

Principals Excellence Program (PEP)

- Who:** Cadres of practicing principals, assistant principals, and administrator-certified teachers who worked with leadership educators from the University of Kentucky and administrator practitioners from Pike County School District and Johnson County School District
- What:** An ISLLC *Standards*-based leadership development initiative spanning one calendar year (January to December) that integrated seminar-workshops, school-based disciplined inquiry and findings dissemination, active learning with P-12 educators, professional reading, and structured reflection
- When:** Weekly full-day activities during spring and fall semesters with cohort peers, project instructors, and mentor principals; annual district-wide summer leadership institute
- Why:** To expand the principalship from school management to “balanced leadership”¹ focused on student achievement through four performance themes: vision for success, focus on teaching and learning, involvement of all stakeholders, and demonstration of ethical behavior²
- How:** University-district partnership that addressed specific leadership development needs in high-need rural Appalachian schools; clearly defined program outcome goals; specific strategies to recruit, develop, and retain school leaders able to assure optimum learning for all students and engage representatives of all school stakeholder groups through visionary collaboration; funded through three-year federal grant from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) School Leadership Development Program

What makes PEP unique?

- PEP selected by WestEd as one of six case study sites (from nearly 60 leadership initiatives nationally) for its promising practices in leadership development, specifically
 - Unique vision to change the principalship
 - Work to establish support for schools and districts in rural Appalachia
 - Innovative integration of theory and practice
- PEP featured in the U.S. Department of Education 2005 publication, *Innovative Pathways to School Leadership* (www.edpubs@inet.ed.gov)

What two aspects of PEP are most effective?

- Cohort participants were administrator-certified practitioners (administrators and teachers) who worked together for an entire calendar year and explored real problems of practice by conducting comprehensive action research with mentor principals in authentic settings
- Learning cohorts provided risk-safe environment that supported professional networking and relationship building, developed leadership confidence and competence, and stimulated “thinking outside the building” and moving “beyond limited experiences”

For additional information:

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¹ Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. A. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

² Hessel, K., & Holloway, J. (2002). *A framework for school leaders: Linking the ISLLC Standards to practice*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.