

The Voices of our Students-What we can Learn from Aspiring Leaders

University of North Florida

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Abstract

In 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards were released, building from professional educational leadership standards approved in 2005 and developed in a similar manner as the work of a collaborative statewide process involving a broad cross section of stakeholders and contemporary research (Crosswalk: Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011 & 2005). The “new” standards of 2011 addressed a gap of emphasis from the 2005 standards in the core and primary focus of “Standard 1: Student Learning Results,” the only standard of ten identified as having a rank order of being the number one focus and thus the number one standard (Crosswalk: Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011 & 2005). The increased attention to the critical area of student achievement permeates the 2011 standards and proposes student learning as the primary focus of schools as a leadership function. In addition, the 2011 standards, which are designed to address an array of functions, are aligned to the evaluation documents for school leaders and serve to guide students in educational leadership programs as they complete their master’s degrees and are required to pass the Florida Educational Leadership Exam, (www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/postsecondary-assessment/fele/). This study aims to consider the viewpoints of aspiring leaders of schools, graduate students enrolled in a Master’s degree program of educational leadership in an introductory course and a capstone course and to hear their voices through narrative expressions of self-reflection and analysis in terms of the 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards. There is considerable knowledge that can be learned from listening to graduate students who seek educational leadership degrees and Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) note the direct effect self- efficacy beliefs can lead to in terms of action such as persistence (p. 501). Graduate students were asked to identify their strengths and growth areas as they related

to standards and to share their thoughts about the importance of the standards' themes and plans of action. As such, the notation of emerging themes of interrelatedness and dissonance derived from a review of this work can provide insight to professors of educational leadership for course and program improvement and can most importantly guide instructors in assisting graduate students so that they feel confident and prepared to assume leadership roles in our Florida institutions of learning.

Keywords: Leadership standards, narrative self-reflection of leadership standards, self-identified strength and growth areas for educational leadership graduate students

Study Purpose

The objective of the research was to review graduate student reflections on the topic of the 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards from a self-assessment perspective. The investigator/researcher aimed to learn new knowledge from graduate students' expressions, to better understand graduate students' perceptions of their own educational leadership growth journeys as aligned to professional standards, and to use this information to guide course and program improvement. By considering their voices through written expression the aim was to listen, to seek insight students would share through a self-reflection analysis of their own abilities as aligned to the professional standards. The guiding research questions based upon professional standards included:

- 1) What are strength areas as aligned to the standards that students express in EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership and in EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership?

- 2) What are growth areas aligned to the standards for which students are seeking improvement in EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership and EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership?
- 3) What are personal observations, experiences, and views of each standard as expressed by students in EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership and EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership?
- 4) What are interrelated areas for EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership and EDA Practicum in Educational Leadership students as shared in their reflections in both strengths and growths?
- 5) What are areas of difference of strengths and growth as shared by both groups in EDA 6061 Introduction Educational Leadership and EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership?
- 6) And finally, what can instructors of educational leadership programs do with the observations and themes noted by graduate students in EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership and EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership to enhance courses, improve our program, and meet the needs of graduate students in educational leadership programs, aspiring leaders?

Methodology

The study included the review of 22 students' reflective analyses during 2017-2018 in EDA 6061, Introduction to Educational Leadership, School Leadership concentration, and eight students' reflective analyses in EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, School Leadership concentration. The setting for the study was a public urban university in Florida with

an average enrollment of 75 students in the Master's Degree Program of School Leadership. The Master's Degree Program for Educational Leadership, School Leadership concentration is a 39 hour credit degree which students typically complete within a two-year period through both on-line and face to face class opportunities (<https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-north-florida-9841>). The institution ranked #42 out of 148 southern regional universities in 2019, a U.S. News Best College rankings based upon several areas such as retention and graduation rates, social mobility, class size and faculty salaries, student excellence, standardized tests, and peer assessments, among other factors and has a graduate rate of enrollment of 2054 (<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-us-news-calculated-the-rankings>).

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership is a beginning course in the master's program and is a prerequisite for EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership. EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership is a capstone course that students complete at the end or very near the end of their program. EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership is a course that typically has a higher enrollment than EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership.

The research encompassed the review of two separate but similar course assignments embedded within each course: EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, Assignment #1, and EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, Assignment #1, Part II, A. The assignment descriptions for both courses included:

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership

Assignment #1: Self-Reflection and Written Assessment of Leadership Competencies. Part I: Review the 10 Florida Principal Leadership Standards along with the sample performance indicators. Part II: Develop a reflection paper based upon your review. Structure your paper to list

each area, address the strength, area of improvement and personal observation for each area. Conclude with a brief summary of your own plan for growth. List each standard followed by a brief self-assessment:

- (a) Strength/s you believe you have regarding the standard;
- (b) Area/s that need most improvement; and
- (c) Your personal observations, experiences, and view of the importance of this standard in educational leadership. For example, how important, in your view, is this standard to being an effective leader in education? Give examples of your own leadership experiences or others you have observed to demonstrate your points/beliefs.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

Assignment #1, Part II, A: Educational Leadership Standards-My Personal/Professional Strengths, Growth Areas, Documents, and Plans. Using the current revised Florida Principal Leadership Standards assess your characteristics as an aspiring educational leader by providing artifacts and reflections on each standard and document and describe your competency level. List each of the ten standards and then include strengths, growth areas, and you plan to improve in this area or continue the growth strategies you have begun. Think in terms of areas in which you feel you are strong/confident and areas in which you feel less secure and need to grow as you self-reflect. Select experiences/projects/assignments you have already completed or those you plan to capture highlights of your educational leadership program thus far in your career and list these as appropriate. Since this is a self-reflection exercise, you may have more to note for one area than another and that is certainly expected and acceptable.

Methodology

The investigator/researcher used textual analysis and coded the students' self-reflection analyses of the ten Florida Principal Leadership Standards by first starting with a reading of all documents which consisted of 22 reflections from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership students and eight reflections from students in EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership. The investigator/researcher captured ideas in the margins of each paper and identified strengths expressed and growth areas for each standard within each paper as part of a "lean coding" function, which included assigning only a few broad codes in the initial review (Cresswell, 2015, p. 243). Observations were coded within the work in terms of S-strength area, and G-growth area, and I for ideas, experiences, and thoughts as noted for each of ten standards. The next step of coding included a closer reading of the work, breaking the data into manageable parts through the process of a more robust notation of each strength, growth, and ideas of the ten standards in each reflection paper as part of two cohesive lists representing the two separate courses utilizing a qualitative coding method recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). Next the investigator/researcher reviewed the two lists of strengths, growth areas, and ideas to synthesize the findings, and identified emerging themes of the two separate lists into one overall representation recognizing interrelated findings, dissonance, and ideas inclusive of action plans, experiences, and strategies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Cresswell, 3015). A narrative summary and graphic form highlighting common strengths, growth areas and beliefs for EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 is included at the end of this paper.

Introduction

The breadth of literature on the importance of having effective leaders in our schools is extensive and includes a new vision of educational leadership that is increasingly complex, a role

that is encompassed within standards to align to a student-centered focus of achievement of measurable and equitable outcomes, as part of what some researchers deem “..the accountability era” (Fink, 2010; Sorenson, 2005; Professional Standards of Educational Leaders, 2015; Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011). A contemporary purview of leadership focuses strongly on student learning with a distributive approach (Earley & Weindling, 2004). The Florida Principal Leadership Standards have been refocused in 2011 with a stronger emphasis not only on student learning, but also in key areas of instructional leadership to include both faculty and staff development, the leadership development of teacher leaders and emerging leaders within the organization, and a more intentional recognition of the importance of creating a school culture that includes opportunities for all students’ success through equity and building capacity within a democratic and global society, one that recognizes Florida’s diversity (Crosswalk: Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011 & 2005). The paramount focus of the revised 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards from 2005 Florida Principal Leadership Standards was the shifting of the view of job requirements of a school principal to a much broader lens of leadership, and the new standards also addressed the critical gap noted as “ Student Learning as a Priority” a theme that permeates the 2011 standards and serves as an overarching tenet that is embedded within areas of impact, such as system collaboration, engagement of students, closing achievement gaps and establishing high expectations for all students (Crosswalk: Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011 & 2005). The core change of the 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards as expressed in “Standard #1 Student Learning Results” is recognized as being significant in its order within the ten standards and its position is discussed as purposeful by design as “...intentionally listed as the first standard to reflect the significance of student learning. The order of the rest of

the 2011 standards is based upon grouping related issues and does not imply relative importance” (Crosswalk: Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011 & 2015).

Shortly after the 2011 release date of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, formerly known as the ISLLC Standards were revised by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 2015 with similar substantive changes such as an increased notation of ethics, equity, and culturally responsive schooling as separate areas for leadership attention (Murphy, Seashore-Louis, & Smylie, 2017). Murphy, Seashore-Louis, and Smylie (2017) share that “...an extraordinary amount of research” informed the standards which were built upon the foundation of the 2008 ISLLC standards, and that the standards offer “...”more detailed guidance related to leadership for curriculum, instruction, and assessment,” but also that there is “...more attention to the need for school leaders to create a community of care and support for students; they (the standards) fully describe school leaders’ responsibility to develop professional capacities of teachers and staff, and they (the standards) stress the value of engaging families and community members in student learning” (p. 21-2). Furthermore, Murphy (2015) postulates that the work of the revision of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015, maintained the architecture of “...leadership for learning,” while recognizing that growth in the standards was needed in the areas of “...core technology, leadership of the school culture, and leadership of diverse communities,” along with a strengthening of social justice (p.720). A concern for previous Florida Principal Leadership Standards in this area was noted by researcher/professors Black and Karanxha as “...significant concern dealt with the complete lack of attention to issues of equity, marginalization, and social justice” (2013, p. 41). The 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards emphasize within Standard Five classroom practices that “validate and value similarities and differences...within a

school environment that is focused on learning with ...actionable and observable descriptors,” as linked to diversity, equity, and cultural issues that “impact student learning” (Crosswalk: Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011 & 2005).

While the 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards are presented as “...core expectations for effective school administrators,” and are “based upon contemporary research on multi-dimensional school leadership, and represent skills and knowledge bases needed in effective schools,” similarly the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders are described as “...a compass that guides the direction of practices,” and “...communicate expectation to practitioners, supporting institutions, professional associations, policy makers and the public about the work, qualities and values of effective school leaders” (Crosswalk: Florida Principal Leadership Standards, 2011 & 2005; Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015, p. 4). Also, like the Florida Principal Leadership Standards of 2011, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015, have been “...recast with a stronger, clearer emphasis on students and students learning, outlining foundational principles of leadership to help that each child is well-educated and prepared for the 21st century” with a future-oriented perspective (Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015, p. 2).

In their descriptive analysis of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015, Murphy, Seashore-Louis, and Smylie (2017) have created a new conceptual framework they deem Positive School Leadership or PSL to “... bring the new standards to life” (p. 23). PSL speaks to six key areas of leadership the researchers consider as a method of “...translating the work” of the standards to leadership practice which include “...a stronger professional calling; a stronger moral framework; a focus on character and virtue; a focus on the interest of others; personalized relationship; and empowerment and community building” (Murphy, Seashore-Louis, & Smylie,

2017, p. 24). Supporting literature is prolific and supports the belief that school leaders' roles and the translation of standards into practice have evolved over time. The work of Gordon, Taylor-Backor, and Croteau, (2017) most pointedly considers the recommended capacities for educational leaders as shifting in focus. Gordon, Taylor-Backor, and Croteau provide a compelling analysis of the standards in context through two distinct decades (2017). The reorganization of standards by the researchers resulted in the construction of four "Standards Pyramids" which delineate categories of educational capacities as recognized in the literature and which include the broadest area of, for the first pyramid (1976-1985), "Technical Management" (Gordon, P., Taylor-Backor, K., and Croteau, S., 2017, p. 192). The areas moving up within this pyramid diagram in sequence include: "Behavioral & Social Sciences, Law, Politics & Governance, School Improvement, Instructional Leadership," (Gordon, P., Taylor-Backor, K., and Croteau, S., 2017, p. 192). Moving forward to their most current model the shift is significant and the capacity categories different. In the fourth model for 2006-2015 the researchers Gordon, Taylor-Backer, and Croteau (2017) created what they term "the authors' pyramid" and begin with the largest area of the Standards Pyramid to include "Democratic Community," followed upwards in the diagram in a lesser attention progression to "School Improvement; Instructional Leadership; Social Justice; School-Community Collaboration; Professional-Ethical; Law, Politics, Policy, & Governance; and then finally, Technical Management"(p. 203).

Professional standards serve to clarify and define the work of individuals in a variety of professions. In the case of educational leaders, the work in standards has been reimagined "... with an emphasis on students and student learning" (Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015, p. 2). The Florida Principal Leadership Standards of 2011 represent a shift from job requirements to leadership capacities with a much more developed roadmap of expectations that

are both broad in topic and specific in expectations as aligned to complex leadership roles and responsibilities emphasizing high impact leadership behaviors. The standards though are not just for the preparation of school leaders, although this has been deemed a primary focus (Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015, p. 2). Murphy postures that "...the standards (ISLLC) were never intended to be limited to or primarily focused on the preparation of school administrators" and suggests that in the design of standards professional development attention was given to an "...an array of leverage points that could influence the definition and practice of school administration (2015, p. 721). In terms of the use of educational leadership standards to guide students, practitioners, and institutions, educational leadership researchers agree that leadership matters, that leadership impacts student achievement, and they support the idea that attention should be given to preparation programs to "...provide systematically generated evidence about principal preparation program' impact on the education field's bottom line, improving student achievement" (Donmoyer, R., Yennie-Donmoyer, J., & Galloway, F., 2012, p.8).

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2009) express the importance of two purposes in the preparation of graduate students enrolled in educational leadership programs to lead student learning on a broad scale as: the production of leaders and the idea that this preparation is a development process which "...prepares individuals for new responsibilities and career opportunities" (p. 195). But, Browne- Ferrigno and Muth (2009) note that research in the area of educational leadership program participants is "...sparse," and "...overlooked" (p. 195). With this in mind, it seems imperative that educational leadership instructors listen to their students and observe in their discussions and assignments what students are saying about the standards, diving deeper as instructors of aspiring leaders so that we gain the insight and gauge the needs of our future school leaders from a standards-based lens.

Findings

The findings are presented in narrative form identifying emerging themes for each of the ten 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards denoting self-analyses reflections as expressed by graduate students in EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership and in EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership. The data is from two separate sections of each course collected during the years of 2017 and 2018 and includes 22 students from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, School Leader concentration, a pre-requisite to EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, and eight students from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, School Leader concentration, primarily a capstone course students complete at the end or very near the end of their master's degree program. The areas included in the narrative summaries align to research questions #1-5 as noted at the beginning of this paper to consider strengths, growth, personal observations of experiences, artifacts, interrelated areas shared by both course groups, differences as expressed in the course groups, ideas, and general thoughts inclusive of plans of actions. Students were not required in either assignment to compose a particular amount of narrative for each standard. Student work varied in terms of the amount of narrative written for each standard. The investigator sought to include the most emerging and commonly expressed thoughts and ideas for each standard in the goal of bringing cohesion to the overall review for each of the two groups separately, and as interrelated or different. The findings are organized in the order of the standards and for the two separate courses, EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership followed by EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership by Strengths, Growth, and Ideas, the latter which represents observations, beliefs, and experiences. A general discussion of key points deemed Conclusions and Discussion follows the findings. A graphic description

has been created in the goal of synthesizing the information into a layered model and is included at the end of this paper (Cresswell, 2015).

The Florida Principal Leadership Standards

Domain 1: Student Achievement:

Standard 1: Student Learning Results. Effective school leaders achieve results on the school's student learning goals.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership:

Strengths: Students overall identified this more as a strength area than a growth area and provided ample positive statements about their abilities in this core area of the standards, referencing most frequently a confidence due to their familiarity with using school data from a classroom perspective.

Comments such as: "I strive for this daily. I can reference state standards when creating plans for group instruction. I am very organized. I understand learning targets and can work towards them. I have managed to hit the 80% mark with my students. I understand how data works."

(Assignments from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: The common growth area mentioned for this standard was scale as students expressed concern for managing data school-wide. Another area of concern was working with staff on communication of data. Being acquainted with all grade level standards were expressed by several students as a growth area.

Ideas: Students expressed ideas of leadership actions in terms of having data chats to look at student scores, study sessions on the use of data for the entire faculty, holding separate meetings

for each subject within a school to dive deeper into data by discipline, and providing a more structured and less intimidating environment around the use of school-wide data.

Observation: Role models in this area was noted as a positive and many students commented that they have or have had successful modeling in leadership in their schools with the use of data.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership:

Strengths: A high level of confidence was noted in the comments from this group of students not only in classroom data but with a shift in their discussion to the experience of school-wide leadership in this standard.

Comments were robust such as: “I am knowledgeable in data analysis for school wide decisions. Coursework has prepared me for this standard, especially Practicum and School Assessment and Accountability. Analyzing data is a strength of mine. I have experience in working with data school-wide” (Assignments from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: An area of growth for several students included relationship concerns with faculty and they shared comments about topics such as dealing with teachers with negative attitudes, supervising and providing teachers with feedback, having tough conversations about data, being nervous about data for all subjects, and understanding Florida School Assessment data.

Ideas: This group noted experiences as positives for this standard such as working on the school

improvement team and designing lessons for the school team through Professional Learning Communities. One student mentioned a book she was reading on how to speak to employees to increase performance. This group also emphasized the importance of strong role models in leading school data.

Standard #1: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Comfortable with classroom level use of data and understand the importance of data overall as aligned to standards of teaching and learning.

*Roles models in schools are key to observe in developing their own skills in using and communicating about data on a school-wide level.

*Conversations about data that are negative in nature with faculty is a challenging area

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*A recall of preparation in this area inclusive of specific courses and school-based wide lens experiences serving on teams noted by Practicum students.

Standard 2: Student Learning as a Priority. Effective school leaders demonstrate that student learning is their top priority through leadership actions that build and support a learning organization focused on student success.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership:

Strengths: Students expressed confidence in prioritizing, focusing attention on students and understanding how to use data to inform instruction. Comments were aligned to, for the most part, a classroom perspective.

Comments included: "I do a great job of prioritizing and celebrating students' successes and creating an environment focused on student learning. I focus

my attention on students. I build a system and a routine. I focus my attention on what is relevant.

I demonstrate this standard through actions and questions such as: Are students engaged? Are students mastering learning standards?" (Assignments from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Students expressed concerns about enabling staff and faculty to work as a team on student learning. Providing feedback was a common concern expressed by this group and maintaining a sense of relevance on a large scale.

Comments of concern for this standard included: "How do I create buy-in for teachers? How do I meet their needs (of all students)? How do I develop a roadmap of how implementation should take place as I don't want to rock the boat?" (Assignments from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Ideas: This group expressed ample ideas of how to address this growth area inclusive of developing a bell to bell engagement, providing opportunities for peer teaching, establishing a growth mindset, supporting teachers in their efforts to support student learning, working with stakeholders to achieve a shared vision and plan, creating the opportunity for real-time chats, and creating a culture that is trustworthy, respectful, and engaging.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership:

Strengths: Students indicated feeling strong with this standard and commented "I have come a long way in my confidence as a leader. As an educational leader I will remain passionate in my

conviction that every person has value and all students can learn” (Assignments from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership).

Growth: A common concern or growth area as expressed by this group dealt with experience in all content areas and grade levels and a need to focus on curriculum planning school-wide.

Ideas: Role models are key in this standard.

Standard #2: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

- * A level of confidence with both groups.
- * Knowing all subjects and disciplines was expressed as a concern by both groups.

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

- * The Intro group expressed more questions within their growth narratives and more ideas for how they would lead this standard.
- * Practicum students referred frequently about their participation on school teams.

Domain 2: Instructional Leadership:

Standard 3: Instructional Plan Implementation.

Effective school leaders work collaboratively to develop and implement an instructional framework that aligns curriculum with state standards, effective instructional practices, student learning needs and assessments.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership:

Strengths: Students commented frequently on their work in collaborating with others in cross-curricular goals, using data to drive instruction, and curriculum mapping.

Comments were verbose in terms of current classroom actions “I designed a curriculum map. I am well versed in data and standards. I spend a great deal of time assessing student performance, and working with other teachers. I enjoy data and use it to drive instruction. I collaborate with other teachers towards cross-curricular goals and have experience training teachers. I feel strong in my ability to recognize the relationship among standards, instruction, and student performance” (Assignments from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Students were expansive in their descriptions of growth areas for this standard. Comments included “How do I share my knowledge with others? How do I find time to create opportunities to communicate with teachers? I need to understand that not all teachers love planning and analyzing data as much as I do. I need to expand my collaboration to learn to work with teachers of different levels. I struggle with meeting students’ needs and finding a plan that incorporates all aspects of growth” (Assignments from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Ideas: Role modeling is key. Use data as the start of action. Allow staff and faculty to use many resources. Monitor and offer feedback.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership:

Strengths: This group noted experienced based strengths such as leading Professional Development and curriculum mapping, working with district level administrators on assessment, and leading training in collaboration and technology.

Growth: Writing specs for assessments and seeking more experience in all content areas. A lack of school-wide planning was noted, and large-scale scope of reference.

Ideas: Experiences and leadership opportunities were mentioned frequently by this group as why they felt strong in this standard. Experiences they would recommend and have participated in were noted as: “I led Professional Development in instructional planning. I have worked with district level administrators on assessment. I have extensive experience in collaboration training and technology training. I have been part of a healthy professional learning community” (Assignments from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership).

Standard #3: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

- *Strong in understanding data
- *Collaboration experiences at the school level on teams

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

- *Concerned about translating their knowledge to a large school wide scope mentioned more frequently by EDA 6061 students

Standard 4: Faculty Development.

Effective school leaders recruit, retain and develop an effective and diverse faculty and staff.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership:

Strengths: Strengths were noted as experience-based involving participation

on school teams, serving as mentors, and helping others find value as team members. Only one student of twenty-two mentioned experience in interviewing prospective teachers.

Growth: Most mentioned that this would be a significant growth standard for them due to lack of experience. Many mentioned no experience at all in the area of recruitment.

Ideas: Shadowing a school leader was suggested and one student mentioned the importance of establishing coaching cycles, providing feedback, and being visible as key to this standard.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership:

Strengths: Participating in the Practicum experience. Teacher leadership opportunities and using data to drive Professional Development were mentioned as strengths.

Growth: Knowledge of recruitment and retention of teachers and dealing with difficult people who do not see a reason to change.

Standard #4: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*A lack of experience in recruitment.

Dissonance:

*Notation of retention concerns mentioned more frequently by Practicum, EDA 6945 students.

Standard 5: Learning Environment.

Effective school leaders' structure and monitor a school learning environment that improves learning for all of Florida's diverse student population.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership

Strengths: Students noted classroom culture aspects as being paramount with a strength noted in their ability to provide a safe comfortable learning zone and positively impact their own classroom culture.

Comments were bold and expressive and included “My skill is in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and recognizing cultural gaps. I believe all students should have an equal opportunity with all cultures accepted. My classroom culture is designed so that students can succeed and I would carry that with me as a leader (Assignments from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Students sought growth in how to be more knowledgeable about culture and wanted to be able to monitor and provide feedback of effectiveness for culturally diverse practices.

Ideas: Implement a positive behavior monitoring system. Teacher leadership experiences and experiences on teams were noted by this group as actions that can lead to growth.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

Strengths: A strong understanding of data that includes addressing gaps schoolwide. Confident in their abilities to lead differentiation in instruction and in using data.

Growth: Helping teachers recognize developmental differences and use data from the assessment process.

Standard #5: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Feel passionate about addressing gaps for all students

*Express conviction to providing equal opportunities for all students

*Express concern to provide training/feedback for developmental and cultural needs

*Believe that differentiation is essential

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Practicum students expressed more action statements beginning with “I can...” and “I will....”

Domain 3: Organizational Leadership

Standard 6: Decision Making.

Effective school leaders employ and monitor a decision-making process that is based on vision, mission and improvement priorities using facts and data.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership

Strengths: Ability to problem-solve

Comments included “I am a problem-solver and I give priority to my students. I organize information quickly. I understand the vision, mission, and improvement priorities” (Assignment from EDA 6061 Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Students expressed concerns about sharing decisions, over thinking and second-guessing. One student mentioned that “...this is the toughest one for me” and shared her concerns about keeping students first and making the “tough” decisions (Assignment from EDA 6061 Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

Strengths: Statements began with “I” followed by use, am, can, believe. Students spoke frequently of the importance of “... distributive decision making as key...inclusion in decision making... shared decision making” (Assignment from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Comments included: “I used data -based decision making. I am focused and can make decisions. I am a decisive person and good at analyzing different perspectives. I believe in inclusion in decisions. I believe in shared decision making “(Assignment from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Students were concerned with learning how to better use data to drive decisions and “...how to use the facts” (Assignment from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Standard #6: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness for EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

- *Belief in importance of shared decision making
- *Concerned about using data to drive decisions

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

- *Practicum students’ statements frequently began with “I” followed by action statements related to their ability to make decisions.

Standard 7: Leadership Development.

Effective school leaders actively cultivate, support, and develop other leaders within the organization.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership

Strengths: Students expressed their strengths as experience-based, with teams and colleagues, in teacher leadership activities, and as an enjoyment in the development of others.

Growth: Concerned with a lack of experience in this area. Several students mentioned the importance of trust as key to this standard. A frequent comment was “No experience yet” and “I need more experience” (Assignment from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Ideas: Comments included “I would enjoy supporting and developing leaders within my teachers. I know the importance of building relationships. I do enjoy watching people grow and celebrating their accomplishments. As a leader I would encourage my teachers to take on leadership roles. I have a passion for developing others. My strength in this area is the knowledge of teacher inquiry and how to guide teachers” (Assignment from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

Strengths: This group primarily looked to actions, their own and others, and the opportunity to observe role models to discuss this standard. A comment on role models included “This separates the elite from the effective school leader. I’ve had a good role model, a principal with a keen eye. I hope to demonstrate a similarly nuanced eye for talent” (Assignment from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Comments revolved from current work and future work they would undertake and included “I plan to get to know my teachers better through conferencing and recognizing those who have good leadership qualities” (Assignment from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Students expressed growth areas in terms of action plans to include conferencing with teachers, writing affirmative notes, planning activities for teacher, and demonstrating support.

Standard #7: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Building relationships and trust are key to this standard

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Practicum students identified several strategies for this standard such as conferencing

*Introduction to Educational Leadership students felt they lacked experience in this standard

Standard 8: School Management.

Effective school leaders manage the organization, operations, and facilities in ways that maximize the use of resources to promote a safe, efficient, legal, and effective learning environment.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership

Strengths: A classroom focus was recognized as derived from their current experiences with time management, classroom management and being organized. Running an efficient classroom was noted.

Growth: Students were very concerned about budget and how to do and manage a budget for a school. They also spoke of the area of delegating to others as being a growth area in the overall management of a school.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

Strengths: Students mentioned projects in courses that have helped them feel prepared for this standard which included a curriculum alignment project, a field-based legal project, an instructional leadership platform project, and a multiple-experience based assignment in technology. Ability in time management was also considered a strength for this standard.

Growth: Students expressed concern in juggling the weight of many responsibilities, and how to deal with people, coping with the inability or indifference to deadlines. Saying no to those they supervise was also a concern.

Standard #8: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Time management and organization are recognized as strengths

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Introduction to Educational Leadership students are very concerned about managing a school budget

*Practicum students are concerned more than Intro students with having difficult conversations with those they supervise

Standard 9: Communication.

Effective school leaders practice two-way communications and use appropriate oral, written, and electronic communication and collaboration skills to accomplish school and system goals by building and maintaining relationships with students, faculty, parents, and community.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership

Strengths: Students expressed strengths in listening, time management, communication with parents, and an ability to listen respectfully.

Students mentioned that transparency is key and being timely and open and shared “This is my biggest strength. I have the ability to communicate respectfully and listen. I am timely in my communication via calendar reminders and weekly agendas. I value communication. I use clear and consistent communication” (Assignment from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Communicating with the community and reaching out to stakeholders was expressed often by students as a growth area for this standard. Staying composed was noted.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

Strengths: Students spoke of the importance of building trust and being good listeners and expressed their strengths in action statements such as “I am good at seeing different perspectives. I feel confident in finding ways to communicate. I will listen and have an open door. I plan to have weekly newsletters, morning announcements, weekly phone calls, and write personal notes” (Assignment from EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Students expressed a concern about communicating with the community.

Ideas: Students spoke of the importance of being visible and listening as a leader often in their comments as being critical to successful communication for school leaders. Their ideas were frequently expressed in the form of plans for action.

Standard #9: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Working with the community in communication is deemed a challenge area.

*Listening as a leader is paramount.

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Practicum students mentioned building trust as key to successful communication.

*Introduction to Educational Leadership students shared several classroom-based examples.

Domain 4: Professional and Ethical Behavior:

Standard 10: Professional and Ethical Behaviors.

Effective school leaders demonstrate personal and professional behaviors consistent with quality practices in education and as a community leader.

EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership

Strengths: Students viewed themselves as positive role models for others, making healthy choices and continuously seeking improvement. Students noted that they admit when they make mistakes and feel this is important within this standard. An attention to high standards was also noted.

Comments included “I am constantly striving to do the right thing. A code of moral ethics is my way of life. We must adhere to the highest standards of ethics. Ethical integrity is key in leadership” (Assignment from EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Growth: Expressions of concern included that admitting error can be difficult and that at times students felt they were too transparent. Students were concerned with remaining resilient knowing they cannot make everyone happy and must accept discontent.

EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership

Strengths: Students mentioned the Law & Ethics course of their program as providing information about ethical and legal issues in leadership. Students mentioned the importance of maintaining composure and admitting fault. Students felt it was important to exemplify a sense of follow-through.

Growth: Students mentioned having difficult conversations as a growth area.

Standard #10: General Observations of Interrelatedness and Dissonance

Interrelatedness of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*Admitting fault is necessary to ethical leadership

*Dealing with difficult conversations, not making everyone happy is a growth area

*Role models

Dissonance of EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

*None noted

Emerging Themes from the Overall Review of the Ten Standards for EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership students and EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership students:

Interrelatedness of Strengths for EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

Confidence in use of classroom data and assessment as aligned to overall standards of teaching and learning

Time management and organization

Interrelatedness of Growth Areas for EDA 6061 and EDA 6934 students:

Using data to drive instruction for the whole school

Understanding grade level and content standards

Working with and communicating with the community

Difficult conversations with faculty and staff

Providing feedback to faculty and staff

Dissonance in Strengths for EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

Introduction students expressed more concern about moving to a school-wide lens

Introduction students are very concerned about managing a school budget

Introduction students state a lack of experience in recruitment

Practicum students are more concerned with retention of teachers

Practicum students expressed many more statements of action than Introduction students and

frequently began statements with “I can, I will, I plan to....” (Assignments from EDA 6945

Practicum in Educational Leadership, 2017 & 2018).

Practicum students shared more examples of teacher leadership and team participation in their

schools and aligned these opportunities within the standards

Interrelatedness of Belief Statements as derived from the narratives for EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 students:

Role models are key to leadership development

Collaboration experiences are important

Teacher Leadership opportunities provide leadership experiences

Addressing gaps for all students is critical

Feel strongly about understanding culture

Believe in the importance of shared decision making

Need to listen as a leader as part of communication

Building trust and relationships is paramount

Differentiation is essential

Admitting fault is necessary for ethical leadership

Conclusions and Discussion

Philip Hallinger (1992), in his historical review of the role of American principals stated quite boldly “By virtue of their position in the organizational hierarchy, principals find themselves at the intersection where forces seeking the maintenance of traditional values meet those that press for change” (p. 42). His view seems especially relevant to the study undertaken in considering the voices of aspiring leaders who by nature of their graduate work find themselves at a precipice of professional development and growth, broadening their classroom perspectives to one of a whole-school lens encompassing a myriad of leadership roles and expectations. The study sought to listen to educational leadership graduate students through an analysis of their own reflections of their professional attributes rendered in terms of strengths, growths, ideas, beliefs, and action plans as aligned to professional standards, in particular the 2011 Florida Principal Leadership Standards. The review was undertaken to discover information that would guide educational leadership professors in their work with aspiring leaders for course and program improvement, and more critically to bring meaning to

experiences through course and program design for graduate students so that they are prepared to connect tradition with change, embodying a cadre of leadership roles within their work and keeping students first and foremost their intentional focus. Guillame and Vitucci (2015) encourage such work and state that there is a "...notion of faculty..as a catalyst in the learning process..," and share that (university) faculty should "...involve students in a meaning process that influences the ways in which they experience learning" (p. 5). The themes that emerged from the study can serve as a source of inquiry and guide to course and program improvement for instructors in the field of educational leadership. Why do students feel as they do about the standards and their own development? What can educational leadership professors do collectively to address the shared goal of preparing aspiring school leaders to be effective, and open to change, utilizing the framework of the standards as our guide? How can educational leadership professors use these findings, narrative reflections of our students' voices, to enhance course design and ensure that assignments are relevant and meaningful in current school environments? The study provides insight but more critically the need for inquiry, the need for educational leadership professors to remain engaged with the action of listening to our graduate students, whether this in in class discussions, or presented through the students' narratives, their reflections and ideas.

The findings revealed that EDA 6061 Introduction to Educational Leadership students had more concerns than students in the EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership course, but students in the capstone course, EDA 6945 Practicum in Educational Leadership students also expressed continuing growth challenges. Introduction students viewed the standards from a classroom perspective while the Practicum students' comments moved to a broader school landscape. The areas of community outreach and the use of data to drive both decisions and

instruction were shared as common growth areas, along with dealing with difficult conversations. The Practicum students used more statements of action within their narratives and shared more specific strategies to address their own growth. The emerging themes, inclusive of the interrelatedness and the areas of dissonance provide insight into further questions for the investigator/researcher and for those involved in the teaching of educational leadership courses. Some of these questions include:

1. How can we provide or increase in our courses more opportunities for students to engage in the practice of difficult discussions?
2. How can we provide or increase opportunities for students to enhance an awareness of community engagement and communication strategies?
3. How can we provide or enhance opportunities to include data assessment on a school-wide basis?
4. How can we build through a review of this analysis from our Introduction students a body of knowledge of what they identify as strengths coming into our program and use this information in course assignment design?
5. How can we increase in our work with our graduate students a cultural awareness knowledge core so that they feel prepared to lead in this key area?

Limitations and Future Research


Limitations for this study include the small sample size and one university scope. Relatedness to other educational leadership programs is also a factor of possible limitation, especially in terms of curriculum design of course assignments relative to interrelatedness findings of the study and those expressed as growth areas. The qualitative nature of the review

was conducted by one instructor for one setting which also limits the extensive consideration of emerging themes and ideas as expressed by the graduate students. Further dialog on the study findings is needed at the one university level by all professors of Educational Leadership.

Building from this one university dialog, discussion could then be moved to a broader scale such as discussed at the Florida Association of Professional Educational Leadership for systemic growth and change for graduate students engaged in Educational Leadership programs across the state of Florida. In addition, continued review of student work as derived from reflective narratives on the topic of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards is needed to continue the engagement of faculty to a relevant lens of what aspiring school leaders need to be prepared and successful.

The Voices of Students-What we can Learn from Aspiring School Leaders
 Interrelated Areas for EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 Educational Leadership Students-Aligned to Florida Principal Leadership Standards & Shared Beliefs

| Leadership Strengths | Leadership Growth Areas | Shared Beliefs |
|--|--|---|
| Confidence in the use of classroom data and assessment | Using data to drive instruction for whole school | Role models are key to leadership development |
| Time management and organization | Understanding all content standards for all grade levels | Collaboration experiences are important |
| | Working with and communicating with the community | Teacher Leadership opportunities provide leadership experiences |
| | Having difficult conversations | Addressing gaps for all students is critical |
| | Providing feedback | Feel strongly about understanding culture |
| | | L. Boilini, 2019 |
| | | l.boilini@unf.edu |



The Voices of Students-What we can Learn from Aspiring School Leaders
 Areas of Dissonance for EDA 6061 and EDA 6945 Educational Leadership Students-Aligned to Florida
 Principal Leadership Standards & Shared Beliefs

Leadership Strengths

EDA 6945 Practicum students recognized more strengths than EDA 6061 Intro students such as:

EDA 6945 students recalled specific course preparation

EDA 6945 students spoke of ample participation on teams

EDA 6945 students spoke of being prepared to design strategies to enhance retention

EDA 6945 students used more positive action statements beginning with "I can... I will..."

EDA 6945 students spoke positively of being able to develop other leaders

Leadership Growth Areas

EDA 6061 Intro students expressed more concern areas of their development than EDA 6945 Practicum students such as:

EDA 6061 students expressed concern with understanding how they would lead the organization in a broader sense

EDA 6061 Intro students shared they lacked experience in developing other leaders

EDA 6061 Intro students worried about being able to manage a school budget

EDA 6061 Intro students used the phrase "no experience yet" often in their narratives

Shared Beliefs

Shared decision making is paramount

Leaders need to listen

Building trust and relationships is vital

Differentiation is essential

Admitting fault is necessary for ethical leadership

L. Boillini, 2019

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