

**House Bill 4714 (Substitute H-2)**  
**Sponsor: Rep. David Farhat**

**First Analysis (6-18-03)**  
**Committee: Education**

***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Institute for Educational Leadership, a 35-year-old nonprofit and non-partisan organization that advises public schools about student achievement, has issued a series of reports about school leadership during the past three years. For example, the organization's Task Force on the Principalship published *Leadership for Student Learning* in October 2000 to describe the most severe problems of the nation's 93,200 school principals. In its critique of current school administration, the report notes that "First, the top priority of the principalship must be leadership for learning. Second, the principalship as it currently is constructed—a middle management position overloaded with responsibilities for basic building operations—fails to meet this fundamental priority, instead allowing schools to drift without any clear vision of leadership for learning or providing principals with the skills needed to meet the challenge."

Members of the task force propose a new kind of principal, one whose role will be defined in terms of instructional leadership, community leadership both within and outside of the school, and visionary leadership that embodies the values and conviction that all children will learn at high levels. In order to realize these goals, the Institute's task force recommends addressing three critical challenges: 1) fill the pipeline with effective school leaders, improving preparation and buttressing recruitment and retention; 2) support the profession by emphasizing student learning in ongoing professional development and training; and 3) guarantee quality by finding fair ways to hold principals accountable for their role in student learning, including the creation of stronger data-gathering systems that are needed to inform principal leadership.

Some states have long provided school principals ongoing training. For example, in 1984 the North Carolina legislature created the Principals' Executive Program, a part of the University of North Carolina's Center for School Leadership Development, and in 1995, Texas created the Texas Principal Leadership Initiative which requires each principal to

periodically diagnose his or her learning needs and maintain a professional growth plan. Yet another promising program is the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium—an initiative that transcends state boundaries—organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 1998. The Consortium's central mission is helping create leaders for student learning by grounding criteria and standards for school leaders' professional practice in a deep knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning. See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION* below.

Although many—and perhaps all—principals need far deeper knowledge about teaching and learning located within the learning disciplines and subject matter domains, it is likely their training will need to be customized. In his essay *Urban School Leadership: Different in Kind and Degree*, education historian Larry Cuban encourages policymakers to pay attention to the wide variety of civic contexts within which school principals do their work. He questions two key assumptions that drive standards-based school reform and accountability testing: all schools are basically alike, and a one-size-fits-all leadership can solve America's school problems. Cuban warns that "all public schools are hardly alike. In 50 states, almost 15,000 public school districts with almost 90,000 schools serve almost 50 million students. The social, academic, cultural diversity among districts and within districts—think of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago with high schools that send 90 percent of their graduates to college and others where no more than 10 percent continue their education—is stunning." Cuban, a former urban superintendent, says we must plow more resources into urban schools, and train urban teachers and principals within urban schools through year-long paid supervised internships and intensive summer programs in cooperation with local colleges and universities; then pay premium salaries to those teachers and principals who complete the program and stay at least five years in the district.

In his report *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*, educational researcher Richard Elmore notes, however, that “many well-intentioned reformers argue that large scale improvements of schools can be accomplished by recruiting, rewarding, and retaining good people and releasing them from the bonds of bureaucracy to do what they know how to do... What’s missing in this view,” says Elmore, “is any recognition that improvement is more a function of learning to do the right things in the setting where you work than it is of what you know when you start to do the work. Improvement at scale is largely a property of organizations, not of the pre-existing traits of the individuals who work in them. Organizations that improve do so because they create and nurture agreement on what is worth achieving, and then set in motion the internal processes by which people progressively learn how to do what they need to do in order to achieve what is worthwhile....Improvement occurs through organized social learning, not through the idiosyncratic experimentation and discovery of variously talented individuals.” In Elmore’s view what is needed is “distributed leadership” and he outlines a conception of this idea in which policy and practice—policymaker setting targets and stimulating public discussion about content and performance coupled with practitioners (teachers and students) interacting around content at the instructional core—are dependent upon and informed by each other.

In order to improve the leadership in Michigan’s public schools, legislation has been introduced to create an academy for school principals.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILLS:***

House Bill 4714 would amend the Revised School Code (MCL 380.1525) to specify that state and federal professional development funds could be used for a principal leadership academy.

Under the bill, the Department of Education, in collaboration with statewide associations of school principals, would establish a principal leadership academy, and it would consist of training for principals conducted by other school principals with a record of demonstrated success in improving student performance. The department would be required to solicit input from school district superintendents and intermediate school district superintendents, in order to compile a list of successful principals who would likely be effective in conducting the training at the leadership academy. The bill specifies that the department would select principals to conduct the training from the list, and

that the training would be required to include all aspects of successful school leadership, including at least all of the following: 1) strategies for increasing parental involvement; 2) strategies for engaging community support; 3) creative problem solving; 4) financial decision-making; 5) management rights and techniques; and 6) other strategies for improving school leadership to achieve better student performance.

Currently under the law, funds appropriated by the legislature for professional development must be allocated substantially as follows: 20 percent to the Department of Education; 15 percent to intermediate school districts (on an equal amount per pupil basis based upon the memberships of constituent school districts); and 65 percent to school districts (on an equal amount per pupil basis). House Bill 4714 would eliminate this provision that describes the manner in which funds appropriated by the legislature must be allocated.

In addition, the current law specifies that the funds can be used for:

- professional development programs for administrators and teachers, with an emphasis on the improvement of teaching and learning of the academic core curriculum as measured by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program and other criterion-referenced assessment; collaborative decision making; site-based management; the process of school improvement; instructional leadership; and the use of data and assessment instruments to improve teaching and learning for all students;
- a biennial education policy leadership institute;
- a statewide academy for school leadership established by the State Board of Education;
- community leadership development in each school district;
- promotion of high educational standards together with the business community;
- sabbatical leaves for up to one academic year for selected master teachers who aid in profession development; and
- any purpose authorized in the appropriation for professional development in the State School Aid Act.

In order to receive professional development funding, each school district and intermediate school district must submit an annual professional development plan to the State Board of Education, and the board may disapprove funding if it finds that the plan does not further core academic curriculum needs; does not constitute serious, informed innovation; is of general inferior overall quality; or does not comply with requirements under section 1526 (which concerns mentoring for beginning teachers and intensive professional development induction into teaching programs).

Under House Bill 4714, all of these provisions would be retained, and in addition, professional development funds could be used for the principal leadership academy that the department would be required to establish.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Other states' Principal Leadership Academies. In 1984, the North Carolina legislature created the Principals' Executive Program (PEP), a part of the University of North Carolina's Center for School Leadership Development, which patterns its profession development program after Harvard University's renowned leadership training program for business executives. The program offers training in two forms: "residential" and "topical." Residential programs on campus provide in-depth training on numerous school issues, and span from 3 to 20 days, while topical programs are from 1 to 3 day sessions. The program provides free telephone consultations on school law issues, and maintains a library of books, videotapes and audio cassettes on a wide range of education leadership topics. More information is available at <http://www.ga.unc.edu/pep>

The State of Texas offers the Texas Principals Leadership Initiative, created in 1995. It assists a variety of entities in providing ongoing reflective and collaborative professional development opportunities directly linked to school administrators' role of facilitating high quality teaching and learning, with a sharp focus on assessment. Principals who participate receive an objective diagnosis of their skills in relation to the state's new standards for leadership and achievement. More information is available at <http://www.tpli.org>

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, created in 1998 by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the national Policy Board for Educational Administration, promotes Six Standards for School Leaders, now used in 30 states, and which

serve as the basis for assessments for the licensing of beginning principals. The standards say: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by 1) facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community; 2) advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth; 3) ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; 4) collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interest and needs, and mobilizing community resources; 5) acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner; and 6) understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. More information is available at <http://www.ccsso.org>

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The House Fiscal Agency notes that House Bill 4714 would create a minor, indeterminate cost to the Department of Education. The cost would be due to an increased amount of staff time and other resources that would be required to plan the academy, to solicit and process input from superintendents, to develop a curriculum for the required training, and to administer the academy. It is unclear whether there would be a cost to local school districts to send principals to the academy.

The agency points out that House Bill 4714 amends section 1525 to add principal leadership academies to the list of allowable uses of professional development funds. However, the agency notes that there are no state funds for this purpose. [When section 1524 was last amended, \$10 million in state professional development funds was appropriated under section 95 of the School Aid Act, a section that has since been repealed.] Currently, the legislature does not appropriate state funds for professional development; however it does appropriate federal monies under the Improving Teacher Quality grants. These funds could be used to offset the costs of the academies, to the extent that would be allowed by federal law.

### **ARGUMENTS:**

#### **For:**

Under the bill, the Department of Education, in collaboration with statewide associations of school principals, would establish a principal leadership academy, and it would consist of training for

principals conducted by other school principals with a record of demonstrated success at improving student performance. An academy for principals that would be designed and implemented by their most successful peers would enable those who administer school buildings to share their best practices. The bill specifies that among the best practices that would constitute the academy's curriculum, the instructing principals would include information about all aspects of successful school leadership, including at least all of the following: strategies for increasing parental involvement; strategies for engaging community support; creative problem solving; financial decision-making; management rights and techniques; and other strategies for improving school leadership to achieve better student performance. This kind of information will help principals succeed in the more than 200 schools where student achievement is substandard. They will be taught by peers with whom they will share a common language and many similar experiences.

#### ***Against:***

House Bill 4714 is too vague and broadly written to ensure optimal professional development for school principals. Only one of the academy's six curricular goals concerns student learning, and that aspect of school leadership, listed last of all, is described as "other strategies for improving school leadership to achieve better student performance." The bill should be amended to ensure that the teachers at the academy utilize the most up-to-date research-based, and research-related, knowledge and information concerning optimal professional development. Otherwise, the academy is apt to be a waste of time, at least with regard to any effort that would increase student achievement.

A principals' academy should enable school leaders to have on-going professional development about teaching, learning, curriculum development, and assessment so they could be better instructional leaders in their schools. A review of recent research about professional development, completed at the request of legislators in the North Carolina general assembly and undertaken by the director of the North Carolina Education Research Council, indicates that optimal kinds of professional development opportunities must be designed so that the adults in schools have the chance to learn the subject matter that their students are learning, usually by examining student work. Briefly stated, optimal professional development—that which increases student achievement as measured by assessments—maintains a sharp focus on subject matter learning (Kennedy, 1999); links professional development to curricular

materials and assessment (Cohen and Hill, 2001); promotes coherence and active learning (Porter and Garet, 2000); and extends activities to permit more active learning and promote collective participation to enhance coherence (that is, learning that fits into a coherent pattern of standards, goals, and continuing professional development) (Porter and Garet, 2000). Further, there is some evidence that professional development on how to teach diverse learners promotes more student learning (Wenglinsky, 2002). If the Michigan Principals' Academy that is envisioned in House Bill 4714 were to focus on these matters, more learning would happen for all—both for students and the adults who guide them—who do intellectual work in the places we call school.

#### ***Against:***

This bill is an attempt by the legislature to micro-manage schools. If legislators truly cared about high quality school administration, they would reinstitute the administrator certification program. Michigan is one of only a few states that does not require its school administrators to be certified by the state department of education.

#### ***POSITIONS:***

Oakland Schools has indicated support for the bill. (6-17-03)

The Michigan Education Association is neutral on the bill. (6-17-03)

The Michigan Association of School Administrators testified in opposition to the bill. (6-17-03)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.