Aspiring to Excellence

Findings and Recommendations from Years 1-2 of Designing and Piloting Rural School Leader Development Efforts

Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education (AsPIRE)

A rural school leadership initiative of the University of Tennessee Knoxville

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) has been on a 2-year journey to develop learning opportunities by, for and with rural school leaders

- The Center for Educational Leadership began in 2010 as a partnership between the University of Tennessee and local school districts to grow the **next generation of outstanding school leaders in Tennessee.**

- Our flagship Leadership Academy has been cited as a **national model for principal preparation** in an intensive residency program.

- The Center also is a member and grantee of the **Tennessee Transformational Leadership Alliance**, designed to spread and sustain innovative ways to prepare school leaders.

- With external support, the Center launched the AsPIRE initiative (Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education) to engage **exemplary rural school-leaders in designing and participating in professional growth opportunities** to meet the needs of East Tennessee.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Since 2017, CEL has convened rural principals to learn from each other and advance opportunities for future leaders

The Charge

- Rural school leaders in Tennessee face **serious challenges** that include isolation, high turnover and a lack of instructional leadership skills.
- Following recommendations from an expert design team of exemplary rural school leaders in summer 2017, CEL created **three professional learning opportunities** for rural school leaders in East Tennessee: a "Mastermind" Group, a Cohort Experience and a Learning Network.

The Process

- Each professional learning opportunity met during 2018 and 2019 and featured varying levels of **in-person/virtual coaching, mentoring and problem-solving**.
- The Learning Network's meetings alternated between professional growth discussions featuring readings and case studies, and **design sessions** to provide feedback on the residency and the other two learning opportunities.

The Result

- The AsPIRE efforts won the **National Rural Education Association's 2018 Exemplary Practices Award.**
- 91% of AsPIRE participants said their experience was "greatly" valuable. In interviews and surveys, participants suggested **feedback on improvements and refinements** to the learning opportunities.
- The Learning Network helped design a **rural school-leader residency program** to improve the pipeline of rural principals through coursework, school placements, mentoring and coaching.

The purpose of this presentation is to share learnings from Years 1-2 of the professional learning opportunities and propose design elements for a rural residency

DELIVERY MODEL AND INTENSITY		DEFINITION	DETAILS	TIMELINE
Less intense	MASTERMIND GROUP	A facilitated group of school leaders who convene regularly virtually (and occasionally in person) to discuss issues or readings on rural education as well as strategies and solutions around common "problems of practice."	• 24 participants in two groups (one spanning K-12, one K-5) • Monthly virtual meetings centered on structured "problems of practice"	Launched July 2018 Funding available for 2019-2020
	LEARNING NETWORK	A facilitated group of school leaders who convene regularly for a set period of time on a specific topic(s) that are taught more informally through readings, discussion, walkthroughs or speakers.	• 23 participants • Two-hour meetings every six weeks that alternated between professional learning and guiding development of the learning opptys.	Launched February 2018 Funding available for 2019-2020
More intense	COHORT EXPERIENCE	A group of school leaders selected for a formal learning experience during which they learn about a specific topic(s) in rural school leadership together and from each other, with an expectation of an ongoing relationship.	• 17 participants • Monthly 3-hour meetings with scope/sequence devoted to issues in rural education (instruction, educator retention/development, rural social dynamics)	Launched October 2018 Funding available for 2019-2020
	RESIDENCY (proposed)	A structured experience in which aspiring rural school leaders learn coursework, are placed full-time with a successful school leader for a set period of time, complete a work product and receive a credential.	• Designed for up to 10 participants initially • Residents would be placed in a school with a mentor principal and complete coursework	Funding sought for planning year in 2019-2020 and pilot in 2020-2021

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Table of Contents

The Center's design work is grounded in one fact: Exemplary leadership is essential to a high-achieving, caring, well-run school

**Great schools don't exist apart from great leaders.**

Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school.

There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader.

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Unfortunately, rural schools – particularly in East Tennessee – struggle to find effective leaders

Of the 174 public school principals who lead rural schools in the East and First CORE Regions:
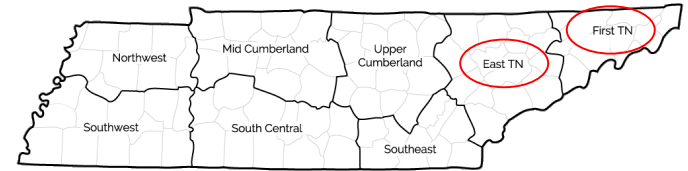
1. They stay in their jobs longer	▪ Average tenure as principal: 5.7 years (state average for all principals: about 5 years) ▪ Average service in their school: 4.5 years (just above state average)
2. They enter the principalship with substantially less experience	▪ Average administrative experience: 1.9 years (2.7 years for urban and suburban school leaders) ▪ Never been an assistant principal: 46 percent (31 percent for urban and suburban school leaders)
3. Their effectiveness ratings lag their peers	▪ Score slightly below the state average on the TEAM Evaluation System
4. Their turnover rate is higher	▪ Annual turnover rate: 22 percent (19 percent for all rural principals; 15 percent for ALL principals in the state)
5. They have fewer opportunities to improve their leadership skills	▪ 25 percent return to the classroom, substantially higher than their peers

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

In addition, rural students in Tennessee lag behind their urban and suburban counterparts in 3-8 math and reading achievement

Figure 1: Grade 3-8 Students Proficient and Advanced on TCAP – Rural vs. Urban

Grades 3-8 Math: Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced

Year	RURAL	URBAN
2013	42	48
2014	46	50
2015	50	55

Grades 3-8 Reading: Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced

Year	RURAL	URBAN
2013	40	46
2014	43	46
2015	41	47

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education
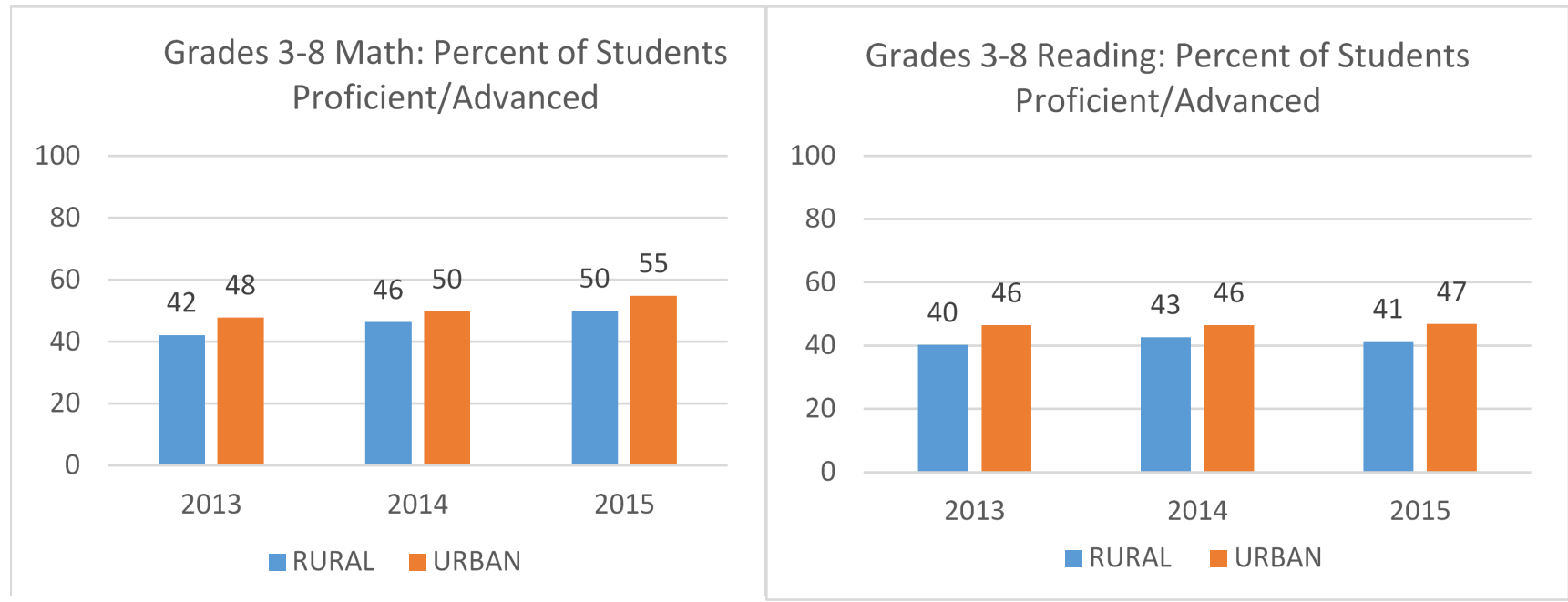
Rural students in Tennessee have caught up to their urban and suburban peers in Algebra I proficiency, but trail them in Algebra II

Figure 2: Students Proficient and Advanced on TCAP EOCs – Rural vs. Urban

Grades 9-12: Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced on Algebra I

Year	RURAL	URBAN
2013	52	57
2014	60	60
2015	64	61

Grades 9-12: Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced on Algebra II

Year	RURAL	URBAN
2013	36	43
2014	45	49
2015	53	56

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education
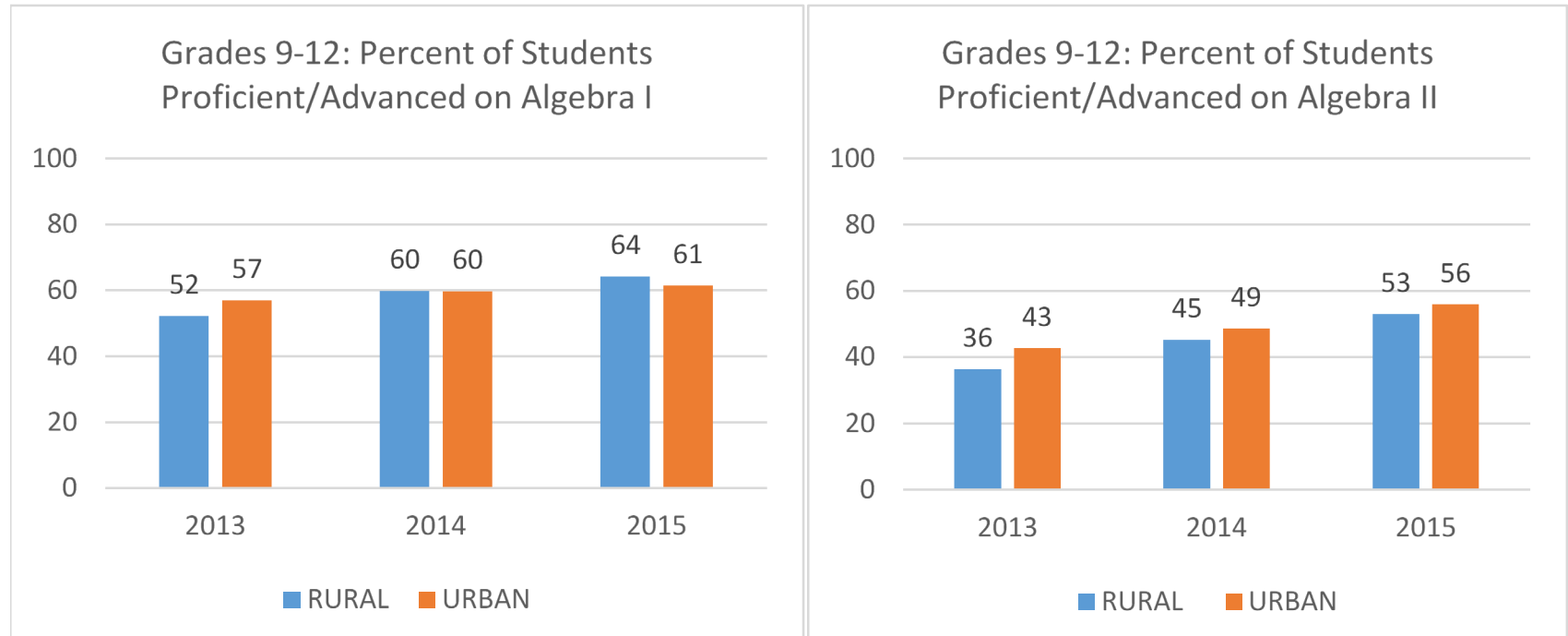
Rural students in Tennessee graduated in 2016 at higher rates than urban and suburban peers, but fewer are college-ready

Figure 3: Student Graduation Rate and ACT score – Rural vs. Urban

Percent of students Graduating (2016): RURAL 91%, URBAN 89%

Percent of students scoring 21+ on ACT (2016): RURAL 37%, URBAN 49%
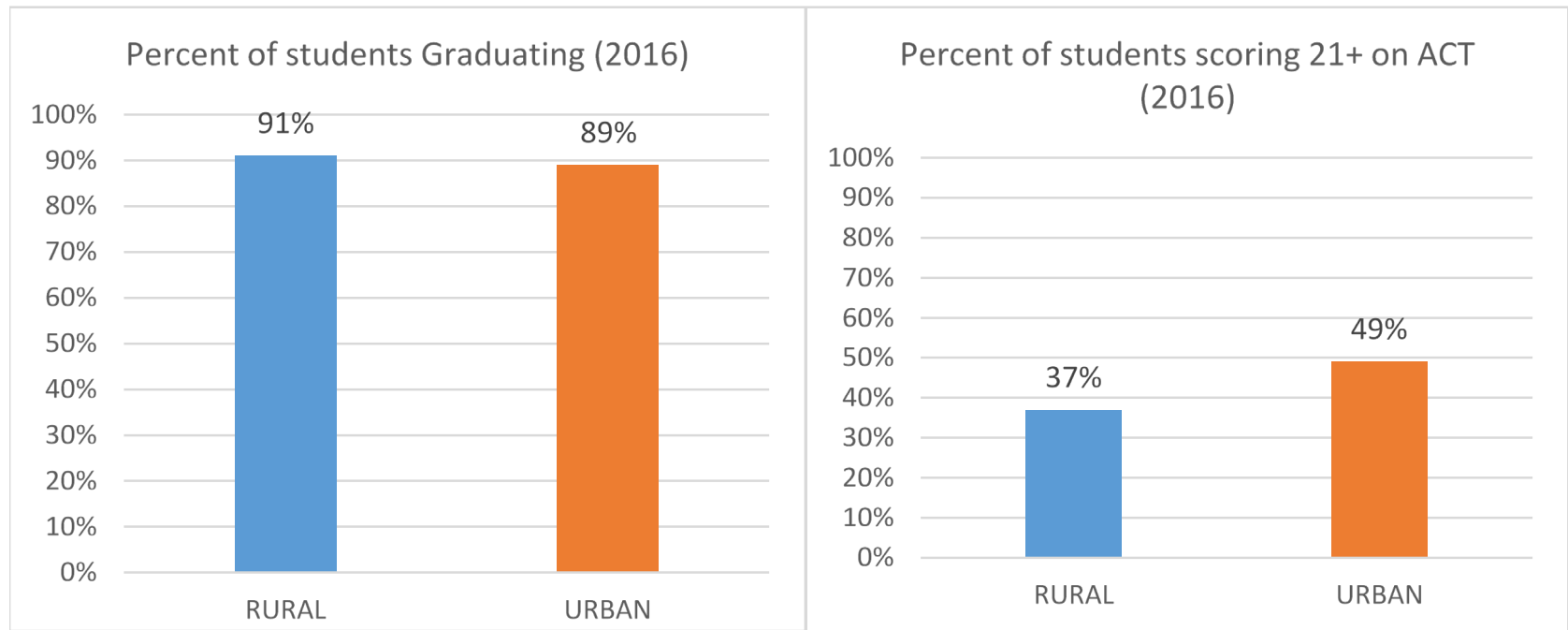
Research suggests that rural school leaders can be overwhelmed, isolated and in need of support

Diverse array of responsibilities

- Rural principals can play **the role of change agent, classroom teacher, instructional specialist, assessment leader, community leader and parent liaison** on any given day.

- These challenges, combined with **lower rates of quality leadership preparation and significantly increased job complexity**, underscore the need to support rural principals' leadership skills.

Lack of mentoring support

- Research points to an **acute lack of on-the-job support** for principals in smaller and rural districts.

- Only 13 percent of new principals in one predominantly rural state (Wyoming) received formalized mentoring from their districts – a striking fact since **mentoring is required for new principals** among more than half of states.

Scarcity of social and professional networks

- **Weak or limited professional learning opportunities and peer networks** – often a result of distance between districts – can create social isolation and reduce rural principal effectiveness.

- Other factors deter rural principals from being able to network professionally both inside and outside their immediate school community, including **lack of diverse views of staff members, the oppressiveness of an extreme workload and the challenge and expense related to travel.**

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Table of Contents

CEL has been on a 2-year journey of developing learning opportunities by, for and with rural school leaders

| *Funded by:* The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | *Commissioned by:* Tennessee SCORE | **AsPIRE network of rural school leaders** | *Facilitated by:* Center for Educational Leadership | *Supported by:* Education First |

Year 1: Design Thinking

An Expert Design Team of experienced and successful principals, former principals and other educators with expertise in rural school leadership met from May 2017 – September 2017.

They examined data/research on rural school leadership and discussed barriers to and attributes of effective rural school leadership based on their experiences. Their discussion informed a definition of an effective rural school leader (next slide).

Using a "Design Thinking" framework, the team developed hypotheses about the best responses that would reduce barriers and increase attributes of effective rural school leadership.

The team recommended four initiatives of varying intensity, including specific design elements tailored to the needs of rural school leaders in Tennessee.

Year 2: Piloting

CEL secured funding to launch three professional learning opportunities for rural school leaders and design a fourth:
- February 2018: Learning Network launched (asked to design the residency, engage in professional learning, and serve as an advisory committee for AsPIRE)
- July 2018: Mastermind Group launched
- October 2018: Cohort Network launched

The Mastermind Group and Cohort Experience featured structured, facilitated professional learning experiences and discussions for school leaders across the region.

The Learning Network offered feedback on critical design elements of the residency, such as quality of assignments, structure and curriculum.

As a result, the Center has the outline of a rural school-leader residency and seeks additional support to launch a pilot effort for East Tennessee.

Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

15

The Expert Design Team's 2017 definition of effective rural school leaders (known as the "5 Pillars") drove the creation of the learning opportunities

An effective rural school leader is one who:

1. Is an instructional leader

- Knows instruction (e.g., methods, data, assessment practices)
- Honors and enables best practices of teaching students in poverty
- Cares for children
- Is a systems thinker
- Builds child-centered goals
- Focuses on each child's individual success both through building relationships and analyzing results

2. Creates a personal and professional community

- Listens and leads from the front
- Builds a culture of collaboration and efficacy (no excuses)
- Demonstrates immense will to succeed
- Cares about well-being of staff, and of self
- Combats isolation

3. Builds and harnesses social and political capital

- Immerses himself/herself in and understands his/her community's context
- Enhances student learning through partnerships with industry and higher education
- Engages with and advocates for parents, families and community members
- "Keeps the dream" for students and "promotes the dream" with families
- Speaks truth to power

4. Shares and distributes leadership

- Empowers others to solve problems individually and collectively
- Delegates work
- Solicits feedback
- Builds a leadership team that is open to new ideas
- Asks for support when needed
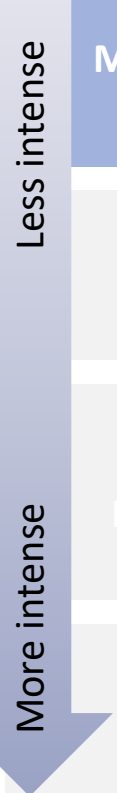
5. Sustains success

- Ensures success for kids at any and all costs
- Creates or fosters talent pipelines
- Encourages career advancement
- Effectively utilizes resources
- Builds a "bench"

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Vision: If we design an initiative that addresses the root causes of leadership challenges in rural areas, we can encourage and spread effective leadership in rural schools

Phase	Delivery Models	Outcomes for Rural School Leaders	Impact
Design **Pilot** **Refinement**	"Mastermind" groups	Exhibits greater capacity for instructional leadership	**Improved student learning**
	Learning networks	Creates a vibrant professional community that reduces isolation	**Decreased principal turnover**
	Cohort experiences	Builds and harnesses social and political capital in service of students and families	
	Residency programs		**Well-supported school leaders**
	Mentoring	Shares and distributes leadership to empower staff	
	Coaching	Sustains success by encouraging career advancement and building a "bench"	**Stronger rural schools and communities**

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

CEL designed the learning opportunities to meet rural school leaders' varying needs: Mastermind Groups

DELIVERY MODEL AND INTENSITY	DEFINITION	DETAILS	TIMELINE
MASTERMIND GROUP	▪ A facilitated group of school leaders who convene monthly for one hour virtually to explore rural education issues through structured discussions of "problems of practice" ▪ Aimed for "high impact, low maintenance" ▪ Problems of practice topics included chronic absenteeism, building positive school climate and upholding principles of equity in the rural setting	▪ 24 participants in two groups (one spanning K-12, one K-5) ▪ Nominated by directors of schools ▪ Groups created a problem of practice protocol to structure their work ▪ Facilitated by highly effective recently retired principal	▪ Launched July 2018 ▪ Funding available for 2019-2020
LEARNING NETWORK			
COHORT EXPERIENCE			
RESIDENCY			

Less intense → More intense

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

CEL designed the learning opportunities to meet rural school leaders' varying needs: Learning Network

DELIVERY MODEL AND INTENSITY	DEFINITION	DETAILS	TIMELINE
Less intense → More intense MASTERMIND GROUP **LEARNING NETWORK** COHORT EXPERIENCE RESIDENCY	▪ A facilitated group of school leaders who convene regularly for a set period of time on specific topics that are taught more informally through readings, activities, discussion, walkthroughs or speakers ▪ Functioned as a steering committee for the rest of the AsPIRE learning opportunities ▪ Facilitated discussions included design of the residency program, vision-setting, culture, school improvement and equity	▪ 23 participants ▪ Nominated by directors of schools; highly selective (based on their schools' successful outcomes) ▪ Two-hour meetings every six weeks that alternated between professional learning and guiding development of the other AsPIRE learning opportunities	▪ Launched February 2018 ▪ Funding available for 2019-2020

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

CEL designed the learning opportunities to meet rural school leaders' varying needs: Cohort Experience

DELIVERY MODEL AND INTENSITY	DEFINITION	DETAILS	TIMELINE
Less intense → More intense MASTERMIND GROUP / LEARNING NETWORK / **COHORT EXPERIENCE** / RESIDENCY	▪ A group of school leaders selected for an intensive learning experience (year-long, multi-module) during which they learn about specific topics in rural school leadership together and from each other, with an expectation of an ongoing relationship ▪ Facilitated modules included equity in the rural context, having difficult conversations, unique rural political challenges, building school culture, and school improvement planning	▪ 17 participants ▪ Monthly 3-hour in-person meetings with scope/sequence devoted to issues in rural education (instruction, educator retention & development, rural social and political dynamics, etc.)	▪ Launched October 2018 ▪ Funding available for 2019-2020

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

CEL designed the learning opportunities to meet rural school leaders' varying needs: Residency

DELIVERY MODEL AND INTENSITY	DEFINITION	DETAILS	TIMELINE
Less intense ↓ **More intense** MASTERMIND GROUP LEARNING NETWORK COHORT EXPERIENCE **RESIDENCY (proposed)**	▪ A structured experience in which aspiring rural school leaders do coursework, are placed full-time with a successful school leader for a set period of time, complete a work product and receive a credential. ▪ Designed based on research findings, interviews with other residencies and the Learning Network's guidance	▪ Designed for about 10 participants initially ▪ Residents would be full-time employees in a school with a mentor principal (could be current school or new school) and complete coursework and projects of varying scope (e.g., one full-year projects, several smaller ones)	▪ Funding sought for planning year in 2019-2020 and pilot in 2020-2021

See details on slides 29-53

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

For the past year, we've surveyed AsPIRE participants on their perceptions of the learning opportunities

Ongoing individual check-ins

- We spoke with the same seven principals – 3 Learning Network participants and 4 Mastermind Group principals – three times during the 2018-19 school year to track their perceptions over time.

- We spoke with them in-person twice (September 2018 and March 2019) and by telephone/video in May 2019.

Standalone 1:1 interviews

- A University of Tennessee graduate assistant interviewed five Cohort Experience principals in April 2019.

Survey

- The Center administered a survey to all 65 participants across the three professional learning opportunities in May 2019.

- The data in this presentation were as of May 28 and reflect a 70% response rate (46 out of 65).

- Those who responded were:
  - 45% Mastermind Group
  - 34% Cohort Experience
  - 21% Learning Network

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

The AsPIRE experience met participants' expectations overall, with useful content, fairly convenient meetings and meaningful engagement

91%

of AsPIRE participants said their experience

has been "greatly" valuable

Participants particularly liked content, structure and opportunity to collaborate with peers
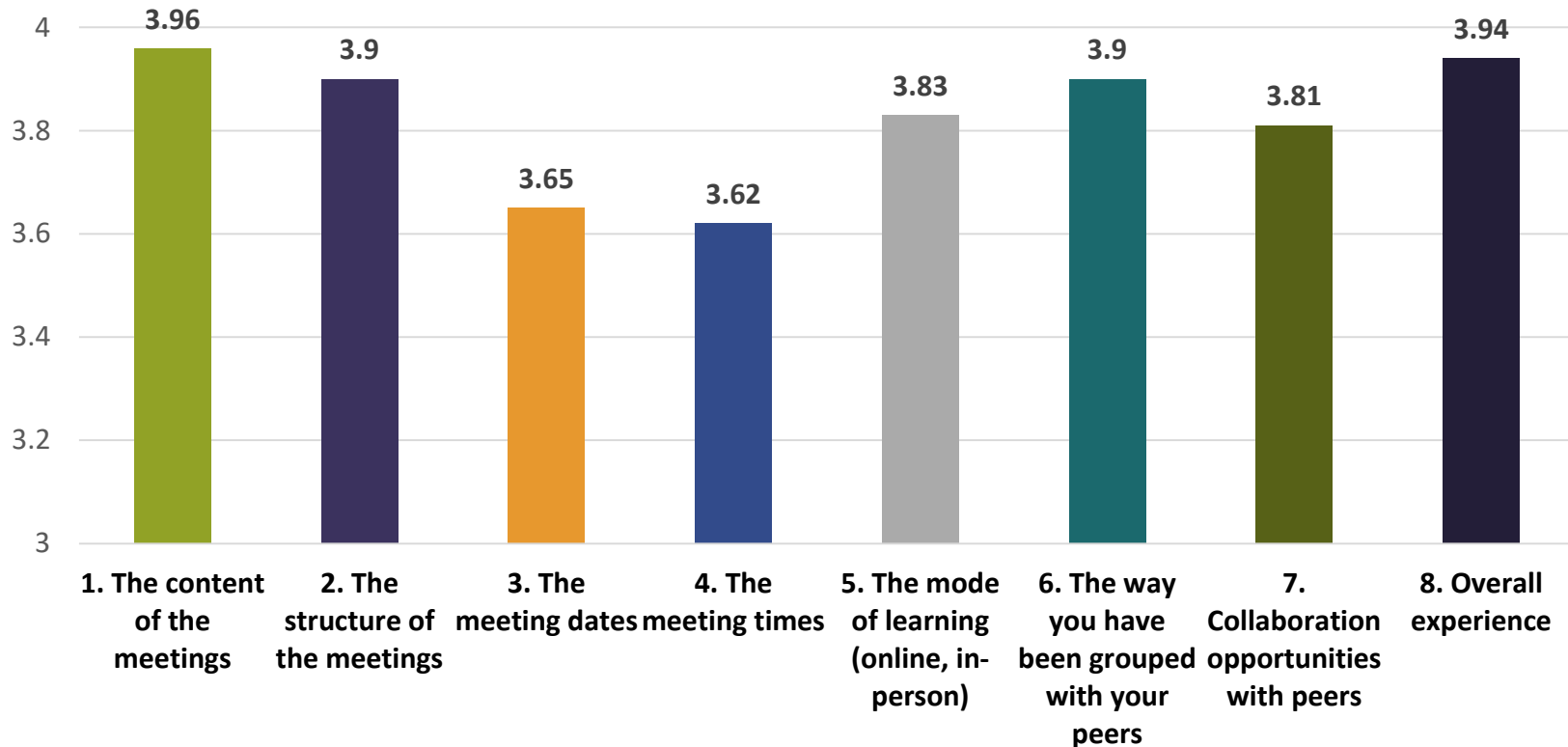
KEY:
1 = Not at all
2 = A little
3 = Somewhat
4 = Greatly

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

School leaders' feedback affirms the value of the network and the importance of scheduling time for meetings

The content during sessions was useful, interesting and relevant to your professional practice

> Having a team effort to share things with has been crucial. I am a "one-man show" in my building as far as administration is concerned. Seeing how others do it helps me to generate ideas that will work for the kids in my building.

> … affirms the important concept of building relationships and identifying the vision/purpose of WHY we do what we do.

> I have learned to more boldly engage my colleagues and community with bold optimism.

Meetings, both face to face and virtual, are very valuable but sometimes hard to keep or too far away

> I know it would have been great if I had the chance to attend all meetings.

> I love attending the meetings, so I wish it would be possible to schedule them more often.

> It was very hard for me to make meetings that were very far away. A more central meeting location would have helped me make more meetings.

Connecting with peers in meaningful ways, especially time to share and reflect, is impactful and actionable

> The participants were extremely helpful and shared their information and skills they use that are successful.

> Taking time to reflect is always valuable; it catalyzes the next action steps.

> Being able to hear other principals' point of views and advice has been wonderful. Just hearing someone else's point of view and reason why they did what they did or reacted the way they reacted is very eye-opening.

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

And participants found AsPIRE to be a valuable, unique experience that they would recommend to their peers

I thoroughly enjoyed my entire experience with the group.

This has been an amazing experience. Thank you for letting me be a part of it!

I have really enjoyed it and felt that this time was truly worthwhile and beneficial.

I sincerely hope this project continues. Administrators need more opportunities for these kinds of professional learning communities.

While AsPIRE is valuable, there is a need to better ensure the learning is quickly impacting professional practice

Question: To what extent has your participation in the AsPIRE initiative changed your professional practice?

Chart – "To what extent has your participation in the AsPIRE initiative changed your professional practice?":
- Not at all: 0.00%
- A little: 7.00%
- Somewhat: 58.00%
- Greatly: 36.00%
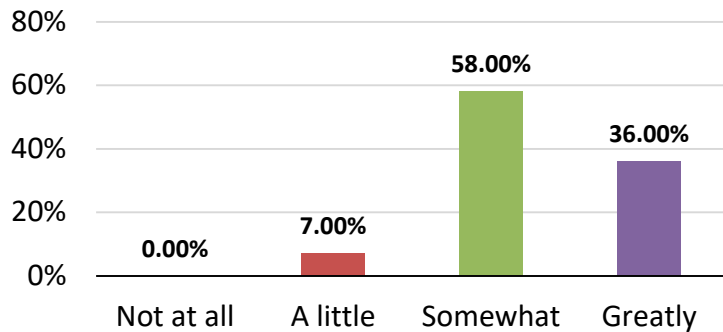
> It enhanced my professional practice and brought about positive change.

> While I have not yet implemented as many changes as I desire, this collaboration has changed my mindset.

> I've done a lot of thinking, and next year will start to implement some of these ideas.

Question: To what extent have you learned new skills from your participation in the AsPIRE initiative?

Chart – "To what extent have you learned new skills from your participation in the AsPIRE initiative?":
- Not at all: 0.00%
- A little: 0.00%
- Somewhat: 52.00%
- Greatly: 48.00%
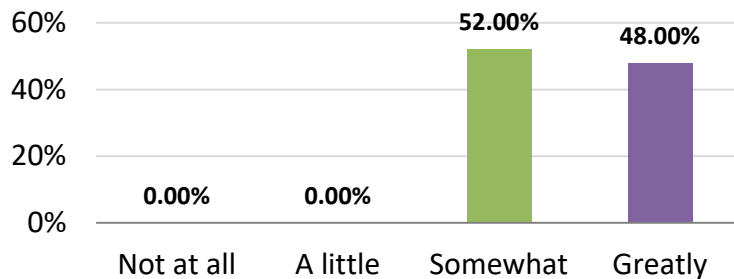
> … the experience has enhanced my skills as a school administrator as opposed to learning new skills.

> It has provided me with innovative ideas to implement to effect change and effective ways to track the progress of those changes.

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

27

Based on the feedback, future experiences will be even better by strengthening existing components of the network

Deepen and follow-up on content to improve practice. Building on the connections, participants are hungry to continue to expand the relationships and continue to apply new learning

> … cohesion breeds focus and growth.

> I hope we are able to continue collaboration among rural leaders in some way.

Encourage more face-to-face meetings. Where possible, cluster teams for more frequent in-person meetings, but continue to take advantage of technology, which works for most people, too.

> I wish we could be more concentrated so face-to-face collaboration could happen more easily.

Provide more opportunities for principals of similar schools to collaborate. The rural focus is important, but there are some significant differences with the issues facing principals of schools of different sizes and serving different grade bands (elementary, middle, high schools).

> I wish I could have been placed in a group that is a little more similar to my own situation. My school of 400 doesn't have much in common with a school of 2200.

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Table of Contents

Linda Darling-Hammond et. al. describe five common features of effective principal residencies

🤝	**District-higher education collaboration**	Collaboration between universities and school districts to create coherence between training and practice as well as pipelines for recruitment, preparation, hiring and induction
👥	**Cohort model**	Cohort structures were positively linked to participant perception of readiness as a principal, sense of self-efficacy and satisfaction with the program
🎖	**Research and standards alignment**	Programs are research-based and aligned with professional standards
🏫	**Quality internships**	Field-based internships allowing application of leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner
💡	**Problem-based learning**	Problem-based learning strategies that link theory and practice and support reflection

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

We examined five principal residency programs that meet most or all of Darling-Hammond's criteria – 3 that are explicitly rural

Urban Education Leadership EdD (Univ. of Illinois)
4.5-year program
20 candidates/year

NE Leadership Academy 2.0 (NC State Univ.)
2-year program
15 candidates/year

IMPACT Arkansas Fellowship (Univ. of Arkansas)
15-month program
12-20 candidates/year

Delta School Leadership Pipeline (Delta State Univ.)
13-month program
5 candidates/year

Leadership Academy (Univ. of Tennessee)
15-month program
10-15 candidates/year

Rural-focused

Not rural-focused

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Using a strict definition of "residency," we chose programs that represent the best available in both rural and non-rural settings

1 | **First, we ruled out non-residency programs**

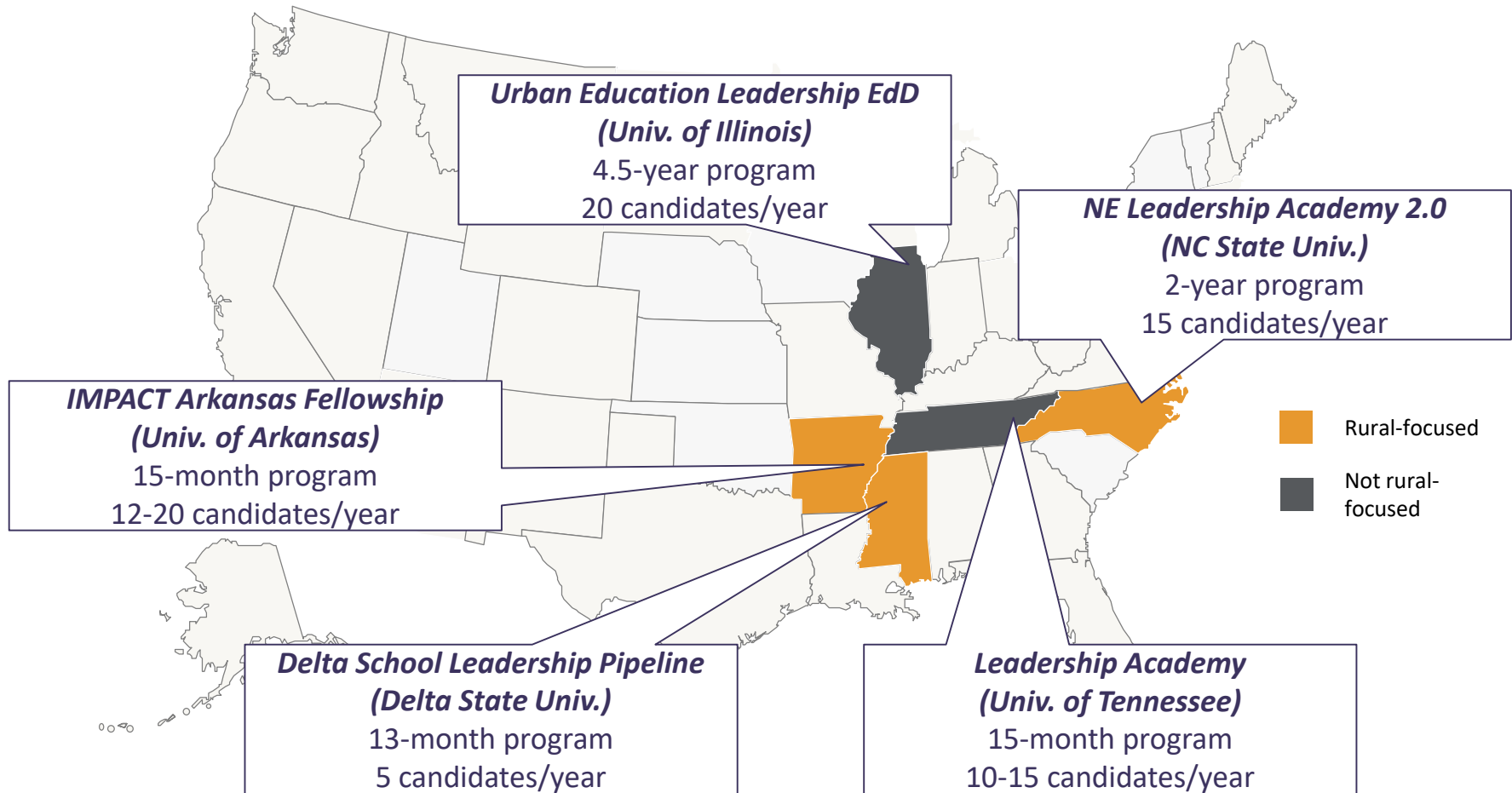A principal residency is …

A principal residency is not …

A program involving a field-based internship that allows for application of leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner
- An alternative certification program
- A licensure program completed while serving as an assistant principal

2 | **Then, we scanned for the best available programs and compared them to the Center's Leadership Academy**

Rural

Using publicly available information, we identified just three active programs across the U.S. that meet our definition of **rural**

Not rural-focused

We interviewed University of Illinois as an exemplar, and also looked at the University of Tennessee's Leadership Academy

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

When we say a principal residency is "rural," we mean that it focuses explicitly on solving principal pipeline challenges associated with a rural area

Challenge	Mississippi Delta	NE North Carolina	Rural Arkansas
Aspiring principals' lack of resources to pursue graduate studies	✓	✓	
Lack of deep pre-professional internship experiences for aspiring principals in the region			✓
Lack of deep understanding of teaching and learning among aspiring principals in the region		✓	
Shortage of principal candidates meeting district hiring criteria			✓
Lack of principal induction supports	✓		
Principal isolation	✓	✓	
High principal eligibility for retirement		✓	

We looked at six key areas of program design and found a number of common themes across some or all programs

1   **Selection**

Selection usually requires district staff **recommendations** and post-program **commitments tailored to district needs**; many programs also **select for "hard-to-teach" competencies**

2   **Curriculum**

Little publicly available information exists to describe how the programs tailor their curriculum to the local context; some programs assume that the rural placement alone drives the curriculum

3   **Residency expectations**

Programs differ on the assignments candidates use to connect theory to their practice, but most programs provide **standards-based feedback** on their residency performance

4   **Staffing and costs**

Alongside dedicated staff, all programs have both **carefully selected mentor principals** and **non-supervisory coaches**. Programs have a mix of **state dollars and private funding**

5   **Induction**

All programs provide induction **coaching** to alumni in year 1 of their principalship, with several **extending support into year 2**

6   **Program evaluation**

Programs generally measure themselves on alumni **schools' performance against state metrics**, as well as on **alumni retention** in partner districts

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Structural parameters of the proposed residency match the programs we studied

Admission process includes nominations, pre-work on personal leadership profile and school-level data analysis

15-month program (summer to summer)

Deep residency in one school for a year + familiarity with 2 other schools that host other residents

Cohort residency model

Full cohort meets in person about twice a month for coursework

Small groups (3-4 residents in affiliate schools) based on geographic proximity meet once a month

Upon completion, residents return to their district fully eligible for leadership positions, with a 3-year commitment to stay in the district

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Our research plus the Learning Network's feedback informed key design questions

1 **Selection:** Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?

4 **Staffing/Costs:** Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?

2 **Curriculum:** How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?

5 **Induction and Support:** How will residents be supported during and after the residency?

3 **Expectations:** How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?

6 **Evaluation:** How will program effectiveness be measured?

Over a series of alternating meetings starting in February 2018, the Learning Network helped design the residency, particularly selection, curriculum, expectations and induction

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Selection: The residency would be open to educators in administrative/quasi-administrative roles in rural school districts to build a robust pipeline

1 **Selection:** Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?	**4** Staffing/Costs: Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?
2 Curriculum: How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?	**5** Induction and Support: How will residents be supported during and after the residency?
3 Expectations: How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?	**6** Evaluation: How will program effectiveness be measured?

1| Selection

- Residents would be **full-time employees in a rural school** in an administrative or quasi-administrative capacity (e.g., assistant principal, teacher leader) and be able to complete leadership tasks and assignments required in each module

- **Admission process** starts with nomination from school superintendent. Application includes pre-work on personal leadership profile and school-level data analysis

- Open to at least **10 residents** per year.

- **Ideally free** to participants (e.g., tuition and program costs); districts continue to pay their salary

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: The curriculum would be tailored to the rural experience and attempt to build competencies found in the definition of effective rural school leaders

1 Selection: Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?	**4** Staffing/Costs: Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?
2 Curriculum: How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?	**5** Induction and Support: How will residents be supported during and after the residency?
3 Expectations: How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?	**6** Evaluation: How will program effectiveness be measured?

2| Curriculum

- Interviews with other rural school-leader residency programs suggested that mere placement in a rural school was sufficient to inform what residents studied and worked on.

- However, we believe the light-touch approach is a missed opportunity. A **specially designed scope and sequence** with tailored coursework and experiences steeped in the rural context will build residents' skills to be effective rural school leaders.

- Curriculum would be **aligned with state and national leadership standards.**

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: The scope and sequence centers on three types of activities

Cohort Activity

- Full-group instruction
- Guided by coordinator and university faculty
- Involves pre-/post-work (i.e., homework)

- **Example assignment**: Complete a written draft of vision and mission

AsPIRE Team Activity

- Small-group assignment
- Involves applying content from cohort meetings
- Feeds into the overall improvement project for the residency

- **Example assignment**: Draft a family engagement strategy for curriculum implementation

Mentored Activity

- Yearlong school improvement project with school-based design team
- Supervised by mentor
- Includes two related smaller team activities

- **Example project:** Implementation of new math curriculum

Curriculum: The Learning Network helped map out a 15-month experience

Every two months, participants take on a new aspect of the AsPIRE rural school leadership pillars and related competencies.

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	**Community**	**Instruction**	**Social & Political Capital**	**Shared Leadership**	**Sustains Success**	**Preparing for Leader-ship Roles**

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Leadership	Leading School Culture	Supervision	Community Relations & Family Engagement	Distributing Leadership	Leading Change	Operations & Resource Management
Leading School Improvement	Responding to Data & Planning Interventions	Teacher Engagement				Education Law

Each pillar covers one to two topics aligned to PSEL/TILS, and courses are aligned to current University of Tennessee classes.

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: Instructional leadership

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	Community	Instruction	Social & Political Capital	Shared Leadership	Sustains Success	Preparing for Leader-ship Roles

Topic	Activity Type				Description
	Cohort	AsPIRE Team	Mentored	Other	
Leadership (~EDAM578)				✔	**Leadership profile (independent pre-work or application)** • Complete initial leadership reflection and self-assessment (e.g., StrengthsFinder) • Complete a written personal reflection
Leading School Improvement (~EDAM 576)	✔				**Module on school-level data** • Conduct data analysis and identify key improvement areas • Complete a written draft of vision and mission
				✔	**Identify and design improvement project in home school**

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: Community

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	**Community**	Instruction	Social & Political Capital	Shared Leadership	Sustains Success	Preparing for Leader-ship Roles

Topic	Activity Type				Description
	Cohort	**AsPIRE Team**	**Mentored**	**Other**	
Leading School Culture (~EDAM 578 & 567)	✔ ✔				**Modules on school culture and data** • Conduct an audit of school culture and root cause analysis • Analyzing data and identifying relevant interventions **School visits** • Complete school visit observation analysis and recommendations
Responding to Data & Planning Interventions (~EDAM 565 & 588)		✔	✔		**Create school improvement project and plan for implementation** • Lead school-based design team in home school • Organize team, identify data and analyze, name problem of practice, create and monitor plans to address area of focus

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: Instruction

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	Community	**Instruction**	Social & Political Capital	Shared Leadership	Sustains Success	Preparing for Leader-ship Roles

Topic	Activity Type				Description
	Cohort	**AsPIRE Team**	**Mentored**	**Other**	
Supervision (~EDAM 567)	✔				**Supervision modules: Human resources, teacher performance evaluation, cultural competency, professional learning, etc.** • Research curricular best practices and present findings to cohort • Teacher evaluation cycle report & presentation **Monitor school improvement project** • Provide feedback to design team members • Document early wins and modify plan as needed • Design stakeholder feedback on SI project **Feedback (~EDAM 576)** • Classroom observation and feedback with focus on rigor
			✔		
			✔		
Teacher Engagement (~EDAM...)		✔			**Problem of Practice: Collaboration & teacher leadership** • Identify and present teacher engagement PoP related to school-based design team

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: Social and political capital

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	Community	Instruction	**Social & Political Capital**	Shared Leadership	Sustains Success	Preparing for Leader-ship Roles

Topic	Activity Type				Description
	Cohort	AsPIRE Team	Mentored	Other	
Community Relations and Family Engagement (~EDAM 563 & 585)	✔	✔ (two checks)	✔		**Community asset map** **Monitor school improvement project** • Identify and leverage relevant community assets • Conduct stakeholder feedback with community members on SI project **School visits** • Complete school visit observation analysis and recommendations **Family engagement** • Implement a classroom-based family engagement strategy aligned to SI, collect data, present results

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: Shared leadership

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	Community	Instruction	Social & Political Capital	**Shared Leadership**	Sustains Success	Preparing for Leader-ship Roles

Topic	Activity Type				Description
	Cohort	AsPIRE Team	Mentored	Other	
Distributing Leadership (~EDAM 563, 565 & 578)	✔				**Distributing leaders module:** Strength-based team leadership, evaluating performance • School Talent Inventory, Deployment Analysis & Presentation
			✔		**Monitor school improvement project** • Building purposeful community • Develop a School/Community Engagement Plan
		✔			**Problem of Practice** • Identify and present distributed leadership PoP related to school-based design team

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Curriculum: Sustained success

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	Community	Instruction	Social & Political Capital	Shared Leadership	**Sustains Success**	Preparing for Leader-ship Roles

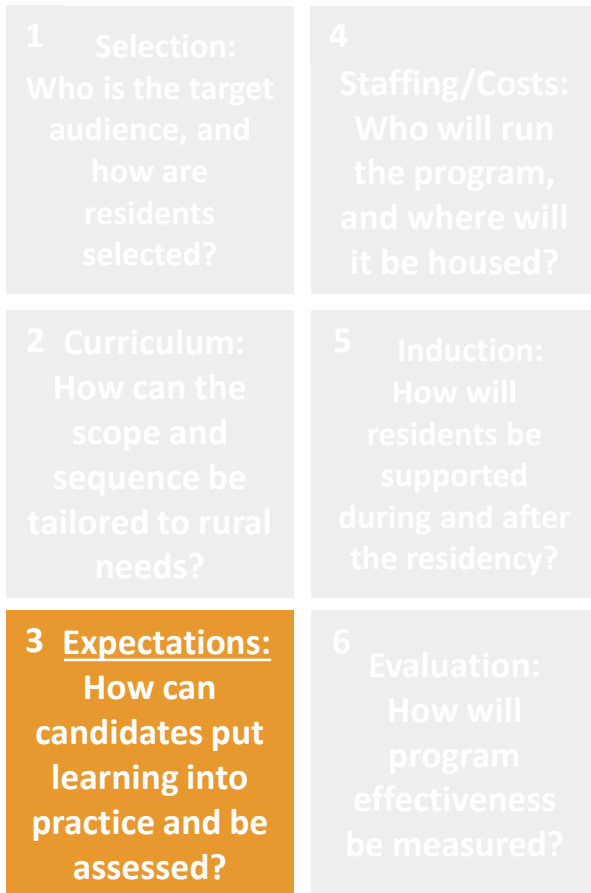| Topic	Activity Type				Description
	Cohort	**AsPIRE Team**	**Mentored**	**Other**	
Leading Change (~EDAM 574)	✔	✔	✔		**Modules on leading change:** organizational & personal change, transitional & sustainable leadership, etc. **School visits** • Complete school visit observation analysis on student systems **Monitoring of school improvement project** • Conduct data analysis, review with design team and make recommendations for sustainability

Curriculum: Preparing for leadership roles

June-July	Aug-Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	March	Apr-May	June-July
Is an Instruction-al Leader	Community	Instruction	Social & Political Capital	Shared Leadership	Sustains Success	**Preparing for Leader-ship Roles**

Topic	Activity Type				Description
	Cohort	AsPIRE Team	Mentored	Other	
Operations & Resource Management (~EDAM 572)	✔				**Modules on management of organizational systems and operations: finance, transportation, student systems, etc.** • State or district budget analysis • School resource analysis &presentation
		✔			
					90-day plans for the new school year
Education Law (~EDAM 587):	✔		✔		

Expectations: Residents would apply their learning through projects, including an intensive yearlong effort based at their home school

1 Selection: Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?	4 Staffing/Costs: Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?
2 Curriculum: How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?	5 Induction: How will residents be supported during and after the residency?
3 Expectations: How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?	6 Evaluation: How will program effectiveness be measured?

3| Expectations

- In addition to coursework, the residency would be **project-based:**
  - One yearlong project in their home school, developed with their mentor principal and peers
  - Two smaller team-based activities at other residents' schools outside of the resident's grade span
  - A smaller cohort project
- **Program coursework, modules and assignments** are aligned with:
  - Definition of effective rural school leaders (slide 16)
  - Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS)
  - Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Staffing/Costs: There are several options for staffing and housing the residency program; costs would be split between districts and participating organizations (1/2)
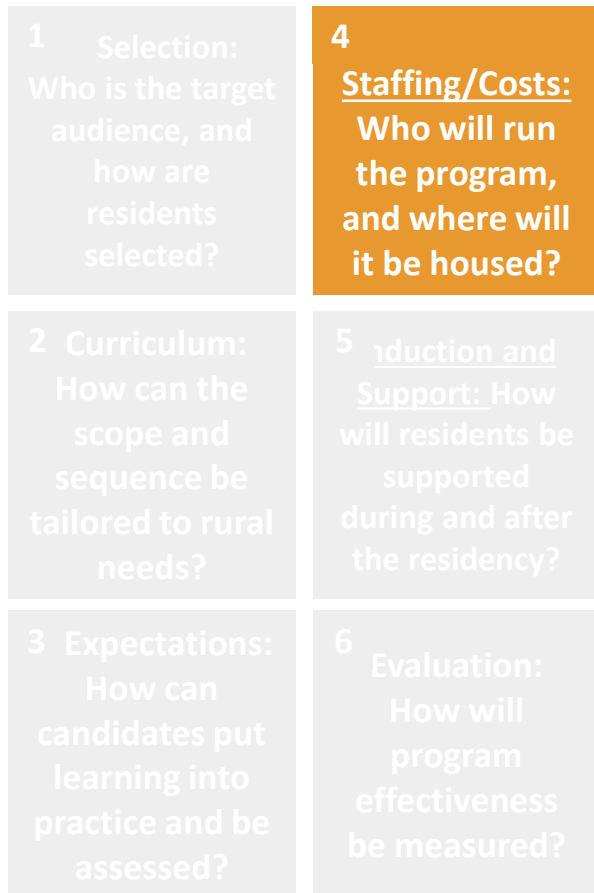
1 **Selection: Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?**	**4** **Staffing/Costs: Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?**
2 Curriculum: How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?	**5 Induction and Support: How will residents be supported during and after the residency?**
3 Expectations: How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?	**6 Evaluation: How will program effectiveness be measured?**

4| Staffing/Costs

Staffing

- Option 1: Program is **a cohort or strand of the Center's existing Leadership Academy.** Center staff administer the program; UT faculty teach coursework.
  - Residents would participate in all Leadership Academy activities and have specialized coursework/small-group opportunities as a cohort

- Option 2: The Center's **existing Leadership Academy transitions to become** the residency.
  - Focus would entirely be on rural school leaders, with tailored coursework
  - No urban or suburban school leaders would be part of the Leadership Academy

- Option 3: Program is **housed at another university;** those professors and staff administer and teach in the program.

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Staffing/Costs: There are several options for staffing and housing the residency program; costs would be split between districts and participating organizations (2/2)

1 Selection: Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?	4 Staffing/Costs: Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?
2 Curriculum: How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?	5 Induction and Support: How will residents be supported during and after the residency?
3 Expectations: How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?	6 Evaluation: How will program effectiveness be measured?

4| Staffing/Costs

Costs

- The average cost of a resident at UT's Leadership Academy is **$100,000 per year.**
  - This assumes that districts pay the residents' average salary of **$65,000** (residents are full-time employees, with understanding that they have residency duties, e.g., Fridays at UT for classes)
  - University, state and private funders assume other costs (faculty/staff time, stipends) that total roughly **$35,000**

- Actual **costs to residents** are nominal (materials, mileage).

- For a residency cohort of a minimum of 10, the annual operating cost would be roughly **$1 million.**
  - Assuming districts continue to pay residents' average salaries, public/private funds to be sought would be **$350,000**

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Induction and Support: Residents would have a strong support system within their home school and across program staff, faculty and peers
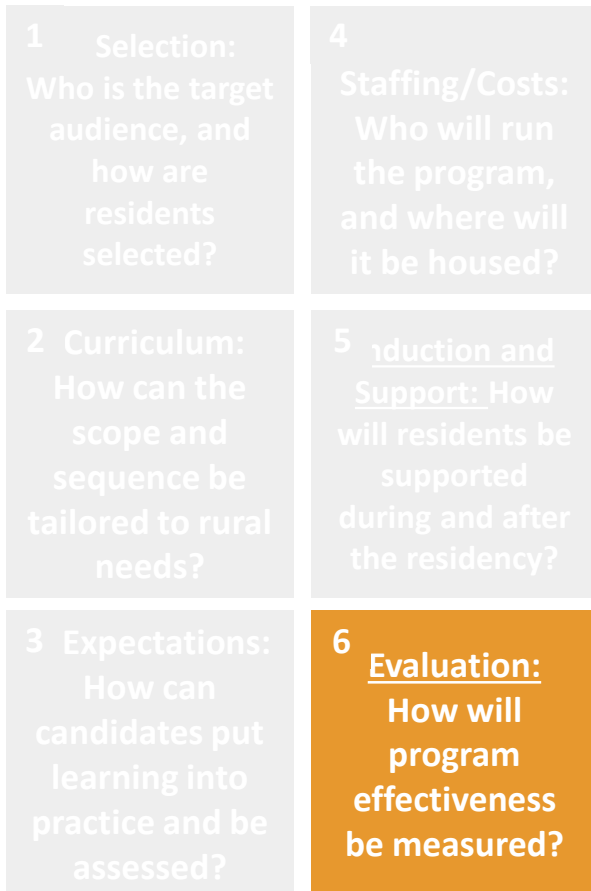
1 Selection: Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?	**4** Staffing/Costs: Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?
2 Curriculum: How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?	**5** Induction and Support: How will residents be supported during and after the residency?
3 Expectations: How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?	**6** Evaluation: How will program effectiveness be measured?

5| Induction and Support

- **Mentor principal:** Pre-screened by program staff, these principals would guide residents' work in their home school:
  - o Per other programs we studied, the mentor relationship would continue past the residency.
  - o Mentors would need some professional learning and guidance by program staff (e.g., giving residents principal-like experiences, explicitly sharing their decision-making).

- **Coach:** Leadership Academy staff and consultants would provide outside perspective and problem-solving. This support also would continue past the residency.

- **Peer network:** As a cohort, residents would rely on each other for peer coaching and feedback.

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Evaluation: Over time, residents' performance individually and in their schools could be tracked

6| Evaluation

1	Selection: Who is the target audience, and how are residents selected?	4	Staffing/Costs: Who will run the program, and where will it be housed?
2	**Curriculum:** How can the scope and sequence be tailored to rural needs?	**5**	**Induction and Support:** How will residents be supported during and after the residency?
3	**Expectations:** How can candidates put learning into practice and be assessed?	**6**	**Evaluation: How will program effectiveness be measured?**

- **Program metrics** should track with the problem(s) the residency was meant to address: turnover, experience, effectiveness
  - **Longevity**: How long did the leader stay in a rural school?
  - **Effectiveness**: What was the leader's individual evaluation results? Where did the school place in the state's accountability system?
  - **Leadership**: Did the leader meet the competencies outlined in the five pillars? (informed by survey data, formative evaluation)
  - **Over time**: schoolwide measures such as student academic achievement and growth, gap closing, graduation rates

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Potential risks of and mitigation strategies for the residency

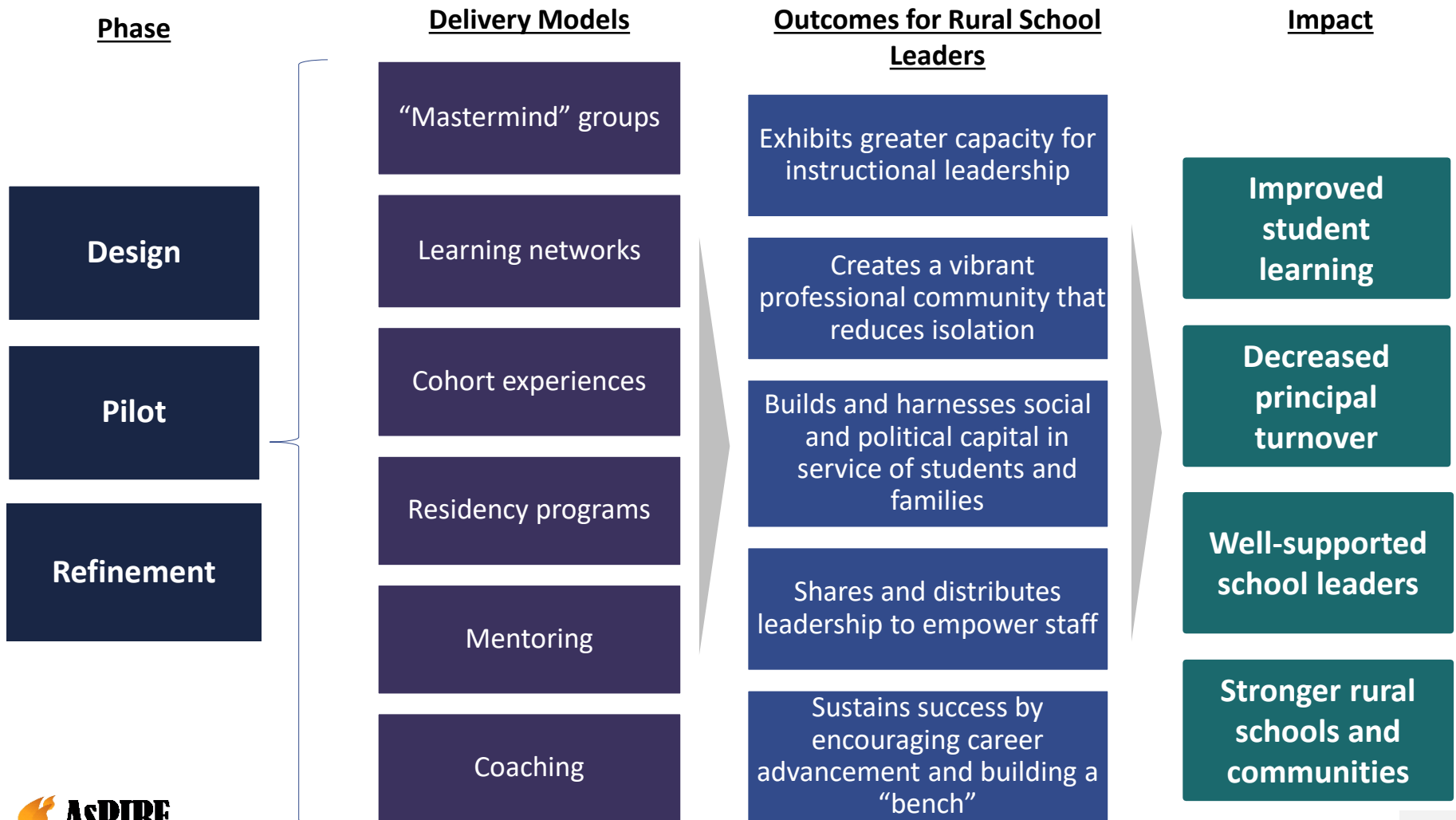| Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Residents' workload (full-time job, coursework, residency duties) is overwhelming	Be transparent up front about the workload; ensure mentor principals give residents time and space for learning
Residents are diverse from a gender and background perspective, but not race/ethnicity	Ensure that recruitment targets diverse candidates in the region as well as minority-serving institutions of higher education in the state
Residents may not find an administrative job in their district immediately	Of the Leadership Academy's 102 graduates to date, all but one were placed in an administrative role, and 94% are still in school-based administrative jobs in Tennessee
Securing funding will be challenging	All sources – philanthropy, university, public dollars – will be examined. This is a long-term endeavor.

Table of Contents

RECAP: Our vision: If we design an initiative that addresses the root causes of leadership challenges in rural areas, we can encourage and spread effective leadership in rural schools

Phase	Delivery Models	Outcomes for Rural School Leaders	Impact
Design	"Mastermind" groups	Exhibits greater capacity for instructional leadership	**Improved student learning**
Pilot	Learning networks	Creates a vibrant professional community that reduces isolation	**Decreased principal turnover**
Refinement	Cohort experiences	Builds and harnesses social and political capital in service of students and families	**Well-supported school leaders**
	Residency programs		
	Mentoring	Shares and distributes leadership to empower staff	**Stronger rural schools and communities**
	Coaching	Sustains success by encouraging career advancement and building a "bench"	

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Conclusion and next steps

- This presentation serves as both a **final report** and **summary** of our work to date and a starting point for **discussing how our efforts can be supported** in the coming months.

- We will continue the **Mastermind Groups, Learning Network and Cohort Experience** for a second year through 2019-2020.

- We seek **conversations with policymakers, practitioners, philanthropies and other stakeholders** interested in learning more about building a strong, sustainable pipeline of effective rural school leaders.
  - → We have built and nurtured relationships with 21 school districts and 63 school leaders, giving us a bench of mentor principals and a list of districts keenly interested in growing effective leaders.

- We have made much progress over the past two years and invite your **questions, insights and support.**

Acknowledgements: We are grateful for the involvement of our school leaders, partners and other stakeholders (1/2)

Partners

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: Josh Edelman, Felicia Smith, Ky Vu
- Tennessee SCORE: David Mansouri, Sharon Roberts, Jamie Woodson

Facilitators

- University of Tennessee Knoxville - Center for Educational Leadership: Dr. Jim McIntyre, Dr. Edd Diden, Nancy Maland, Wade McGarity, Robbie Norman, Betty Sue Sparks
- Education First: Ann Duffy, Anand Vaishnav

Members of the AsPIRE Learning Network

- Christie Amburn, Loudon County Schools *
- Joe Cameron, Knox County Schools *
- Matthew Cheek, Knox County Schools
- Greg Clay, Union County Schools *
- Jennifer Coleman, Anderson County Schools *
- Dominique Davis, Jefferson County Schools *
- Mike Fulkerson, Kingsport City Schools *
- April Herron, Blount County Schools *
- Cheryl Hickman, Knox County Schools *
- Karri Hobby, Anderson County Schools *
- Ginny McElhaney, Grainger County Schools *
- Brandon McKee, Washington County *
- Carmen Murphy, Union County Schools *

- Mary Rouse, Bristol Tennessee City Schools *
- Jenna Sharp, Clinton City Schools *
- Chad Smith, Knox County Schools *
- Eric Snider, Anderson County Schools *
- James (Danny) Templin, Hamblen County Schools *
- Matthew Tinker, Loudon County Schools *
- Scott Walker, Jefferson County *
- Greg Wilson, Bell County Schools (KY) *
- Ronnie Wilson, Morgan County Schools

* Member of 2017 Expert Design Team

Appreciation

- National Rural Education Association
- Tennessee Department of Education
- University of Tennessee Martin

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education

Acknowledgements: We are grateful for the involvement of our school leaders, partners and other stakeholders (2/2)

Members of the Mastermind Groups

- Tommy Arnold, Jefferson County Schools
- Scott Calahan, Roane County Schools
- Lisa Carter, Union County Schools
- Tim Collins, Grainger County Schools
- Stacy Edwards, Kingsport City Schools
- Marvin Feezell, Loudon County Schools
- Chris Hampton, Kingsport City Schools
- Jeff Harshbarger, Anderson County Schools
- Heather Henry, Sweetwater City Schools
- Travis Hutcheson, Anderson County Schools
- Lisa Jessie, Claiborne County Schools
- Aaron Jones, Morgan County Schools

- Travis Langley, Roane County Schools
- Monique Maples, Alcoa City Schools
- Matt Murphy, Morgan County Schools
- LeAnn Myers, Greene County Schools
- Dr. Scott Porter, Alcoa City Schools
- Sandi Ramey, Jefferson County Schools
- Connie Roberts, Blount County Schools
- Shelly Smith, Greene County Schools
- Donna Stapleton, Loudon County Schools
- Sharon Tolliver, Claiborne County Schools
- Kim Turner, Union County Schools
- Rhonda Winstead, Rogersville City Schools

Members of the Cohort Experience

- Henry Baggett, Anderson County Schools
- Patrick Bethel, Loudon County Schools
- Amy Cawood, Roane County Schools
- Matt Conley, Monroe County Schools
- Craig Day, Jefferson County Schools
- Missy Fugate, Union County Schools
- Zandy Knox, Morgan County Schools

- Aaron Maddox, Knox County Schools
- Elizabeth Rose, Roane County Schools
- Tim Shelton, Greene County Schools
- Leslie Smith, Roane County Schools
- Stacy Smith, Union County Schools
- Heath Snow, Morgan County Schools
- Rebecca Stone, Alcoa City Schools
- Dr. Krissy Turner, Kingsport City Schools
- Kathy Winsor, Loudon County Schools

AsPIRE
Administrators Planning Innovation for Rural Education