

## 1.1 Program Narrative Description

Our mission is to create relevant and credible leaders who possess the knowledge and skills to respond to the complex and dynamic needs of the educational community. To fulfill this mission, our program is, and will continue to be, framed around adult learning theories that include “hands on field experiences, collaboration, thematically integrated curricula and problem-based instruction. . .” (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Our intent is to balance theory with application following Knowles (2012) principles of andragogy to ensure that our future principals receive relative, purposeful, developmental and integrated real-world learning experiences based on and aligned with the *California Administrator Performance Expectations (CAPEs)*. Coursework include aligned curriculum system, socio-cultural, self-learning and change theories integrated into active, collaborative learning experiences using real-life problems, inquiry, reflection and extended projects that support “learning by doing” (O’Neil, 2000), “encourages learners to move through complex problem solving, challenging them to think in new ways” (Allen, 2007) and increases transferability of skills and knowledge. Research-based, highly-interactive, authentic professional learning experiences apply systems thinking, data-driven decision making, cyclical planning and field experience to deepen understanding about how leadership behaviors and actions affect others, influence decisions and create change.

Our program is based on a cohort model, similar to that practiced by innovative leadership training programs, in which cohorts “of students enroll in and move through the coursework together. . .” (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Candidates are organized by partnership cohorts that are maintained throughout the program to provide purposeful, professional and collaborative learning experiences that accelerate learning, support development of broader perspectives, gain an appreciation for diversity in thinking and promote practical real-world interactions, including generation of new ideas, team building, effective communication skills, problem solving and shared decision making. Cohorts meet off-campus in school districts, complete common research-based assignments to ensure quality course outcomes, and receive instruction delivered by university instructors as well as highly-qualified and trained district leaders, who partner to “integrate the work of the program into the work of the schools” (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Successful on-site learning supports development of leadership skills and knowledge needed to understand, analyze, and systematically apply change processes to make data-driven decisions. Additionally, leadership experiences, in the context of a school setting, emphasizes the human aspects of leadership, inherent in productive collaborations and partnerships . For these reasons, all field experiences are embedded into all courses and designed to be completed on-site, or in close proximity to the actual work. Active instructional strategies, applied overtly and systematically, link theory with real, critical problems of practice. Field experiences include, for example, classroom walkthroughs/data analysis to identify instructional trends and participation

in instructional rounds to understand true problems of practice and practical feedback loops. Candidates also analyze real-world school environments using multiple mental models and interview actual school leaders to gain new perspectives.

Each Candidate is assisted and guided by an assigned district mentor that remains with the Cohort Candidate throughout the program. Selected mentors hold an administrative credential, possess 3 or more years of principal, or other like administrative, experience and possess attributes of an effective leader, including emotional intelligence, problem solving skills, strong organization and interpersonal skills, knowledge of instructional best practices, and a willingness to share experiences and expertise. Candidates meet with mentors before beginning course field work to discuss expectations and, again, at the conclusion of the course field work to share findings, make recommendations, reflect on learning and to receive mentor feedback on results of the field experience.

*Allen, Scott. "Adult Learning Theory & Leadership Development," Kravis Leadership Institute, Leadership Review v.. 7, Spring 2007, pp. 26-37.*

*Davis, S & Darling-Hammond, L. (2012). Innovative Principal Preparation Programs: What Works and How We Know. Planning and Changing. v. 43:12, pp. 25-45.*

*Knowles, M. (2002). Lifelong learning: A Dream. Creating the Future: Perspectives on Educational Change, v. January. October 10, 2003.*  
[http://education.jhu.edu/newhorizons/future/creating\\_the\\_future/crfut\\_knowles.cfm](http://education.jhu.edu/newhorizons/future/creating_the_future/crfut_knowles.cfm)

*O'Neil, J. & Lamm, S.L. (2000). Working as a learning coach team in action learning. New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education, v. 87, p. 43-52.*