The PELS Program

SPRING, 2013

Penn GSE
Graduate School of Education

Penn Educational Leadership Simulation Program
The Need

IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
HOW?

ENHANCE HUMAN CAPITAL IN SCHOOLS
HOW?

ENHANCE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY
SCHOOL LEADERS FACE EXTREME CHALLENGES (ESPECIALLY IN HIGH-NEED COMMUNITIES)
So, Ms. Miller, would you tell me briefly your methods for teaching reading, your overall philosophy of education, your views on testing, your ideas on discipline, your opinions about homework, the ways you could excite kids about science, and how you would upgrade math skills in our school should you be hired?
Tough job!

- Nine in 10 principals say that ultimately a principal should be held accountable for everything that happens to the children in a school.
  - 74% of teachers agree in 2012, compared with 60% in 1989.
- Three-quarters of principals feel the job has become too complex.
- Seven in 10 principals say the job responsibilities are not very similar to five years ago.

MetLife, 2013
Tough job!

- Job satisfaction among principals has decreased nine percentage points in less than five years, to 59% very satisfied.
- Half of principals feel under great stress several days a week.
- More than half of principals and teachers report that their school’s budget has decreased in the past 12 months.

MetLife, 2013
...and did I mention....

- Common Core?
  - Teachers and principals have more confidence that teachers can teach the Common Core than they have that the Common Core will benefit students.

- Teacher satisfaction declining, turnover high

- Half of teachers have a leadership role in the school now
  - Distributed leadership arrived some time ago...

- School leadership pipeline?
  - Most teachers (69%) say they are not at all interested in becoming a principal.

- Politics, local and national
- Parental expectations
- Little time for collaboration
- Feeling under siege ...

MetLife, 2013
Experience Heading Out the Door

- Low-achieving, high-poverty schools face twice the leadership turnover rates of other schools and generally fill positions with the least experienced leaders.
- 30% annual turnover in low-achieving, high-poverty schools
- Over 60% of urban superintendents cannot recruit or retain qualified principals
- More than 45% of superintendents turned over every three years

Béteille et al., 2011; Burkhauser, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Grissom & Andersen, 2012
Part of this is the nature of the job, policy, politics, etc.

But a key leverage point is preparation support practice.
The Need:
Enhanced School Leadership

- Increased importance as current reform pushes site autonomy
- Increased achievement challenges
- To address large contextual differences & inequities
- Most efficient & powerful lever to support improved teaching/learning
- Point of practice judgment = critical ingredient
But how do you practice to lead a school?
Decision by Decision
Simulations?
How do you practice being in charge of a middle school in Bakersfield, CA?

In an elementary school in suburban Columbus?

In a high school in El Paso?

Rural districts outside of Dubuque?

A new charter school in New York City?
"Mock warfare, mock trials and aircraft trainers [were already] but a few examples of simulation used to teach, evaluate and provide practical experience for the student" when Barrows (1968) introduced the use of simulated patients in training physicians (p. 674).
“Medical education institutions frequently simulate interactions between future health professionals and standardized patients. [Dotger, et al. (2010)] describe a partnership between a teacher preparation institution and a nearby medical institution, outlining specific procedures associated with the use of standardized parents, students, and paraprofessionals in helping future teachers and school leaders navigate common problems of practice” (p. 129).
In-Person Simulations

- More complex, closer to practice
- Unnamed problems, w/o category, unstructured
- Force decision-making practice, mix of emotions, in the moment
- Experience of failing, “failing forward”
- Experience of consequences
- Accelerates the situations one can experience
- Emotions in the mix, who you are “on the line”
- Provokes memories, prior experiences
- Reflective base
Drawbacks to *in-person* simulation.....

- Expensive, to build & to implement
- Unstable as instruments, gauges
- Difficult to scale
- Difficult to subject to peer review & quality control
A Solution?

Web-based Multimedia Sims

Pathing Simulations
Created by Experienced Peers

Qualified Crowdsourcing as Profession-Building
In Collaboration with the Leading K-12 Leadership Professional Associations

- American Association of School Administrators (AASA)
- National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
- National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
Teacher Goal Setting Simulation

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
You are principal of Worthing Middle School.
You have been at Worthing for four years.
Preparing to read Everett Goodall.
Developing his annual goals.
Goodall has spent his entire ten-year career teaching social studies at Worthing.
Pupil test indicates satisfactory performance overall.

Objectives:
- Promoting student growth and development (SLCC Standard 2)
- Enhancing curriculum design, implementation, assessment, and refinement (SLCC Standard 2)
- Supporting adult learning and professional development (SLCC Standard 2)
Parent Concern Simulation

PUBLIC LEADERSHIP
Teacher Dress Code Simulation

ORGANIZATIONAL LEadership
It's Friday at 10:30 a.m. and your scheduled meeting with Miss Brown is about to begin. Click the link below to review the district dress code policy. When you are ready to begin the meeting, select the "Next" button.

District Dress Code Policy

- No ties, nor should be used.
- No open-toed shoes.
- No hats or caps.
- No jewelry that is excessive or distracting.
- No clothing that is revealing or inappropriate.

By Amy Crowell

End

Objectives

- Establishing a culture of professionalism within the school (ESSLG Standard 2)
- Maintaining an effective supervisory relationship while giving feedback around sensitive issues (ESSLG Standard 2)
Ongoing development work

- Partnering with NexLearn, LLC, to utilize SimWriter® Pro for multimedia interface

- Exploring hosting and distribution options through distributed learning management systems (LMS)

- Establishing peer-review standards and procedures for educational leadership simulations
Powerful Research Opportunities

- Assessing learning and practice impact on
  - Developers
  - End-users
- Assessing growth and development of the developer network; and
- Taking the top off the "black box" of educational leadership decision making
  - Building a database that records the actual decisions of school leaders (and deconstructs their decision-making processes), sortable by context, background, experience, etc.
PELS

- Peer-developed
- Context-rich
- Consequential
- Daily decision-making

- Practice the core of daily school leadership before, during
PELS

Scaling judgment
Clients:
- Districts, schools, intermediaries
- Universities
- Preparation programs
- PD providers

Uses (individual, group)
- Pre-service
- In-service
- Selection

For less than a workshop...
In 3 years:

- Positive P&L
- 300+ sim developers
- 9,000 leaders developed
- 4,000,000 students affected
- Groundbreaking research
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