance to future study of this program and others.

The first finding demonstrates that males and females were evenly distributed between the two groups. Based on the distribution of males and females within the district (FLDOE, 2011), this demonstrates that leader recruitment and self-selection is in proportion with the current district teacher gender percentages. It harbors good news for recent trends in educational leadership, where the previous "glass ceiling" tended to maintain a bias towards male leadership, a

bias congruent with the leadership trends in the management and leadership positions across the spectrum of organizations and still existent in most, as well as in the superintendency of school districts in the US.

The second major finding is similar in that there is not a significant difference between the expected and observed numbers, in either group, based on minority status. This finding indicates that minorities were not less likely, statistically speaking, to be "tapped" for the PROPEL program. Since Broward has a very diverse student population (28% ethnically Hispanic, 39% Black, and 51% White), it is interesting to know that there is not a disproportionate representation of either minorities or non-minorities in either currently enrolled educational leadership students or potential applicants for the PROPEL program. The purpose of PROPEL does not have as a goal changing the demographic make-up of school leadership in the district, but just the analysis of this demographic in further study of this program will lead to whether or not this and similar programs should be looking at the demographics of the incoming aspiring leaders as a way to balance the demographic distribution of school leaders in the district. This remains to be seen, and further analysis may reveal differences within the minority populations and will be the subject of forthcoming research.

The interesting takeaway regarding the third finding, undergraduate preparation, relates to the "clarion calls" for educational leadership reform referred to at the beginning of this article. Proponents of using policy to drive principal preparation reform call for reaching out to professionals from backgrounds other than education to fill workforce needs among teachers and principals. Given that 78% of the participants currently enrolled in the traditional educational leadership program were undergraduate majors in a field other than education and the percentage for the principal-nominated group was 44%, it seems that the goal of attaining a wider variety of professionals entering into teacher leadership is being attained in both programs. Further analysis is needed to compare these percent-

ages with the actual percentages of education and non-education majors within the district to examine whether or not there is coherence between the two or there is a difference with the district's general teacher population. BCPS has a very strong set of alternative certification programs, and this may be a factor that has led to these findings. If there is no coherency, then the question must be asked about why it is that alternate certification teachers are both self-selecting and/or being selected in greater numbers than the teacher population itself.

The other findings concerning GPA and Years of Teaching were not significant and have not, at this point, any relevance to recruitment. Further study using larger sample sizes and other statistical analyses using other variables of interest may bring these into focus for future discussion.

## CONCLUSION

This is an initial evaluation study regarding an innovative school leadership preparation program called PROPEL. The findings provide guidance for future analysis and raise questions for immediate consideration. These questions encourage program developers and stakeholders to consider data and information on this and all programs of this type in terms of the location and situation in which the information was discovered. Although fundamental to program development and improvement, context is often ignored in studies of this kind. This is unfortunate and dangerous because the demographics, policies and politics of a district, the academy and state and Federal government.

A program and its impact must be evaluated based on the population it serves and from which it draws its participants – in other words, on its "local cultural context" (Luke, 2011). This means it is important to carefully consider program context when attempting to apply evaluation findings from one program, or even to borrow processes. That being said, the conceptual and thematic structure of this report may inform the development of similar

existing and future programs throughout the nation and in other countries. In many countries, educational leadership program administrators and district human resource development professionals are dealing with similar challenges and have similar goals related to leadership preparation programs.

This evaluation report is just the first stage of what will be a series of evaluation reports and research studies to help interested parties learn more about how qualified candidates can be tapped and prepared to take their place as educational leaders.

# REFERENCES

Bottoms, G. (2001). *What school leaders need to know about curriculum and instruction. A part of the High Schools that Work Series 51.* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB).

Copland, M. A. (2001). The myth of the superprincipal. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *82*, 528–533.

Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Florida School Leaders. (2006). *F.S. 1012.986. William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders*. Retrieved from https://www.floridaschoolleaders.org/WCG1012_986.aspx

Fry, B., Bottoms, G., & O'Neill, K. (2005). *The principal internship: How can we get it right?* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Southern Board. Regional Education Board (SREB).

Grossman, T. (2011). *State policies to improve the effectiveness of school principals*. Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980–1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *32*(1), 5–44. doi:10.1177/0013161X96032001002

Herrington, C., & Wills, B. K. (2005). Decertifying the principalship: The politics of administrator preparation in Florida. *Educational Policy*, *19*(1), 181–200. doi:10.1177/0895904804271715

Hess, F., & Kelly, A. (2005). The accidental principal: What doesn't get taught at ed schools. *Education Next*, *5*(3), 35–40.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, *28*(1), 27–42. doi:10.1080/13632430701800060

Leithwood, K., Seashore-Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, (2004). *How leadership influences student learning.* Stanford, CA: Stanford Educational Leadership Institute in conjunction with The Finance Project Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation.

Levine, A. (2005). *Educating school leaders.* The Education Schools Project. Retrieved from http://www.edschools.org/pdf/Final313.pdf

Loeb, S., Kalogrides, D., & Horng, E. (2010). Principal preferences and the uneven distribution of principals across schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *32*(2), 205–229. doi:10.3102/0162373710369833

Luke, A. (2011). Generalizing across borders: Policy and the limits of educational science. *Educational Researcher*, *40*(8), 367–377. doi:10.3102/0013189X11424314

McGuire, M. Y. (2002). *Evaluating educational leadership task force report (Report issued to the Michigan Board of Education)*. Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Education.

Miller, K. (2003). *School, teacher, and leadership impacts on student achievement (Policy brief)*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

Murphy, J. (2005). Using the ISLLC standards for school leaders at the state level to strengthen school administration. In *The State Standard* (pp. 15–18). Arlington, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

Murphy, J., & Vriesenga, M. (2004). *Research on preparation programs in educational administration: An analysis*. Columbia, MO: University Council for Educational Administration, University of Missouri-Columbia.

Myung, J., Loeb, S., & Horng, E. (2011). Tapping the principal pipeline: Identifying talent for future school leadership in the absence of formal succession management. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *47*(5), 695–727. doi:10.1177/0013161X11406112

Norton, J., O'Neill, K., Fry, B., & Hill, D. (2002). *Universities in the lead: Redesigning leadership preparation for student achievement*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board.

Orr, M. T., King, C., & LaPointe, M. (2010). *Districts developing leaders: Lessons on consumer actions and program approaches from eight urban districts (Executive Summary)*. Washington, DC: Education Development Center.

Profiles International, Inc. (2003). *The Profile XT Technical Manual*. Waco, TX: Author.

Profiles International, Inc. (2012). *Assessment overview*. Retrieved from http://www.profilesinternational.com/products/profilext.php

Reyes-Guerra, D., & Mountford, M. (2009, November 18-22). *Partnerships and internships: How partnerships between districts and universities during internship development and implementation increase learning gains of developing leaders*. Paper presented at the 22nd Annual UCEA Convention, Anaheim, CA.

Roza, M. (2003). *A matter of definition: Is there truly a shortage of school principals?* Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington.

Stanford University UCEA. (2011). *Candidates in educational leadership graduate programs*. Stanford, CA: Author.

Tucker, M. (2003). Out with the old. *Education Next*, 20–24.

U.S. Department of Education. (2012a). *Race to the top*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2012b). *Nine states and the District of Columbia win second round Race to the Top grants*. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/nine-states-and-district-columbia-win-second-round-race-top-grants

White House. (2012). *Promoting innovation, reform, and excellence in America's public schools*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/fact-sheet-race-top

Young, M. D. (2002). *NCAELP Wingspread Report: Ensuing the university's capacity to prepare learning-focused leadership*. Racine, WI: Wingspread Conference Report.

Young, M. D., Mountford, M., & Crow, G. (2005). Preparing educational leaders: A roadmap to success. In M. D. Young, M. Mountford, & G. Crow (Eds.), *Educational Considerations Special Issue: Preparing Educational Leaders, 32*(2), 3-9.

*Steve J. Rios is an Assistant Visiting Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology at Florida Atlantic University. He also is the Program Evaluator for the Principal Rapid Orientation and Preparation in Educational Leadership (PROPEL) Program. Dr. Rios received his doctorate in Adult Education and Human Resource Development from Florida International University. His research interests in educational issues related to emerging adults and virtual learning.*

*Daniel Reyes-Guerra is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology at Florida Atlantic University. He also is the Director of the Principal Rapid Orientation and Preparation in Educational Leadership (PROPEL) Program. His research interests include district-university partnerships and internships, strategic leadership actions and thinking, and the promotion of social justice in public schools.*