

Doubling Back: Using Curriculum Mapping, Alignment, and Formative Capstone Projects to Make a Good School Leadership Program Better

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Curriculum revision does not always turn out exactly the way that educators envision. In 2007, Appalachian State University revised its school administration Master's Degree (MSA) and Graduate Certificate in School Leadership (GCSL) Programs to meet new state mandates for principal certification. The process was called "revisoning." Standards for School Executives were embedded throughout courses and an electronic e-portfolio replaced the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA). Despite the initial success of these reforms, the faculty concluded after several years that some of the evidence provided by principal candidates in their portfolios needed to be improved. Using curriculum mapping, course alignment, and the creation of formative capstone projects, the program initiated a second "revisoning," desiring to improve the School Administration programs. This article discusses the research basis for each of these pedagogical practices and how the school administration faculty applied that research to improving the knowledge and skills of principal candidates. An example of a formative capstone project and ten recommendations for improving the pedagogy of principal preparation and other practitioner programs are provided.

Revisoning North Carolina University School Leadership Programs

In 2007, the North Carolina State Legislature required school leadership programs in colleges and universities to realign courses and student assessments with the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (S.L. 2007-517). The process was described as "revisoning" (see Table 1). At Appalachian State University, the initial "revisoning" took place between 2007-2011 (Gummerson, 2011). Prior to 2007, to earn certification, principal candidates completed a specific course of study, a two-semester internship, and were required to pass the national School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA). S.L. 2007-517 replaced the SLLA with a candidate e-portfolio.

The e-portfolio includes formative assignments from coursework and six summative capstone projects completed during the two-semester capstone course—the internship. In addition, the candidate completes logged hours based on the School Executive Standards as a principal intern in a public, private, or charter school. A certified principal supervises the principal candidate and evaluates their ability to apply the School Executive Standards to leading a school. Candidates self-assess their knowledge and application of principal dispositions upon entering the program and at the end. The two self-assessments provide a window into what a candidate has learned while in the program. At the end of the program, two faculty members evaluate the evidence provided in the e-portfolio to determine if the candidate is ready to become a principal. If there is a question concerning the scoring, a third assessor may be called upon to adjudicate. Collectively, the pedagogy and the portfolio are designed to assess the ability of the candidate to apply research to practice.

Based on student exit surveys, faculty members generally felt satisfied about the impact of the initial (2007-2011) revisoning process. Most graduates were hired quickly as either assistant principals or principals in North Carolina and beyond. Upon becoming administrators, many took the time to let faculty know of their appreciation for being well-prepared to lead schools. The integration of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives and signature pedagogies throughout the curriculum had fostered good results. Signature pedagogies "tailor active learning, collaborative learning, inquiry-based learning, experiential learning, etc. to field-specific applications" (Dubec, 2017, para. 2).

Over several years, however, after reviewing principal candidate e-portfolios, faculty members began to express concerns that some papers and projects completed during the formative courses were not always of the highest caliber. A few of the summative capstone projects completed during the internship also lacked the desired quality. With the exception of an Environmental Scan Project taught during the principalship course, professors had been given academic freedom to design their own formative assignments for each of their courses. Some were either not using formative course assessments fully aligned with the North Carolina Standards for School Executives or providing less than rigorous assignments.

To address these concerns, the school administration faculty decided to "double-back" in 2018 to revisit the initial "revisoning." To make a good program better, it was decided to build upon some of the practices already in place and undergo a second revisoning process. The curriculum was mapped to ensure that courses were fully aligned with the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. At the same

Table 1*Appalachian State University School Administration Revisioning Process, 2007-2019*

First Revisioning Process (2007-2011)	Second Revisioning Process (2018-2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced signature and high impact pedagogies • Embedded the North Carolina Standards for School Executives throughout courses • Employed principal candidate cohorts • Embedded a single formative capstone project—The Environmental Scan, in the principalship course, to serve as the precursor to 6 summative capstone projects completed during the internship • Designated the two-semester internship as the summative capstone course • Created and embedded 6 summative capstone projects in the two-semester internship course • Created and embedded an e-portfolio in the internship course that includes—formative coursework artifacts, 6 summative capstone projects, an internship hours log, a student self-assessment survey of principal dispositions, a student program evaluation, and a competency packet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a comprehensive program evaluation, conducted curriculum mapping • Reexamined the placement and use of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives in courses • Identified power standards within the North Carolina Standards for School Executives • Designated courses containing power standards as cornerstone courses • Aligned instruction and assessments within and across courses using constructive and holistic alignment • Created and embedded a formative capstone project within each of the cornerstone courses • Assessed the student learning focus of each formative capstone project utilizing Palmer et al.'s, "Analyzing Assignments Utilizing the Learning Focused Assignment Rubric" (2016)

time common summative capstone assessments were created for specific courses that would better prepare the students for the six capstone projects completed during the internship.

Educational Challenges to the Post-Modern Principalship

Devising school leadership programs to develop school leaders capable of meeting 21st century challenges is an imperative for principal preparation programs (Wang et al., 2018). School leadership programs are keenly aware of the ever-changing landscape of school leadership. Today, principals contend with greater accountability, student-centered learning, data-based decision making, and greater competition driven by school choice (Goldring & Schuermann, 2009, p. 10). Jean-Marie and colleagues (2009) remind us that "given current conversations about increasing the diversity among leadership ranks, we need to provide authentic and relevant experiences pertaining to leadership and social justice" (p. 20). Principals are

also required to set priorities and build capacity in a way that allows schools to quickly adapt to changing circumstances. Top down, one size fits all reforms mandated by state and federal legislatures all too often ignore the unique contexts of different schools, making it difficult for principals to lead effectively (Gummerson, 2015; Johnson, 2019). Today's schools have been aptly described as "institutions of notoriously slippery substance—affected by a wide range of factors, marked by organizational complexity" (Schneider, 2011, p. 137).

Principals frequently interact with stakeholders who advance radically different agendas. Many are resistant to change, forcing the principal to "stomach hostility" (Eck & Goodwin, 2007; Heifetz & Linsky, 2017, p. 18; Leithwood et al., 1994; Marzano et al., 2005). School leaders are required to be master diagnosticians. Of paramount importance, principals must make moral decisions based on an internal set of values (Johnson, 2018). Bryk and Schneider (2002) remind us that community trust "lubricates much of a school's day to day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans" (p. 5). Trust

is essential for gaining and maintaining stakeholder support (Dutelle & Taylor, 2018).

Coming Full Circle—From Practice to Research...and Back Again

There has always been disagreement between academia and practitioners in the field about whether theory or practice is more important. Prior to the 1940's, school leadership programs were not grounded in a single academic discipline. "Novices learned from highly experienced, retired administrators who tended to stress the technical, mechanical and rational aspects of control, authority and management rather than the curricular and instructional aspects of leadership" (Brown, 2006, p. 1042). Between 1950 and 1970, however, American institutions of higher learning turned their focus towards academic preparation based on social, behavioral, and organizational theory (Owens & Steinhoff, 1976). During the 1980's and 90's, leadership programs emphasized the application of business principles. In addition, school leaders were expected to be supervisors of instruction responsible for the development of curriculum and providing pedagogical assistance to teachers (Glickman, 1990). More recently, school leadership programs have come to realize that effective school leaders integrate research and practice. Today, the pedagogy for developing school leaders is driven by professional standards and practitioner competencies grounded in a healthy blend of both research and practice (Hoyle, 2005, 2007).

Getting School Leaders to Apply Research to Practice

School leadership programs differ from traditional academic research programs whose primary responsibility is to advance theoretical constructs and knowledge. In contrast, leadership programs develop candidates who practice leadership. Jack Schneider (2014), who has studied the transfer and application of academic theories into K-12 schools, argued that to gain practitioner acceptance, the research being taught must be philosophically compatible with practices in the field and take into consideration how schools operate. Caboni and Proper (2009) agreed when they asserted,

If instruction is delivered in such a way that students grapple with problems that emerge from the challenges of a school or university, solve those problems using the tools they would use in practice, and eventually produce final products with relevance to, and usefulness for, the site from which the problem came, learning is more likely to be obviously transferable. This requires faculty to

teach in such a way that knowledge is both useable and adaptable. (p. 64)

The North Carolina Standards for School Executives

Teaching principal candidates to apply research to practice is only as good as the professional standards that undergird the pedagogy. Fortunately, the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2013) integrate research and practice. The standards are grounded in McREL's 2005 balanced leadership research and a 2003 study of principal practices entitled *Making Sense: A Study of the Principals*. The McREL meta-analysis determined that certain practices of instructional leadership correlate strongly with student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). The researchers identified 66 leadership practices embedded in 21 leadership responsibilities that affect student learning. They concluded that a school leader's actions, depending on how teachers perceive the change, will affect student achievement either positively or negatively. The magnitude of the change, whether it is first order—incremental, or second order—a dramatic departure from the expected, ultimately affects how well teachers will support change. Understanding this is intended to help "leaders to select leadership practices and strategies appropriate for their initiatives" (Waters et al., 2003, p. 8).

A second study, *Making Sense: A Study of the Principals*, examined what American principals actually do on a daily basis when leading their schools regardless of the rural, urban, or suburban setting (Portin et al., 2003). The authors concluded that principals focus primarily on seven leadership areas: (a) instructional, (b) cultural, (c) managerial, (d) human resource, (e) strategic, (f) external development, and (g) micro-political leadership. Unfortunately, no principal can ever become an expert in all seven, hence the need for transformational leadership, that is, decision making that identifies and employs others who have supplementary talents that can help the principal to solve problems. Above all, the principal has to be a master diagnostician.

The North Carolina Standards for School Executives are organized around the seven leadership areas identified in the *Making Sense* study. Each standard includes a summary statement, a description of best principal practices, and artifacts that serve as evidence of being able to apply the standard (see Appendix A). Universities and colleges employ a North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric for Preservice Candidates that mirrors the School Executive Standards (see Appendix B). The Preservice Rubric contains standards, elements, and a progressive rubric for measuring how well a principal candidate can demonstrate the application of each standard.

Fortunately, for principal candidates, the School Executive Standards, the Pre-Service Rubric, and the North Carolina School Executive Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process (2015) align perfectly (see Appendix C).

By successfully integrating the standards within the curriculum and providing opportunities for application via formative and summative capstone assignments, a school leadership program can develop principal candidates capable of transitioning easily from academia to leading public schools. Capstone projects can also be used by students and faculty members to assess the effectiveness of instruction and learning.

Signature Pedagogies and High Impact Practices

Lee Shulman (2005) advocated the use of signature pedagogies, which are “types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated” because they simplify complex practices and form habits of “the mind, heart and hand” (pp. 52, 59). When employed properly, these practices can promote deep learning and success (Kuh, 2008). During the initial (2007-2011) revisioning process, the school administration faculty implemented many of Kuh’s high-impact practices, including,

- Student cohorts that serve as learning communities,
- Common intellectual experiences,
- Intensive writing,
- Collaborative assignments and projects,
- Summative capstone projects,
- A two-semester internship, and
- An e-portfolio that serves as the ultimate capstone project.

At Appalachian State University, principal candidates are assigned to a cohort that becomes their learning community throughout the program; the cohort is intended to provide emotional support and promote long-lasting professional relationships (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). During their prescribed course of study, candidates practice academic and professional writing and work collaboratively on formative projects and assignments, allowing instructors and students to adjust instruction and learning (Popham, 2010). Students also complete group projects, whose importance cannot be underestimated as an effective method for training school leaders. Ward (2013) touts the value of group projects:

The advantage of group projects is that they better mimic the projects and team working environment that are common to industry. In group projects, students must work through interpersonal disagreements and develop cohesive teams to guide

development of the product. They must be able to make design compromises, produce multiple design revisions, reviews, and technical reports. (p. 214)

Doubling Back—A Second Revisioning (2018-2019)

To improve formative course work and the quality of the six summative capstone projects included in the e-portfolio, the faculty initiated a second revisioning process. The integration of the School Executive Standards within and across courses was revisited using curriculum mapping and alignment. Several courses were designated as essential or “cornerstone courses.” Cornerstone courses promote practitioner skills based on specific standards from the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. They are considered essential for candidates to be able to successfully complete their internship and e-portfolio, and ultimately to effectively lead schools (Gipson et al., 2015; Pejcinovic, 2019). The process of curriculum mapping ensures that formative coursework is grounded in the professional standards and that a designated capstone project is embedded in each cornerstone course. Equally important, mapping prevents candidates from developing gaps in their understanding that can negatively impact their ability to apply the standards. A parallel objective has been to promote faculty collegiality and better define professional responsibilities (Cuevas & Feit, 2011).

Curriculum Mapping and Course Alignment

When used properly, curriculum mapping can identify “gaps, redundancies, and misalignments in the curriculum and instructional program” (Jacobs, 2004, p. vi). Combined with curriculum alignment, both can improve instruction and learning. Effective curriculum alignment involves two kinds: constructive and holistic (Jankowski & Marshall, 2017). Constructive alignment within a course promotes teacher-initiated pedagogies that guide the student to “create meaning in the processes by which they learn” (Wang, as cited in Jankowski & Marshall, 2017, p. 67). It also promotes student comprehension of “intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks so that they understand why they need to take the course and how the course was related to other courses and even the program goals” (Wang, as cited in Jankowski & Marshall, 2017, p. 58). Constructive alignment within each course is both linear and vertical.

In contrast, holistic alignment aligns learning horizontally across curricular and co-curricular activities to help students make connections between different kinds of learning (Jankowski & Marshall, 2017, p. 60). Scaffolding, reinforcing, integrating and embedding techniques are used to promote holistic alignment. Scaffolded activities progress from smaller to larger

elements, “sequentially and iteratively” over time (p. 61). Reinforcing activities connect learning through different courses, contexts, and co-curricular experiences (pp. 62-64). Integrated learning teaches students how to integrate what they learn (pp. 64-67). Finally, embedding promotes alignment within the practice: it is something we do with students, not to them, in hopes of developing active rather than passive learners (p. 68). Curriculum mapping in conjunction with constructive and holistic alignment helped the school administration faculty to evaluate and revise what was being taught within and across courses as well as determine the proper sequencing of courses.

Designing Formative Capstone Course Projects to Enhance the Summative Capstone Projects

Summative Capstone Projects and Courses

Coursework leading to a capstone course should prepare students for the rigor of that course (McGill, 2012). Timely feedback from professors throughout formative courses is equally important. Formative coursework must be highly structured to prepare students for “the independent problem-solving challenges” they will face in any capstone course (Ward, 2011, p. 213). Pedagogically sound capstone projects, grounded in the formative coursework, provide opportunities for integrating “fragmented disciplinary knowledge, facilitating a meaningful closure to students’ academic experiences” (Hall et al., 2003, p. 50). Designed properly, a capstone project or course can be the bridge that helps students transition from academia into the world of work (Hall et al., 2003, p. 51). Ideally, capstone projects also provide students with opportunities to practice their skills in an environment that duplicates the stress of the profession, but within the safety of a classroom (Anderson et al., 2015, p. 90; Farr et al., 2001).

Six leadership problems that serve as summative capstone projects during the internship are designed with these purposes in mind (see Appendix D). Each focuses on a specific problem that requires the principal candidate to demonstrate application of multiple leadership standards and provide viable solutions. The rubrics used for assessing the projects force students to apply specific standards (see Appendix E). Having sound summative capstone projects already in place as part of the internship made it easier for the faculty to “backward map” when creating formative capstone projects for each of the “cornerstone” courses.

Creating Formative Capstone Projects for the Cornerstone Courses

Smrekar and McGraner (2009) insisted that school leadership courses must be “professionally anchored” and provide the opportunity to “practice dilemmas that educational leaders encounter in their professional contexts” (p. 57). When designing a capstone project, the educator should ask, “What connections do we intend to make between knowledge and life?” (Brooks et al., 2004, p. 275). Students need to engage in structured coursework that promotes deep learning (Hauhart & Grahe, 2012). Projects should enhance student communication and problem-solving skills employed commonly in the profession (Moore et al., 2011; Nilsson & Fulton, 2002; Patterson et al., 2012). Projects should also require the candidate to synthesize knowledge, to grasp the big picture and see the relationship between theory and practice (Sargent et al., 2003). When career preparation is balanced with skill integration and application, it can enhance student success not only during the practitioner program but later in the field (Cannon et al., 2010).

In the spring of 2018, an external facilitator guided the school administration faculty through curriculum mapping and course alignment. Curriculum mapping ensured that collectively the cornerstone courses covered all of the essential standards identified as “power standards.” Power standards are those deemed necessary for student success as opposed to others that are just “nice to know” (Ainsworth, 2003, p. 3). Formative capstone assessments rooted in the North Carolina Standards for School Executives were created for each of the cornerstone courses. In some instances, formative projects already being used by individual professors were revised and enhanced to serve as the capstone project for a designated course.

Each formative capstone project was required to address specific standards, be guided by best academic practices, and promote student-centered learning. To ensure this, Palmer and colleagues’ (2016) “Analyzing Assignments Utilizing the Learning-focused Assignment Rubric” was used to evaluate the design of each capstone project (see Appendix F).

The rubric requires the educator to:

- Define broad criteria characteristic of well-designed assignments,
- Break the criteria down into a set of concrete, measurable components, and
- Suggest what the evidence for each component should look like in the assignment’s description (Palmer et al., 2016, p. 2).

The rubric provides assignment descriptions that are learning focused. These include the purpose, tasks, criteria and assessments, and additional learning-focused qualities.

- The purpose section describes the knowledge and skills that a student will learn and the kind of practice that will occur.
- The task section analyzes how clearly the instructions and steps are expressed to ensure that the student will understand how to approach the assignment.
- The criteria and assessments describe what excellent student work looks like and how it will be assessed,
- Additional learning-focused qualities identify specific learning-focused principles that are applicable to the project. (Palmer et al., pp. 2-7)

The Palmer, Gravett, and LaFleur rubric also helped to ensure that the formative capstone projects provide principal candidates with multiple opportunities to integrate research and practice. Formative capstone projects now employed in the cornerstone courses include the following: An Environmental Scan of a School (LSA 5030), An Analysis of a School Crisis and Intervention Plan (LSA 5400), The Budget Exercise (LSA 5400), A Case Study Exam-What Should be the Role of the Student Newspaper? (LSA 5600), The School Liability Project (LSA 5600), School Based Evaluation-Developing a Strategic Plan for School Improvement (RES 5070), The Data-Based Decision Making for School Leaders Project (RES 5080), and An Organizational Analysis of a School's Learning Culture (LSA 5820). Some of the formative capstone projects are group projects requiring collaboration, while others serve as individual projects requiring independent thinking and writing.

An Example of a Formative Capstone Project

In the School Law course (LSA 5600), students complete a case study exam on the proper supervision of a student newspaper while protecting the rights of students (see Appendix G). The project provides an opportunity for principal candidates to demonstrate not only their ability to integrate research and practice, but also how well they can problem solve and collaborate to produce a workable solution.

Formative Instructional Practices

Students learn the skills necessary to successfully complete the project by completing purposeful assignments in the course. Students are assigned readings in school law, followed by discussions with other members of the class in an electronic forum. Under the guidance of the professor, principal candidates

discuss principles of the law. Because the logic of legal reasoning is foreign to most students, much time is spent on learning both the terminology and processes for deciding judicial cases. Weekly multiple-choice quizzes on the law allow the student to develop an understanding of the principles and processes of the law. Students complete case study briefs that teach them how to read and interpret cases in a *Case Law Reporter*. Each week in their assigned group, candidates apply a four-step problem method designed to teach them how to logically examine a legal problem and provide solutions that prevent it from “growing legs” and becoming even bigger. The formative instructional processes allow the student to gain the necessary skills to successfully complete the capstone project for the course.

The LSA 5600 Capstone Project

Students complete a project entitled, “What Should Be the Role of the Student Newspaper?” Working within an assigned group, they rely on the expertise that each student brings to the team. The project allows students to demonstrate that they can apply principles of the law to real-life situations, while employing legally and pedagogically defensible practices. Students apply a four-step method to solve the problem. The paper is written using APA 7th edition formatting, is 15-20 pages in length, and contains at least 8-10 citations based on academic and legal research. The length of the paper is limited due to the compressed period of time that is allowed outside of class for each group to research and write the project. The reduced page count also forces candidates to write clearly and to the point, a style required of principals when completing professional reports, school improvement, and strategic plans. In real life, reports produced by multiple educators are often not edited properly, resulting in a product that is difficult to understand and ineffective in producing the desired results. Equally important the compressed time factor induces some pedagogical stress, which mimics the pressure principals must overcome when solving complex problems.

On the night the paper is submitted, each group also conducts a PowerPoint presentation to a mock school board. The presentation, based on the findings of the case study is limited to 15 slides and 15 minutes. This provides an opportunity for candidates to practice presenting a complex subject in a limited amount of time to a public entity. Rarely do legislative committees or governmental boards grant large amounts of time to presenters due to natural limits that are created by the number of issues that a committee or board faces at any point in time. The chances of garnering the result a principal wants increases exponentially if the presentation can concisely convey the information needed by the public body and the presenter is able to

answer deeper follow-up questions that the audience may have.

Assessing the Formative Capstone Project

The capstone project is assessed using a progressive rubric. The project's design allows for students to apply standards 3a, 5d, 6b, and 7a from the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric for Preservice Candidates. Later, during the internship, students are given another opportunity to show that they have mastered and can apply the standards in a different context when they complete the six summative capstone projects. In addition to the internship professor grading the summative capstones projects during the two internship courses, two other professors independently assess the portfolio as a whole. The e-portfolio process allows faculty to assess both student learning and the quality of instruction.

Conclusion

Kuh et al. (2015) believed that assessment must harness evidence in order to promote educational improvement. Too often faculty in academic or practitioner programs assess student mastery of a subject or practice but take little or no time to reexamine the effectiveness of the pedagogy and how it affects student learning for better or worse. The second revisioning process provided an opportunity for the school administration faculty to employ curriculum mapping and course alignment to improve instruction. Cornerstone courses heavily grounded in essential standards—power standards from the North Carolina Standards for School Executives—were identified. Once identified, formative capstone projects were created for each cornerstone course as precursors to the summative capstone projects completed during the capstone course (i.e., the internship). In conjunction with signature pedagogies and other high impact practices that promote student integration of knowledge and practice, the e-portfolio process provides an effective way to enhance instruction and assess student success over time. So, what can be learned from our experience?

Recommendations

We offer the following ten recommendations for principal preparation and other practitioner programs:

1. The primary purpose of a practitioner program is to teach the candidate how to apply research to practice in their profession, to work collaboratively with others, and to problem solve. It is not to promote researchers who create or advance knowledge.
2. Practitioner programs must balance academic freedom with quality control of the program (Woods

et al., 2016). While professors should be allowed academic freedom with how they teach, what they teach must be driven primarily by professional standards and programmatic objectives (Abbott et al., 2018). Failure to take this into account will inevitably result in gaps in the instruction and less reinforcement of the standards and objectives across the curriculum. Ultimately, it will negatively affect the quality of practitioners that a program produces.

3. Practitioner programs that have a coherent set of professional standards will find it easier to institute curriculum mapping and alignment, as well as to develop formative and summative capstone projects. If coherent professional standards do not exist, the identification and selection of power standards that can have the greatest impact on instruction and practice will be much more difficult.
4. Curriculum mapping helps to minimize gaps in what is being taught, learned, and experienced. It is also an excellent methodology for identifying cornerstone courses and power standards that are essential if a program is to produce well-rounded candidates for the profession.
5. Seamless alignment and scaffolding of the academic research, professional standards, and competencies within and between courses make it easier for student practitioners to understand, internalize, and apply the knowledge that they learn to the profession they will serve.
6. Capstone projects, completed in either the formative courses or a capstone course like an internship, allow practitioners to synthesize knowledge within a course and across courses, as well as apply research to practice. Bai and colleagues (2007) recommended that “a formal standard at the departmental level should be set up for capstone courses” (p. 5). If the academic program contains summative capstone projects or courses, formative capstone projects should be created with the summative capstones in mind. Effective summative capstone projects should require the student to synthesize knowledge across courses and apply research to practice in a different context from those applied in the formative courses.
7. Signature pedagogies organize the way future practitioners are educated and simplify complex practices. High impact practices, including learning communities, common intellectual experiences, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments, capstone projects, internships, and the e-portfolio, in conjunction with signature pedagogies, can help practitioner candidates form habits of “the mind, heart and hand” (Shulman, 2005, p. 59).
8. Capstone projects that require working in a group provide realistic practice for working as a team in

the field. Successful teams learn to overcome personality differences, develop team consensus, understand the importance of compromise, revise their work product often, apply pragmatic solutions to current educational challenges (e.g., leading schools through COVID-19), and write and speak with a single voice.

9. In a capstone course like the internship, an e-portfolio containing both formative and summative capstone projects and other work products can be an authentic tool for assessing whether a practitioner candidate is ready and capable of confronting the realities of the profession.
10. The identification of power standards and proper implementation of signature pedagogies, curriculum mapping, course alignment, and capstone assignments, in conjunction with a major capstone course, can be powerful pedagogical tools that enhance the ability of practitioner candidates to effectively apply what they learn in academia to their practice in the field.

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Appendix A

Example of North Carolina Standards for School Executives: Standard I

NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL EXECUTIVES

STANDARD 1
Strategic Leadership

Summary: School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry that challenges the school community to continually re-purpose itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

Practices: The school executive practices effective strategic leadership when he or she:

- Is able to share a vision of the changing world in the 21st century that schools are preparing children to enter;
- Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes;
- Systematically considers new ways of accomplishing tasks and is comfortable with major changes in how processes are implemented;
- Utilizes data from the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey in developing the framework for continual improvement in the School Improvement Plan;
- Is a driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21st century skills;
- Creates with all stakeholders a vision for the school that captures peoples' attention and imagination;
- Creates processes that provide for the periodic review and revision of the school's vision, mission, and strategic goals by all school stakeholders;
- Creates processes to ensure the school's identity (vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals) actually drive decisions and inform the culture of the school;

- Adheres to statutory requirements regarding the School Improvement Plan;
- Facilitates the collaborative development of annual school improvement plans to realize strategic goals and objectives;
- Facilitates the successful execution of the school improvement plan aligned to the mission and goals set by the State Board of Education;
- Facilitates the implementation of state education policy inside the school's classrooms;
- Facilitates the setting of high, concrete goals and the expectations that all students meet them;
- Communicates strong professional beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning that reflect latest research and best practices and in preparing students for success in college or in work;
- Creates processes to distribute leadership throughout the school.

Artifacts:

- Degree to which school improvement plan strategies are implemented, assessed and modified
- Evidence of an effectively functioning, elected School Improvement Team
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- School Improvement Plan, its alignment with district and state strategic priorities, and a plan for growth on items of concern as evidenced in the NC TWC Survey
- The degree to which staff can articulate the school's direction and focus
- Student testing data



Source: North Carolina State Board of Education & North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2013). *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*. Public Schools of North Carolina. Copyright 2013 by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

Appendix B

North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric for Preservice Candidates: Standard 1

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE EVALUATION RUBRIC
Preservice Candidates

Standard 1: Strategic Leadership

School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry and innovation, and a community that continually re-purposes itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

Scale

1a. School Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals: The school's identity, in part, is derived from the vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals of the school, the processes used to establish these attributes, and the ways they are embodied in the life of the school community.				
Emerging Candidate	Developing Candidate	Proficient Candidate	Accomplished Candidate	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
Understands the components, characteristics, and importance of school vision, mission, and strategic goals, and can apply this understanding to the analysis and critique of existing school plans.	AND Develops his/her own vision of the changing world in the 21 st century that schools are preparing children to enter.	AND Works with others to develop a shared vision and strategic goals for student achievement that reflect high expectations for students and staff. Maintains a focus on the vision and strategic goals throughout the school year.	AND Designs and implements collaborative processes to collect and analyze data, from the <i>North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey</i> and other data sources, about the school's progress for the periodic review and revision of the school's vision, mission, and strategic goals.	
1b. Leading Change: The school executive articulates a vision, and implementation strategies, for improvements and changes which result in improved achievement for all students.				
Emerging Candidate	Developing Candidate	Proficient Candidate	Accomplished Candidate	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
Is knowledgeable of research and theory associated with school change particularly the relationship between school vision, student achievement, and organizational change.	AND Identifies changes necessary for the improvement of student learning.	AND Works with others to systematically consider new and better ways of leading for improved student achievement for all students and engages stakeholders in the change process.	AND Adapts/varies leadership style according to the changing needs of the school and community. Effectively communicates the impact of change.	

Approved by the State Board of Education
October 2, 2008

Source: North Carolina State Board of Education & North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (October 2, 2008). *North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric for Preservice Candidates*. Public Schools of North Carolina. Copyright 2008 by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

Appendix C

North Carolina School Executive Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process

North Carolina School Executive Principal Evaluation Process

Rubric for Evaluation and Self-Assessment (Required)

This form **must** be completed by the principal/assistant principal as part of the self-assessment process *and* by the superintendent/designee in preparation for the summary/end-of-year evaluation conference.

Standard I: Strategic Leadership

Principals/assistant principals will create conditions that result in strategically re-imagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry that challenges the school community to continually re-purpose itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

Element Ia. School Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals: The school's identity, in part, is derived from the vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals of the school, the processes used to establish these attributes, and the ways they are embodied in the life of the school community.

Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished	Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)
<input type="checkbox"/> Develops his/her own vision of the changing world in the 21 st century that schools are preparing children to enter	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Leads and implements a process for developing a shared vision and strategic goals for student achievement that reflect high expectations for students and staff <input type="checkbox"/> Maintains a focus on the vision and strategic goals throughout the school year	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Creates with stakeholders a vision for the school that captures peoples' attention and imagination <input type="checkbox"/> Designs and implements collaborative processes to collect and analyze data about the school's progress for the periodic review and revision of the school's vision, mission, and strategic goals	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Ensures that the school's identity (vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals) actually drive decisions and inform the culture of the school <input type="checkbox"/> Initiates changes to vision and goals based on data to improve performance, school culture and school success	

Element Ib. Leading Change: The principal/assistant principal articulates a vision, and implementation strategies, for improvements and changes which result in improved achievement for all students.

<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies changes necessary for the improvement of student learning	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Systematically considers new and better ways of leading for improved student achievement and engages stakeholders in the change process	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Adapts/varies leadership style according to the changing needs of the school and community <input type="checkbox"/> Is comfortable with major changes in implementing processes and accomplishing tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Routinely and systematically communicates the impacts of change processes to all stakeholders	... and <input type="checkbox"/> Is a driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21 st century skills <input type="checkbox"/> Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes	
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Source: North Carolina State Board of Education & North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (July 2015). *North Carolina School Executive Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process*. Public Schools of North Carolina. Copyright 2009 by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

Appendix D

Summative Capstone Projects: Problems 4, 5, 6 for Principal Candidates

*Appalachian State University
MSA/GCSL Portfolio
Capstone Projects 4, 5, 6*

Evidence Cluster #4: *Organizational Management*

Description:

All candidates will complete a project entitled "Assessing/Auditing a School's Organization and Management Procedures." This assessment/audit will focus on how effectively and efficiently the school is managed to support its broader mission of improving student success. The assessment/audit will take the form of an APA appropriate document.

Evidence Cluster #5: *School Culture and Safety*

Description:

All candidates will complete a project entitled "School Culture and Safety Audit." This audit will focus on how effectively and efficiently the school provides the conditions of safety as well as the conditions for meeting the differentiated needs of children and adults based on their cultural and ethnic characteristics.

Evidence Cluster #6: *School Improvement Assessment Project*

Description:

All candidates will complete a project entitled "School Improvement Assessment Project." This assessment will focus on how well the school addresses the processes of school improvement and the results that comes from those processes. Candidates have acquired a wide range of information from the program of studies as well as the completion of Evidences 1-5. This information will be used to create the School Improvement Assessment Project. The evidence is a separate document that assesses the school's commitment to and accomplishment of continuous school improvement. In completing this evidence, the candidate will work with others, including peers, professors, principals and other administrators, members of the School Improvement Team, other teachers, support staff, and/or community members.

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Appendix E

Grading Rubric for a Summative Capstone Project Paper 4 for Principal Candidates

Evidence # 4 – Organizational Management

**Name of Evidence - Assessing/Auditing a School’s Organization and Management Procedures Project
Assessment Rubric**

Descriptors: 2b.1, 2b.2, 4b1, 4c.1, 4c.2, 5a.1, 5a.2, 5c.2, 6b.1, 6b.3

Descriptor from Standard	Emerging	Developing	Proficient		Accomplished	Not Demonstrated
	1	2	3	4	5	
2b.1 Adheres to legal requirements for planning and instructional time.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2b.2 Reviews scheduling processes and protocols that maximize staff input and address diverse student learning needs	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4b.1 Supports, mentors, and coaches staff members and emerging teacher leaders.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4c.1 Works with others to provide formal feedback to teachers concerning the effectiveness of their classroom instruction and ways to improve their instructional practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4c.2 Works with others to implement district and state evaluation policies in a fair and equitable manner	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5a.1 Works with others to incorporate the input of the School Improvement Team in budget and resource decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5a.2 Works with others to use feedback and data to assess the success of funding and program decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5c.2 Works with others to provide information in different formats in multiple ways through different media in order to ensure communication with all members of the community	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6b.1 Works with others to engage parents/guardians and all community	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Candidate Name:

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Appendix F

Guidelines for Writing Summative Capstone Projects 1-6 Internships I, II

Appalachian State University MSA/GCSL Portfolio Guidelines for Writing Capstone Project Papers 1-6

Suggested Titles and Headings for each Project-

Title Page

An Analysis of [] *** of School [] **

Statement of the Problem

Literature Review

The Action Plan(s)

The Personal Reflection

Reference Page(s)

Appendix or Appendices [for tables, charts, or other information that you do not incorporate directly into the narrative]

1) **The Title Page-** See APA 6th Edition.

2) **An Analysis of [] *** of [School] ****

- (a) What is the current state of the school based on its history?
- (b) Analyze each of the standards and elements listed in the rubric that apply to the problem.
- (c) Determine the strengths and weaknesses, based on your analysis, and show how they impact the school for better or worse.
- (d) What issue or issues does the data lead you to determine that the school needs to address?

3) **Statement of the Problem-**

- (a) Based on your Analysis of the School, what are *the most important needs of the school in priority order*, realizing that the school has limited time and resources?
- (b) Why should the school work on the issue(s) that you picked above others?

Note: *** Insert—From Projects 1-6, depending on the project: The Positive Impact on Student Learning & Development, or, Teacher Empowerment and Leadership; or, Community Involvement and Engagement; or, Organizational Management; or, School Culture and Safety; or, The School Improvement Assessment Process. Then, ** Insert— the Name of Your School.

3rd Revision— March 16, 2015

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Page 1 of 4

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Appendix G

Rubric Used to Analyze the Formative Capstone Projects

Analyzing Assignments Utilizing the [Learning-focused Assignment Rubric](#)
 Source: Michael Palmer & Jennifer LaFleur University of Virginia, Center for Teaching Excellence Emily Gravett James Madison University, Center for Faculty Innovation

Assignment Name: _____

Course: _____

Author: _____

Criteria	Self-Evaluation	Peer Review Comments
PURPOSE		
1. Measurable student learning objectives for the assignment are articulated.***		
2. The assignment is authentic, practically useful, and/or relevant to students' lives beyond college.***		
3. The relevance of the assignment in the context of the course is clearly articulated.*		
4. Learning objectives are appropriately pitched to the course level, class size, position of the assignment within the course, and the characteristics of the students taking the class.*		
* The assignment is sufficiently aligned to the summative assessment for the program and covers one or more outcomes.		
TASKS		
5. The task is aligned with the purpose.***		
6. The type(s) or genre(s) of the assignment is clear and defined.***		

Source: Palmer, M. S., LaFleur, J., & Gravett, E. (2016, November). *Measuring the Transparency of Assignment Descriptions*. Interactive session presented at the National Conference for the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, Louisville, KY. Copyright 2016 by Michael Palmer, Jennifer LaFleur, and Emily Gravett.

Appendix H

School Law Case Study Paper LSA 5600

Purpose

Public schools are a reflection of an American rights-based culture that all too often relies upon the federal, state, and local courts to resolve issues. Although the concept of *in loco parentis* provides educators with a great deal of authority in the rearing and education of children, it is counter-balanced with the burden of having a higher duty of care because educators are considered to be trained professionals. Public school principals must have a basic understanding of the traditions and principles of the law as well as how to apply those principles in different situations and circumstances. Understanding application of the law is not always easy—sometimes it is vague, sometimes it is very specific. Principals must anticipate legal issues and avoid them by proactively employing legally and pedagogically sound practices. To that end this case study is intended to allow the student to evaluate legal issues in a hypothetical school setting using a legal lens to produce legally and pedagogically defensible solutions.

Assignment/Methodology

Students within an assigned group will complete a case study paper entitled “A Legal Case Study: What Should be the Role of the Student Newspaper.” When writing the case study, students will:

- Identify the facts of the case.
- Identify short-term legal and pedagogical issues that demand immediate attention.
- Provide short-term solutions to these legal and pedagogical issues.
- Identify long-term legal and pedagogical issues that demand attention.
- Provide long-term solutions to these legal and pedagogical issues. (i.e. Are there issues that may occur again that might be either mitigated or prevented by instituting or revising administrative rules, school or board policies?)

The paper must follow the APA 7th edition format and be completed as a MS Word document. It should be 12-15 pages in length, not including the title page and reference pages. The paper should contain at least 8-10 citations from court cases, scholarly books, and/or legal or academic journals *in addition to* references cited from the *School Law and the Public Schools: A Practical Guide for Educational Leaders* (6th ed.) (2013), *The Law of Schools, Students and Teachers in a Nutshell* (6th ed.) (2018) texts, and the *Education Law in North Carolina Website* (2004).

One paper will be turned in for each group. Each group will also complete a PowerPoint presentation containing no more than 10-12 slides on the Case Study to a mock school board. The presentation will last no longer than 10-15 minutes. The rationale for limiting the time is to provide student practice for presenting complex subjects in front of public bodies while being allotted only a minimal amount of time.

Textbooks

Essex, N.L. (2015). *School law and the public schools. A practical guide for educational leaders* (6th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Pearson.

Alexander, K., & Alexander, M.D. (2018). *The law of schools, students, and teachers in a nutshell* (6th ed.). St. Paul, MN: West Academic Publishing.

Assignment Objectives:

The assignment covers North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric standards and elements 3a., 5d., 6b., 7a.

- 3a. Focus on Collaborative Work Environment: The school executive understands and acts on the understanding of the positive role that a collaborative work environment can play in the school’s culture.
- 5d. School Expectations for Students and Staff: The school executive develops and enforces expectations, structures, rules, and procedures for students and staff.
- 6b. Federal, State and District Mandates: The school executive designs protocols and processes in order to comply with federal, state, and district mandates.
- 7a. School Executive Micro-political Leadership: The school executive develops systems and relationships to leverage staff expertise and influence in order to affect the school’s identity, culture, and performance.

Grading

This assignment counts 1/10 of your total grade (100/1000 points).

Timeline

- Week 1—Step 1. Analyze the case study in class. Group members organize the research and writing of the paper.
- Week 2—Step 2. Group members convene to edit the paper and be sure that the product meets all requirements and demonstrates “one voice.”

Legal Case Study

What Should Be The Role Of The Student Newspaper?

It had been two weeks since the school year's first issue of the Riverside student newspaper, *The Sword*, had been published. Although the tempers in the guidance department had now cooled, the principal sensed that the emotional vibrations generated by the paper's attack on the counselors had still not completely subsided.

The principal himself had been rather upset about the article—a strong indictment of the guidance department for its alleged lack of interest and concern with the non-college-bound students. The principal felt the facts and observations made in the news story were essentially true, so he didn't think he should censor or criticize the student editors—in spite of strong pressure from the counselors that he do so. When they came to him complaining about the newspaper article, he conceded that the students should have used more tact and diplomacy, but the counselors were not easily mollified, and it was clear they were going to be unhappy for some time. Although the school newspaper had become more and more outspoken in recent times, it had never before attacked any department or made editorial comments about educational or professional matters. In the past, *The Sword* had primarily confined itself to reporting on social activities, athletics, student personalities, clubs, or specific subjects in the curriculum. It had occasionally included articles on abortion, militarism in America, and other social issues, but in general, the principal had been pleased with the content. He felt fortunate that *The Sword* was not like some of those school papers—particularly of the underground variety—that spent all their time on either social issues or attacks on the school itself. In fact, the principal could recall only one other article that might have been considered critical, and in that instance, the criticism had been directed toward the school prom. At the time he hadn't been very happy about it, but he had overlooked the article, hoping that there would not be a recurrence.

This year, it appeared that the principal might face a troublesome situation if the first issue of the student newspaper was any harbinger of things to come. The editorial board was now composed of students who were bright and very independent, and they would not be easy to deal with. The principal had already decided—contrary to the recommendations of his assistant principal and the guidance department—that he would ignore the tenor of the first edition. He preferred to avoid conflict with the student editors and the journalism adviser, all of whom had strong feelings about adult interference. He also hoped that things would settle down and the paper would become more occupied with student-oriented activities. Now, as he thought about that decision, the principal hoped fervently that it had been the right one.

On Friday the second issue of *The Sword* was distributed in classes during the last five minutes of the school day. Normally the teachers looked over the paper before passing it out to the students, but this Friday there was no such opportunity because the paper arrived late. Immediately after the papers were handed out, the dismissal bell rang and the students flocked out of the classrooms, reading and chattering on the way to their lockers. With few exceptions, the teachers headed down to the faculty room for their after-school cup of coffee. As several of the teachers in the faculty room began to read *The Sword*, one of them swore and directed the attention of the others in the room to the student editorial on the paper's second page.

As the teacher finished reading the editorial aloud, there was considerable muttering and complaining from the other people in the room. Everyone was upset about the paper's criticism, although a few teachers silently conceded to themselves that its main thrust was accurate. Someone suggested that the administration should immediately take disciplinary action against the student editor and the newspaper staff, and most of those in the room seemed to agree that such a step would be the least that should be done. A counselor proposed that in the future all editorials and newspaper articles should be screened by a faculty committee prior to publication. The counselor's suggestion was viewed by a few faculty members as representing censorship and an extra burden on the faculty, but many of the teachers felt that the administration, or someone else with authority, should pass judgment on the contents of the newspaper before it was approved for publication. Obviously, no one had carefully examined the current issue in advance.

Finally, the guidance director volunteered to go see the principal and apprise him of how most of the faculty felt about the student newspaper. No one could predict how the principal would respond to the editorial, but the teachers were hopeful that he would be as concerned as they were. As one of them put it, "First the guidance department and now the teachers. The next attack could easily be on the administration!"

Source: Gorton, R. A., & Alston, J. A. (2009). *School leadership and administration: Important concepts, case studies, and simulations* (9th edition). McGraw-Hill Irwin. Copyright 2016 by McGraw-Hill Irwin.

**Rubric for School Case Study Project
LSA 5600**

Student _____

Category	High Degree of Proficiency	Acceptable Degree of Proficiency	Proficiency Needs Improvement	Points
A. Identification of facts of the case.	Thoroughly identified.	Partially identified.	Inadequately or not identified.	Total for A = (10 possible)
B. Short-term legal & pedagogical issues.	Thoroughly identified.	Partially identified.	Inadequately or not identified.	Total for B = (10 possible)
C. Short term solutions to legal & pedagogical issues.	Legally and pedagogically defensible.	Somewhat legally and pedagogically defensible.	Not legally and/or pedagogically defensible.	Total for C = (10 possible)
D. Long-term legal & pedagogical issues.	Thoroughly identified.	Partially identified.	Inadequately or not identified.	Total for D = (10 possible)
E. Long-term solutions to legal and pedagogical problems.	Legally and pedagogically defensible.	Somewhat legally and pedagogically defensible.	Not legally and/or pedagogically defensible.	Total for E = (10 possible)
F. Addressed any need to revise or add administrative rules, school or board policies.	Fully addressed.	Partially addressed.	Not addressed.	Total for E = (10 possible)

Category	High Degree of Proficiency	Acceptable Degree of Proficiency	Proficiency Needs Improvement	Points
G. The Paper is Well-Written, Clear and Concise.	To a high degree, the paper is well written, clear and concise.	To a lesser degree, the paper is well-written, clear and concise.	The paper is not well-written, clear and concise.	Total for G = (10 possible)
H. The Paper Provides Sound Analysis and Recommendations Based on Academic Research and Interviews.	To a high degree, the paper provides sound analysis and recommendations based on academic research and interviews.	To a lesser degree, the paper provides sound analysis and recommendations based on academic research and interviews.	The paper does not provide sound analysis and recommendations based on academic research interviews.	Total for H = (10 possible)
I. The Paper Follows the APA 7 th Format.	To a high degree, the paper follows the APA 7 th format.	To a lesser degree, the paper follows the APA 7 th format.	The paper does not follow the APA 7 th format.	Total for I = (10 possible)
J. The Paper Stays within the Allotted Page Requirements (i.e. 30-35 pages).	The paper stays within the allotted page requirements.	The paper strays from the allotted page requirements by 1-2 additional pages.	The paper does not meet the allotted page requirements because it is under the minimum pages required, or, 3 or more pages over the page requirement.	Total for J = (10 possible)
			GRAND TOTAL for A-J = (100 possible)	

Comments: