

# LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

An AERA Special Interest Group



**APRIL 2019**  
**VOLUME: 6**  
**NUMBER: 2**

# LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

An AERA Special Interest Group (SIG #101)

## MISSION

*To examine how leadership exercised by teachers, principals, and superintendents influences instructional capacity resulting in improved student outcomes and how policy guides this collaborative effort.*

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Ph.D., University of Colorado at Boulder, Advisor, Michele Moses

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Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago, Advisor, Shelby Cosner

**2015:** Elizabeth Leisy Stosich, *Learning to Teach to the Common Core State Standards: Examining the Role of Teachers' Collaboration, Principals' Leadership, and Professional Development*  
Ed.D., Harvard University, Advisor, Susan Moore Johnson

**2014:** Doug Wieczorek, *A Repeated, Cross-sectional Analysis of Principals' Professional Development and Instructional Leadership Behaviors in the First Decade of the Educational Accountability Era*  
Ph.D., Syracuse University, Advisor, George Theoharis

**2013:** Emily Palmer, *Talking about Race: Overcoming fear in the process of change*  
Ph.D., University of Minnesota, Advisor, Karen Seashore Louis

**2012:** Angela Urick, *To what extent do typologies of school leaders across the U.S. predict teacher attrition? A multilevel latent class analysis of principals and teachers*  
Ed.D., University of Texas at San Antonio, Advisor, Alex Bowers

**2011:** Kerri J. Tobin, *Identifying Best Practices for Homeless Students*  
Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, Advisor, Joseph Murphy

**2010:** Hans W. Klar, *Laying the groundwork for distributed instructional leadership in urban high schools: How principals foster department chair instructional leadership capacity*  
Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, Advisor, Paul V. Bredeson

**2009:** Jennifer K. Clayton, *Changing diversity in U.S. schools: The impact on elementary student performance and achievement* Ph.D., Old Dominion University, Advisor, William Owings

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

**Dr. Kristin Shawn Huggins**  
**Washington State University**



The annual meeting is quickly approaching, which means we will have the opportunity to celebrate our efforts from this academic year and look toward the next academic year. We hope to see you at the business meeting to connect with other leadership for school improvement scholars and to contribute to our continuing and upcoming initiatives.

Importantly, I want to thank Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Associate Professor, Carol Campbell, and her colleagues in the Ontario Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) who will provide the presentation and panel discussion at our business meeting at the AERA annual meeting entitled, “Developing Teacher Leadership and Learning: Research and Practice from Ontario,” which will include researchers and practitioners from Ontario to discuss what occurred during a six-year research project. This project was focused on transforming mathematics learning in Ontario. The panel promises to be very informative for leadership for school improvement scholars, and I look forward to learning from their work.

Additionally, I want to highlight a couple of accomplishments from initiatives that were started in the 2017-2018 academic year and continued into the 2018-2019 academic year and invite you to consider how you might be involved with these initiatives moving forward. Pam Angelle, our book series editor, had the first volume of the Leadership for School Improvement Special Interest Group (LSI SIG) Information Age Publishing (IAP) book series (See <https://www.infoagepub.com/series/Leadership-for-School-Improvement>) published entitled, *Leadership for school improvement: Reflection and renewal*, which was edited by Cheryl B. Gaines (See <https://www.infoagepub.com/products/Leadership-for-School-Improvement>). I encourage you to learn more about this first volume. Please know we welcome volume proposals for the LSI SIG book series and look forward to the second volume in the series.

Further, we saw the labor of our graduate student representatives come to fruition at the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) Convention with the initial meeting of the mentors and mentees in the Research Development Program that was started with combined graduate student efforts from UCEA graduate student representatives and our LSI SIG graduate student representatives, Alison Wilson and Tamilah Richardson. Through this program, educational leadership and policy graduate student scholars had the opportunity to be connected with mentors to engage in a mutual research project. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of these mentor and mentee relationships.

Finally, on behalf of the SIG membership and leadership, I want to thank Angela Urick. Angela has been a member of the SIG since she was a graduate student and received the dissertation of the year award in 2013. Shortly after becoming an assistant professor, Angela was elected to the executive council. She has served in an official leadership capacity for the last four years. This year, as immediate past chairperson, Angela filled a critical faculty advisor role for the Research Development Program and continued to provide insight to the executive council about historical SIG processes. Many thanks go to Angela for her ongoing service to the SIG.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Toronto,

Kristin

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**LEVERAGING EDUCATION RESEARCH  
IN A "POST-TRUTH" ERA:  
MULTIMODAL NARRATIVES  
TO DEMOCRATIZE EVIDENCE**

**2019 AERA ANNUAL MEETING**  
APRIL 5 - 9, 2019 | TORONTO, CANADA #AERA19

**AERA** FOUNDED 1916  
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TRUST  
INTEGRITY  
METHODOLOGY  
SOCIAL SCIENCE  
RELIABILITY

OPAGANDA  
POST-TRUTH

# 2018 DISSERTATION OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Past Leadership for School Improvement Dissertation of the Year finalists and winners have gone on to have successful careers in academia, in educational leadership positions, and research organizations. This year's finalists engaged in high-quality research that meaningfully contribute to the knowledge base in our field. The researchers show tremendous promise and a dedication to high-quality and rigorous research. The reviewers commented about the high-quality of each finalist's dissertation. We are grateful for the hard work of the reviewers and for the high-quality research produced by the finalists, their advisers, and the other researchers who submitted executive summaries for consideration.

## LSI SIG Dissertation of the Year Reviewers:

Ann Burns	Robert Feirsen
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Margie Johnson	Julia Mahfouz
Kayon Morgan	Rachel Roegman
Meredith Wronowski	

## LSI SIG Dissertation of the Year Evaluation Criteria:

To be considered for the LSI SIG Dissertation of the Year Award, dissertations must:

1. Be submitted by a LSI SIG member, a student of a LSI SIG member, or a graduate student LSI SIG member
2. Align with the LSI SIG mission (see below)
3. Seek to address significant research question(s) situated within the context of school leadership and school improvement
4. Have a clearly articulated and appropriate conceptual framework
5. Use rigorous and appropriate research methods
6. Relate significant findings
7. Discuss the contribution of the findings to research and practice
8. Be well-written

# 2018 DISSERTATION OF THE YEAR FINALISTS



## **Mary A. Bussman, PhD**

(Advisor: Dr. Karen Seashore Louis, University of Minnesota)

Dr. Mary Bussman has been a public school teacher, administrator, and professional developer. She is a researcher and practitioner, seeking to build transformative, equitable learning spaces for youth and adults. Dr. Bussman currently serves as an elementary principal in Roseville Area Schools, and is a consultant for educational equity.

**Title:** Peer Equity Coaching to Increase Cultural Responsiveness in Teaching and Leading

**Abstract:** This qualitative case study investigated the nature of a peer equity coaching program to increase teachers' racial consciousness and cultural responsiveness in one Minnesota school district. In particular, this study examined whether transformative learning occurred leading to deeper cultural responsiveness of adults; what leadership behaviors

contributed to its success; and what organizational learning was influenced by equity coaching. Grounded theory and the constant comparative method were used to analyze data from conversational interviews with participants. Findings include: significant transformative individual and organizational learning occurred; teachers of color felt more support; and culturally responsive administrative leadership substantially increased teacher involvement.



## **Josh Kahn, Ph.D.**

(Advisor Dr. Michael D. Bullis, University of Oregon)

Josh earned his PhD from the Department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership at the University of Oregon. His primary research interests include measurement, assessment, and training of educators' decision-making skills. He currently works at the National Association of Colleges and Employers as the Assistant Director of Research and Policy.

**Title:** The Development and Validation of a Measure of Administrator Decision-Making in Student Discipline

**Abstract:** The art and success of being a competent school administrator relies in large part on the ability to make decisions that address problems effectively, equitably, and efficiently. Despite this skill's importance, there is a dearth of psychometrically-sound measures that focus on school-based administrators (i.e., principals and asst. principals) and the

decisions they make. Filling this gap, this study developed and validated a constructed response measure of Administrator Decision-Making in Student Discipline (ADMin-SD). ADMin-SD was developed and validated iteratively by: assessing its content validity, followed by pilot testing, followed by field testing. The instrument demonstrates adequate reliability and moderate discriminant validity.

# CROSS-NATIONAL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

## Principal Learning Across Two Nations

Rebecca A. Thessin and Maya Bitsadze

**About the Authors:** Rebecca A. Thessin is an Assistant Professor of Educational Administration at The George Washington University. Maya Bitsadze is an Associate Professor at Ilia State University. From 2018-2019, Dr. Bitsadze was at GW on a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Fellowship.

Existing research confirms that school leaders have a measurable effect on school effectiveness and improvement, second only to classroom instruction in influencing what students learn at school (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). While leaders have traditionally been viewed as managers who exercise control over specific aspects of an organization, today, leadership is recognized as “the guidance and direction of instructional improvement” (Elmore, 2000, p. 13). As instructional leaders, principals work closely with classroom teachers to improve classroom instruction and produce improvements in student learning (Elmore, 2004; Knapp et al., 2014). In this context, with an increased focus on improving instruction and student outcomes, the provision of support and ongoing learning opportunities for school leaders has received renewed attention internationally.

Over the past year, we (the authors) have had the opportunity to work together and share insights and experiences in leading principal professional learning and in conducting research on this topic in our nations. Dr. Bitsadze, an Associate Professor at Ilia State University in the country of Georgia, has been a Fulbright Scholar working with Dr. Thessin, an Assistant Professor at The George Washington University. Based on our dialogue over the past months, and in light of the international theme of AERA’s 2019 conference, we would like to share with you a brief overview of what we’ve learned in the areas of policy, common challenges, and recent approaches to facilitating principal learning.

### Policy

In the United States, laws passed at the federal level shape accountability systems, testing requirements and funding allocations, as is demonstrated in the content of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (Klein, 2016). Under ESSA, professional learning for school leaders gained new attention as a potential use for Title II funds (ASCD, 2015). Further, specific guidance by the U.S. Department of Education encourages states to devote their funds to improving school leadership (United States Department of Education, 2016). Despite these changes at the federal level, approaches to providing effective principal professional learning at the local level have remained the same. In some cases, a renewed focus has been placed on preparing aspiring leaders, while local education agencies (LEAs) continue to be responsible for leading learning for principals already in the position. Local education agencies, in many cases, lack the knowledge and capacity to consider how to facilitate principal learning in new ways to positively affect teaching and learning in the classroom.

In Georgia, since 2004, alongside political, economic and social reforms, intensive educational reforms have been taking place as the nation has broken away from the practices of highly centralized educational systems that existed in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Despite frequent changes in the office of the Ministry of Education (now the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport), which has been led by 12 Ministers during the last 15 years, the development strategy decisions by leadership have caused governmental processes to flow from centralization to decentralization, and of

a new national curricula, the upgrade of textbooks, teacher retraining, school governance and principal training, new use of technologies in the educational process and other small or large-scale reforms. The reforms, sometimes contradicting the previous ones, unfortunately have not reached all schools, teachers and students, nor have they yet had a significant effect on the improvement of student learning, as demonstrated by the low performance scores of Georgian students on benchmarking assessments (TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA).

### **Challenges**

We live in an era of changing expectations for the role of the principal. In the U.S., the role and responsibilities of the principal have changed considerably since the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2002 in our expectations of the principal to lead instructional improvement. However, our approaches to principal professional learning have remained largely stagnant. In my former roles as a central office administrator, I spent much of my time providing coaching to school principals on developing, implementing, and sustaining an ongoing process of school improvement in their schools; this professional learning was provided in real-time, was context-based, and focused on the needs of the individual school and the individual principal, in line with current expectations for school leaders. Yet, in each of those districts, as the superintendent has departed and a new leader has taken the reins, the role in which I served has been cut or refocused on new tasks. The fallback form of professional learning for principals, particularly in large school districts, are most often organized presentations for groups of administrators who attend sessions on a monthly, or quarterly, basis, often without a clear link in topic from one session to the next. These opportunities for learning fail to differentiate based on unique school and principal needs, and are rarely followed up on by central office to determine the degree to which what was learned, is being implemented.

Responding to the new requirements to implement student-centered classrooms and focus on students' improved learning, perception of the role of a public school principal also started to change in Georgia in 2013. Traditionally, in Georgia, school principals have been viewed more as school managers than as instructional leaders. They have had little responsibility for the instructional process, which was perceived to be teachers' area of responsibility. For many years, entry into the school principal position in Georgia did not require teaching experience at all, as it is required in many other countries. Not until 2018 was a requirement introduced for administrative applicants to have at least one year of teaching experience in order to become a school principal. In light of these new requirements, school principals in Georgia will need to continue to change the nature of their work to become instructional leaders, allocating more time to visiting classrooms for evaluating, assisting and coaching teachers.

An additional challenge is the lack of clarity on which entity is responsible for supporting principals in becoming effective instructional leaders in Georgia. School principals are monitored and controlled by various agencies such as: school boards, Educational Resource Centers (ERCs), the Internal Audit Department of the Ministry, National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (EQE), and other governmental agencies; it is not clearly defined which governmental agency's responsibility it is to supervise, mentor or coach school principals. Over the last few years, assistance has been provided through trainings, but it is sporadic and irregular, and only principals who express an interest attend trainings offered by organizations, or local NGOs.

### **Recent Approaches to Principal Professional Learning**

To best address principals' learning needs as instructional leaders, across the United States, many central offices in mid-sized and large urban districts around the nation are refocusing the role of principal supervisors. Traditionally, central office supervisors have monitored the work of principals, but not engaged in the work themselves (Honig, 2012). Today, principal supervisors are being asked to engage as coaches, mentors, and partners with principals with the goal of improving student achievement (Browne-Ferrigno and Allen, 2006; Clarke and Wildy, 2011; Thessin, 2019, under review). As I have found in my research, however, this shift is a significant one for principal supervisors, who may have never received effective coaching themselves, to make. Further, the criteria

for hiring principal supervisors often focus on their own successful track records as principals, as opposed to on potential supervisors' abilities to quickly demonstrate credibility and build supportive and collegial relationships with principals so that they might partner in the difficult work of improvement (Thessin, 2019, under review).

In Georgia, in contrast, recent approaches to professional learning for principals have focused on large-scale learning efforts with follow-up learning and continuing discussions conducted within regions. In 2016-18, to promote economic growth and facilitate the reduction of poverty in Georgia, with funding of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the National Center for Teacher Professional Development implemented the nationwide teacher and principal retraining project entitled "Training Educators for Excellence (TEE)." One direction of the project aimed to train public school principals in new approaches required for leading 21st century schools. A comprehensive "Leadership Academy" training course was created that consisted of three series of trainings encompassing 160 contact hours over 3 years. All public school principals of Georgia were invited to participate. The modules broadly aimed to provide Georgian principals with the theory and skills to act as instructional leaders, understand curricula requirements, conduct action research, and base school improvement decisions on data driven analysis. To support implementation in schools following principals' attendance, the trainings were followed up by quarterly meetings for principals within their municipalities. At quarterly meetings, principals shared how they applied their learning and made changes at their schools after the trainings.

Georgia's Leadership Trainings assisted the nation's public school principals in developing a common understanding of the challenges of and strategies for creating 21st century schools, though still it was a top down and "one-size fits all" approach to principal professional development. Such a large-scale training effort in a limited time period could not be tailored to the specific needs of each school. During the implementation period, the need for a more targeted approach became evident. Principals were exposed to many new ideas and approaches at the trainings, but they needed time to digest new information, rethink existing practices in their own contexts and transfer new approaches to their schools. Further steps should be taken to assist principals and motivate them to apply the new knowledge at their schools, make behavioral changes and start acting as instructional leaders.

### **Recommendations for Next Steps**

Evidence from both of our nations demonstrates the need for new and innovative approaches to facilitating principal professional learning. Curry and Killion (2009) describe the micro-macro continuum of professional learning for teachers, but this same continuum of learning can be applied to principal professional learning as well. Principals at all stages of their career, and regardless of school context, would benefit from opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills on key aspects of their work in a macro setting, with the subsequent opportunity to engage in ongoing learning in small networks of principals led by a knowledgeable coach as new learning is put into practice in the school setting.

In the U.S., the individual most likely to assume this new responsibility is the principal supervisor. In Georgia, there is a clear need to increase the responsibility of middle tier agencies, known as Educational Resource Centers (ERCs), that are closest to understanding each municipality's school needs. Building of such a system could be feasible through strengthening the capacities of, and rearranging the functions and duties of, the middle tier agencies and their personnel. But to facilitate learning to prepare principals to be instructional leaders, middle tier agencies, referred to as district central offices in the U.S., must develop clear criteria and expectations for both the principal's role as an instructional leader and for those who facilitate principals' learning as instructional leaders themselves.

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# LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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# GRADUATE STUDENT CORNER - SPOTLIGHT ON THE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## A New LSI SIG Initiative: The Researcher Development Program

**Alison Wilson**  
**University of Oklahoma**

In Spring 2018, LSI SIG Graduate Student Representatives Lee Flood (University of Tennessee) and Alison Wilson (University of Oklahoma) developed a survey for SIG graduate student members to gain insight into how the SIG could more effectively support their academic and professional needs. The survey results revealed that while our graduate student members have varied academic and professional backgrounds, goals, and research interests, there was a common desire for the SIG to provide opportunities for mentoring, writing development and collaboration, and networking with other graduate students and faculty. This information prompted Immediate Past Chairperson Angela Urick



(University of Oklahoma) to reach out to the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and establish a partnership with the UCEA Graduate Student Council (GSC) to develop a mentoring program that is unique from existing mentoring initiatives in the field. Together with UCEA GSC members Bryan VanGronigen (University of Virginia) and Lam Pham (Vanderbilt University), Alison and Angela began initial planning for the Researcher Development Program (RDP) during Summer 2018, and Tamilah Richardson (The George Washington University) joined the team as a SIG Graduate Student Representative in Fall 2018.

A primary goal of the RDP is to help connect graduate students to faculty mentors outside their institution with research interests and expertise aligned with students' academic and professional development needs. The program is unique in its focus on ongoing mentorship and collaboration, which is intended to culminate in the presentation of a research project at the end of the program year. In early Fall 2018, the RDP team released a call for faculty mentors and graduate student mentees. For this inaugural program year, 28 faculty members across the nation generously volunteered their time and expertise to serve as mentors, and 37 graduate students signed up to participate. Because some faculty members indicated that they could mentor multiple graduate students, the RDP team was excited to be able to match all interested mentees with a mentor (read initial reflections from a participating mentor and one of her mentees here). At the 2018 UCEA Annual Convention, UCEA and the LSI SIG co-sponsored an orientation breakfast during which mentors and mentees could meet in person for the first time, begin to develop an RDP network, and move towards project collaboration. Following this orientation meeting, mentors and mentees began project brainstorming and development and provided initial survey feedback to the RDP team about their program experience. Early in Spring 2019, the RDP team met to review this survey feedback and begin planning to incorporate it into next year's RDP program. Moving forward, RDP participants will have another opportunity to meet in person at the end of the LSI SIG Business Meeting at the 2019 AERA Annual Meeting. This will be an important checkpoint for mentors and mentees as they continue to develop their research projects in preparation for presentations at the 2019 UCEA Annual Convention.



The RDP team is very appreciative of the LSI SIG's support for this initiative. The SIG has helped coordinate and provide food for meetings at both UCEA and AERA, and several officers and SIG members have participated as mentors this year. We are enthusiastic about using feedback from this year to continue to improve the RDP program and serve the needs of our LSI SIG graduate students and the field more broadly. If you are interested in participating as a mentor or mentee for the upcoming 2019-2020 program year, a call will be released in early Fall 2019. For questions, feel free to contact SIG Graduate Student Representatives Tamilah Richardson ([twrich@gwmail.gwu.edu](mailto:twrich@gwmail.gwu.edu)) or Alison Wilson ([alisonwilson@ou.edu](mailto:alisonwilson@ou.edu)).

## **Researcher Development Program Reflections**

**Tamilah Richardson  
George Washington University  
Dr. Carol A. Mullen  
Virginia Tech**

I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Carol A. Mullen, a professor of educational leadership at Virginia Tech, about her Researcher Development Program (RDP) experience thus far. Dr. Mullen is an active faculty mentor and committee contributor with AERA, UCEA, SPE (Society of Professors of Education), and ICPEL (International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership). She has written and edited 22 books (with two more underway), including the publication of *Creativity Under Duress in Education? Resistive Theories, Practices, and Actions*; published over 108 refereed journal articles and over 70 refereed book chapters and invited journal articles; delivered over 225 conference presentations; and is a guest editor of 15 special issues of academic journals. This list of accomplishments is certainly not exhaustive, as she is involved in many other professional endeavors and has received a host of honors and recognitions. The first questions that came to my mind, considering Carol's broad and longstanding record of service to the profession, were naturally, "How did you manage to squeeze in yet one more thing to do, and what about the RDP piqued your interest? Here's how Dr. Mullen responded to my inquiry:

When I spotted the announcement for the UCEA Researcher Development Program (RDP), I immediately saw myself participating with a doctoral student whom I would be meeting for the first time. I wasn't aware of squeezing in yet one more thing. When we make the time for something we love—in my case, positive mentoring relationships—it feels like play. Not to oversimplify, it's just that mutual synergies are energizing. These set in motion the desire to work and collaborate on something of joint interest. Rewards associated with a labor of love—such as proposal acceptance to present at a conference and publication in an academic journal—ideally emerge from a compelling project that is meaningful to both parties as well as topical.

Also, as a UCEA Jay D. Scribner Mentoring Awardee, I take the ongoing fulfillment of this honor on behalf of UCEA and the profession very seriously. In my mind, this national mentoring award is about paying it forward so others can benefit by developing a greater capacity to contribute to the world. Mentoring is less about what we have achieved in our lifetime and more about the constant process of becoming in relationship with others who share values, a cause, and/or movement. Mentors imagine the future and make critical decisions in the present by connecting, collaborating, and contributing beyond the immediate needs of the self.

The RDP planning committee has envisioned the same outcomes Dr. Mullen has described. Interestingly, she found the idea of the RDP program to be an "unusual initiative....[yet] a catchy idea." I wondered why she saw it in this way. Dr. Mullen's perception, nevertheless, was made clear as she further explained what about the RDP garnered her attention and her idea of what the essence of the program meant to her. She noted:

A motivation for me to be part of the RDP comes from the opportunity to teach and learn from my doctoral mentees, including those at other institutions.... Involved are yearlong mentorships that pair doctoral students with faculty members they do not know from institutions other than their own. I don't think most doctoral students get the chance to have a positive mentoring relationship with a faculty member outside their university, especially if they do not have an outside member on their doctoral committees. As a doctoral student at OISE/UT in Toronto, Canada, we were required to have an external member on our committees—in fact, my outside faculty member was from Nova Scotia and she travelled to Toronto for my final defense!

Excited and energized by the potential rewards of her engagement in the RDP, she went on to share more about what moved her to participate in the program: that a graduate student focus is reflected in the work of the initiative. This is exactly the intent developers of this program had in mind, and we are thrilled that it was easily recognized. When Dr. Mullen noticed there were UCEA GSC members and other doctoral students serving as programs coordinators, she became even more compelled to get on board. Elaborating further on why she committed to the program, she stated,

I felt confident the program would be well organized, upbeat, student-centered, and successful. As I see it, this program is not delivering a flash-in-the-pan meet up at AERA and UCEA but rather a cultivation of mentoring relationships over time, with productivity and deliverables built in as expectations. This is helpful. I believe—it's motivating as a participant to organize ideas and work in concert with programmatic deadlines and to have the built-in support of a program.

Though this program is in its infancy, we are thankful our programming is structured to provide the built-in support Dr. Mullen finds so helpful. We also recognize that our efforts are well supported by the SIG and, especially, our faculty advisor, Dr. Angela Urick of the University of Oklahoma.

Upon deeper reflection, I have also come to see that having Dr. Mullen as a participating mentor makes her a jewel within our midst. Being that she has expertise in mentoring and learning (among other topics), not only are the mentees and junior faculty members she has graciously agreed to work with extremely lucky to be in collaboration with her, as members of the RDP planning committee, we are also fortunate to be able to learn from her research team's experiences as we navigate this inaugural year and plan for future years of success. Carol shares how she perceives mentorship and its level of importance to emergent scholars next. She also talks about how she has approached the RDP mentorship opportunity and provides details about what has come of her collaboration to-date. We hope that her reflection on her mentoring through the RDP might be inspiring to those considering participating in what we believe is a most edifying experience for potential mentors and mentees.



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### **Carol Speaks About the Importance of Mentorship**

I perceive effective mentorships as not only motivating and inspiring but also life-changing and capacity building. I think the level of importance to emergent scholars is generally high in that effective mentoring matters a lot to them. Those who tap into multiple mentors and different mentoring opportunities are being resourceful and strategic; it's simply not realistic to expect a mentor to meet all of one's needs. Throughout my career I have created mentoring programs, such as at AERA and universities, in part because of the need for mentoring not just one-to-one but as a networked group.

Over time, emergent scholars' draw to effective mentoring has been showing up more and more in programs sponsored by professional associations. Faculty members around the country have been creating mentoring and professional development opportunities for members of

underserved groups, and other eligible doctoral students and early-career faculty, to access targeted mentoring relationships and benefit from them. This professional service addresses a vitally important calling, I think. Increasingly, I've had the pleasure of participating as a faculty mentor in programs organized by others. In recent years, besides the RDP, for example, I have been mentoring in the AERA William L. Boyd National Education Politics Workshop (sponsored by AERA Politics of Education Association & UCEA) and the AERA Division A Early Career Scholar Mentoring Seminar. Mentoring comes to life when you see multiple mentoring mosaics/clusters simultaneously occurring in the same highly charged, industrious space. Networking as mentors and mentees and mentoring through social networking has become big!

*Laying the groundwork and the making of a “mentoring mosaic”*

In Houston at UCEA in November 2018, my assigned mentee Dena Hernandez-Kosche and I met at the inaugural RDP session—the launch of this exciting new formal mentoring program. Dena is a PhD student at Claremont Graduate School in California. She finished her course work over a year ago and is beginning a dissertation. She's a full-time special education teacher in the Montebello Unified School District in Montebello. She teaches what she refers to as the “moderate to severe population.” Dena is the parent of two boys over 18 years old. We have in common a family member who is autistic. Dena submitted her academic goals to the RDP program in advance. She wrote,

I want to strengthen my research skills, develop my future research question, work with an expert on the writing part of the research, and develop research to positively support my work as a future administrator seeking inclusion, social justice, and equity for all students, which includes proper support and training for the adults who work with all students. I hope to leave the program with the research skills to successfully finish my program and have a network of colleagues and friends working together to dismantle the systemic bias inherent in our current education system and transform it so that all students are educated. (Dena, 2018)

After spending time getting to know each other, we explored possible topics for shared research. As the designated mentor, I kept the spotlight on Dena's professional interests and passions. We identified an area of research in keeping with her knowledge, development, and possible contribution to the literature. I said, “I don't have a special education background, but do teach students with expertise in this area.” Then I introduced Dena and Cindy Klimaitis who is my doctoral mentee at Virginia Tech, an elementary school principal with expertise in special education. They hit it off. Cindy stayed the duration because her assigned RDP mentor couldn't make it. I signaled, we needed to be listening deeply to Dena for what might be a social justice topic while she continued sharing school stories, this time with Cindy and myself. A real-world scenario involved a district that had returned students with special needs from an outside agency to teachers' classrooms without notification, appropriate supports, or curriculum.

What about special education, her area of expertise, perplexed her, I wondered. What might be a complex, hidden problem we could study together that is under-researched in the educational leadership literature? We arrived at a social justice idea involving systems (e.g., outside agencies), specifically how these function in relation to special education students and their personal, school, and familial experiences. We brainstormed questions aloud. I recall these as, how do systems interact with students who have special educational needs from their perspective and stakeholders' viewpoints? Are there any differences between what systems are supposed to be doing on behalf of these students and what these systems actually do? Do the goals of such systems represent the people in the system who are students with special needs and their teachers, parents, and other stakeholders/supporters?

In this conversation, we moved onto identifying systems entities worth tracing and relationally. Dena recalls that we specified the following—districts/systems and parent groups, districts and organizations, parent groups and organizations, parent groups and districts, and school-aged students with special

needs at the center of all such intersections. During the event, we also thought about what it might mean to consider current systems of support from a critical lens and imagine rebuilding systems based on values of social justice and equity and stakeholder agency. Who would be involved in such systems and who would these represent?

As Dena and I began discussing possible research methodologies, I mentioned social network analysis as a possibility for mapping/tracing the multiple relationships. She expressed a strong interest in learning about this research method. Just then, my talented colleague Yinying (“Helen”) Wang, an Assistant Professor Georgia State University, showed up just to say hello. Guess what? It just so happens that her research expertise is in social network analysis and text data mining in educational leadership. Helen stayed, brainstorming ways to carry out a systems analysis. She offered ongoing support, so before we knew it the original dyad that became a triad with Cindy morphed into a polyad mentoring relationship with Helen’s buy-in.

After the session, we were joined by two other colleagues—Chris Tienken, Associate Professor at Seton Hall University, with expertise in policy and school systems, and Angelica (“Jellie” Stovall), another doctoral mentee of mine with expertise in diversity and student affairs. Our polyad is now a 6-person mentoring group possessing the various types of expertise our research topic needs in order to become a study. The group’s configuration speaks to Dena’s goals to develop her research question, work with an expert writer, and develop a network.

*Where we are now...*

Our RDP polyad has generated many excellent ideas for a proposal. We are drafting our work for UCEA 2019 New Orleans, which we hope will make a valuable contribution to the RDP and the program opportunity we may have to present at the convention. Dena is our lead presenter who is currently busy utilizing the written ideas of our group to produce a rough proposal for review and response.

I’ve become that much more convinced that collaborative peer mentoring groups are essential for the development, wellbeing, and success of doctoral students, as well as early-career professionals. To make this point, I participate in an informal mentoring group of educational leaders with other Jay D. Scribner awardees, early-career faculty, and doctoral students. We continue to morph while sharing our mentoring and research developments at UCEA conventions. In fact, all of my RDP doctoral mentees—Dena, Cindy, and Jellie—have been folded into the Scribner mentoring group. That group has a strong, national-level record of research and publication, which gives our new members yet another pathway into the profession.

### **Final reflections**

Dr. Mullen’s vision of helping doctoral students find pathways into the profession is a shared hope of the LSI- SIG and is certainly a major premise for the work of the RDP. We thank Dr. Mullen for supporting our initiative and for believing in the promise of this program. We also hope that this reflection has made it clear that the RDP is committed to creating a structured, yet organic mentoring forum for faculty and doctoral students with the expressed desire to prepare emerging scholars for careers as educational researchers and leaders. Please consider answering the call for mentors and mentees this fall. We look forward to growing together with you.

For questions, feel free to contact SIG Graduate Student Representatives Tamilah Richardson (twrich@gwmail.gwu.edu) or Alison Wilson (alisonwilson@ou.edu).

# AERA BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA, 2019

**Leadership for School Improvement SIG Business Meeting**  
**AERA 2019, Toronto, ON**  
**Sunday, April 7, 7:05 PM to 8:45 PM**  
**Metro Toronto Convention Centre**  
**200 Level, Room 206D**

**7:10: Welcome (Kristin Shawn Huggins)**

**7:15:** Invited Presentation: “Developing Teacher Leadership and Learning: Research and Practice from Ontario” Carol Campbell (Facilitator/Researcher, University of Toronto) along with Rosemary Leclair (Superintendent, Durham Catholic District School Board), Suzanne Laforet (Principal, Durham Catholic District School Board), Leanne Oliver (Curriculum Chair of Mathematics, Durham Catholic District School Board), Patricia Maeker (Mathematics Teacher, Durham Catholic District School Board), Lindy Amato (Ontario Teachers’ Federation), Anna Yashkin (TLLP Research Team Co-Principal Investigator)

**8:00: Reports and Announcements**

- AERA Program Report (Rebecca Thessin)
- Membership and Financial Reports (David DeMatthews)
- Website Report (DeMarcus Jenkins)
- Newsletter Report (Doug M. Wieczorek)
- LSI SIG-IAP Book Series (Pam Angelle)
- Graduate Student Connections (Alison Wilson, Tamilah Richardson)

**8:10: Dissertation of the Year Award (Elizabeth Leisy Stosich)**

**Finalists:**

- Mary Bussman, University of Minnesota (Advisor: Karen Seashore Louis)
- Joshua Kahn, University of Oregon (Advisor: Mike Bullis)

**Reviewers:**

Ann Burns, Robert Feirsen, Tim Ford, Randy Hetherington, Margie Johnson, Julia Mahfouz, Kayon Morgan, Rachel Roegman, Meredith Wronowski

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# AERA BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA, 2019

**8:25: Transition to new LSI SIG Executive Committee Officers (Kristin Shawn Huggins)**

2018-19 LSI SIG Executive Committee	2019-20 LSI SIG Executive Committee
<b>Chairperson:</b> Kristin Shawn Huggins, Washington State University	<b>Chairperson:</b> Rebecca Thessin, The George Washington University
<b>Immediate Past Chairperson:</b> Angela Urick, University of Oklahoma	<b>Immediate Past Chairperson:</b> Kristin Shawn Huggins, Washington State University
<b>Program Chairperson:</b> Rebecca Thessin, The George Washington University	<b>Program Chairperson:</b> David DeMatthews, University of Texas at Austin
<b>Secretary/Treasurer:</b> David DeMatthews, University of Texas at Austin	<b>Secretary/Treasurer:</b> Elizabeth Leisy Stosich, Fordham University
<b>Dissertation Award Committee Chairperson:</b> Elizabeth Leisy Stosich, Fordham University	<b>Dissertation Award Committee Chairperson:</b> TBA

**Book Series Editor:** Pam Angelle, University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
**Newsletter Editor & Newsletter Co-Editor & Graduate Student Representative:** Doug M. Wieczorek, Brandon Clark, Iowa State University  
**Graduate Student Representatives:** Alison Wilson, University of Oklahoma and Tamilah Richardson, The George Washington University

**8:30: Social Time**  
**8:45: LSI SIG/UCEA Research Development Program**

# LEADERSHIP COACHING FOR PRINCIPALS

## Still in the Game: How Coaching Keeps Leaders in Schools and Making Progress

**Kathleen Drucker, Jill Grossman and Nikki Nagler**  
NYC Leadership Academy

The role of school leader has become more complex in recent years (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Expected to be both building managers and instructional leaders, principals may suffer from stress and isolation, and often are not given ongoing support. These and other conditions have led to high principal turnover. Research shows that the average length of a principal's tenure at a school is three to four years. In low-performing and high-poverty schools, the average tenure is even shorter (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). When a principal leaves a school, student achievement declines, teacher turnover rises, and effective programs and practices can falter (Béteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2012; Strickland-Cohen, McIntosh, & Horner, 2014).

One way to combat frequent turnover in school leadership is by providing leadership coaching to principals (Warren & Kelsen, 2013; Reiss, 2007). Leadership coaching, an ongoing relationship between a coach and a leader that focuses on the leader taking action toward the realization of her vision, goals, and desires, has been associated with improved student performance and a reduction in principal turnover (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005; Reiss, 2007; Aguilar, Goldwasser, & Tank-Cresseto, 2011).

Because most research on leadership coaching focuses on short-term early-career support, this study focused on the impact of ongoing leadership support on leaders and their schools. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a sample of principals engaged in leadership coaching for at least five years, and their coaches, we sought to address the following questions:

- 1) What impact, if any, does long-term leadership coaching have on principals' leadership practices?
- 2) How does leadership coaching evolve over the course of the coaching relationship?

Given what is known about effective coaching, we approached this research with the lens of double loop learning, a theory originally developed by Argyris (1976). Argyris posits that there are two kinds of organizational learning: single loop and double loop. Single loop learning allows a leader to detect errors and problem solve using existing processes, without questioning or reflecting on how they go about their work. However, in double loop learning, the leader interrogates his theory-in-practice and questions the beliefs and assumptions underlying his actions. The concept of double loop learning has been used by others to understand coaching for school leaders (Houchens, Hurt, Stobaugh, & Keedy, 2012).

A non-profit-based leadership coaching program supporting principals in a large, urban school district served as the setting for our study. A central feature of this coaching program is that the coaches were not involved in the formal evaluation of their coachee and did not share details of an individual coaching relationship with district leadership. This program has worked with the district for more than a decade and has supported nearly 2,000 novice and experienced principals in the system, 180 of whom

had engaged in five or more years of leadership coaching for at least 30 hours per year. We narrowed this group down to the 63 principals who were still being coached at the time of data collection. Within this smaller group, a purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was employed to identify a subset of principals that varied by race, gender, school level, and coach. In total, 12 principals who had received an average of 7.4 years of coaching participated in the study.

Our analysis sought to identify ways that principal practice had shifted as a result of coaching, what characteristics of the coaching relationship supported these shifts, and how the coaching had evolved over time. We found that leadership coaching enabled the principals in our study to improve their leadership practice and skills, particularly in the areas of staff supervision, leadership distribution, communication, and resilience, suggesting that these are aspects of the principal's role that serve as ongoing challenges. Interestingly, three of these areas require the ability to work closely with stakeholders, situations that are continuously evolving and require leaders to adapt their approach, to engage in double loop learning. The principals valued having the coach as a thought partner to help them navigate these challenges, and their practices shifted as a result. The leaders in our study also attributed to coaching their ability to stay in their jobs longer — their tenure at their school was more than double the national average — and to avoid complacency on the job. The longer a principal and coach worked together, the more they worked on adaptive rather than technical challenges.

While the principals in our study saw many benefits from their coaching support, it was not clear from our data the extent to which principals or coaches were formally assessing the ongoing utility of the coaching support. One challenge for ongoing coaching seems to be figuring out when and how an engagement should end, and to balance ongoing support with a leader's independence.

The findings from our study suggest that the ongoing learning afforded from long-term coaching supports school leaders in improving their leadership practices and enables them to stay in their jobs longer, factors that prior research has found lead to improved student learning in schools (Louis, et al., 2010). States and districts should consider this impact as they think about their structures for developing and supporting school leaders.

**Link to full article:** <https://www.nycleadershipacademy.org/resources/still-in-the-game-how-coaching-keeps-leaders-in-schools-and-making-progress/>

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# 2020 AERA Annual Meeting

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# OPEN POSITIONS IN LEADERSHIP

## Call for Leadership for School Improvement (LSI) Special Interest Group (SIG) 2019-2021 Graduate Student Representative

The LSI SIG invites applications for a two-year appointment to serve as Graduate Student Representative. The purpose of the LSI SIG of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) is to examine how leadership of teachers, principals, and superintendents influences instructional capacity resulting in improved student outcomes and how policy guides this collaborative effort. In addition, the LSI SIG encourages discussion and development of the philosophical, theoretical, and empirical tenets guiding school and system renewal.

The Graduate Student Representative position offers the opportunity to work closely with SIG faculty and graduate student members, as well as a broader network of Researcher Development Program (RDP) faculty mentors and graduate student mentees. The RDP is a mentoring initiative co-sponsored by the LSI SIG and UCEA Graduate Student Council (GSC). It matches faculty mentors and graduate students with similar research interests to facilitate the development of collaborative research projects and networks of support. The program was designed in response to graduate student members seeking networking and collaborative writing opportunities. It is unique in its focus on establishing ongoing mentor-mentee relationships through development of a research product over the course of the program year.

### To be considered for the Graduate Student Representative position, applicants must:

- Be a member of the LSI SIG
- Be enrolled as a part- or full-time graduate student in an educational administration/leadership doctoral program through May 2021
- Have leadership and research experience
- Be committed to providing networking and development opportunities for graduate students
- Plan to attend the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) Annual Convention and American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting throughout the appointment term

### Primary responsibilities include:

- working closely with the 2018-2020 Graduate Student Representative and RDP faculty advisor
- managing the LSI SIG graduate student listserv
- attending virtual monthly executive committee meetings
- developing and promoting SIG graduate student engagement initiatives
- selecting a 2020-2022 Graduate Student Representative
- coordinating the RDP in partnership with the UCEA GSCF
  - facilitating ongoing program planning and improvement
  - developing and distributing program documents
  - recruiting and communicating with program participants
  - planning and facilitating program meetings at the UCEA Annual Convention and AERA Annual Meeting

Applicants should be committed to spending an average of 10-15 hours per month on Graduate Student Representative responsibilities. The term will begin effective June 1, 2019.

### To Apply:

To apply for the LSI SIG Graduate Student Representative position, email the following application materials to Alison Wilson at [alisonwilson@ou.edu](mailto:alisonwilson@ou.edu) by **Friday, May 3 at 5:00pm CST**:

- An updated curriculum vitae
- A statement of interest outlining your involvement with the SIG, as well as leadership and research experience that has prepared you for this position (750-word maximum)

Applicants will be notified of their status by Friday, May 31.

Contact Graduate Student Representatives Alison Wilson ([alisonwilson@ou.edu](mailto:alisonwilson@ou.edu)) or Tamilah Richardson ([twrich@gwu.edu](mailto:twrich@gwu.edu)) with questions.

# PUBLICATIONS FROM MEMBERS

\*Brazer, S.D., Bauer, S.C., & Johnson, Jr., B.L. (2019). *Leading Schools to Learn, Grow, and Thrive: Using Theory to Strengthen Practice*. New York: Routledge.

Huguet, A., Wong, L., Harrison, C. W., Coburn, C. E., & Spillane, J. P. (2018). Research use in schools: A framework for understanding research use in school-level decision making. In M. Connolly, D. H. Eddy-Spicer, C. James, & S. D. Kruse (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of School Organization* (pp. 618-631). London: SAGE Publications.

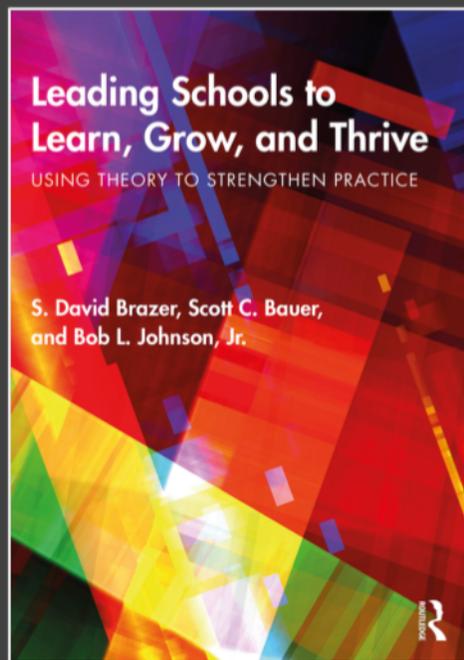
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\*See next page for additional information and discount -

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Call for manuscripts, conference announcements, reading lists, publications, awards, or promotions you would like to have considered for publication in the LSI Newsletter to:

**Brandon Clark, Managing Editor LSI Newsletter**  
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### Leadership for School Improvement: Reflection and Renewal

Edited By: **Cherie B. Gaines**

A volume in **Leadership for School Improvement**  
Series Editor: *Pamela S. Angelle, The University of Tennessee*

As the inaugural issue in the *Leadership for School Improvement (LSI) Special Interest Group (SIG) Book Series*, this volume serves as a reflection on the foundations of the field of school improvement. Contents include connections between school improvement and the agency of principals, districts, universities, and policy. This volume will be placed in the school improvement literature with examinations of evolution, trends, policies, and future foci in the field of school improvement. This book is rich in research and literature about school improvement, school effectiveness, and school reform policy and implementation and thus holds significance for educational practitioners, scholars, and policy makers at all levels.

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