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The emphasis on educational accountability and the necessity of training highly qualified administrators and leaders, prompted changes to Columbus State University’s Educational Leadership programs. Curriculum alignment was the foundation of this initiative.

There has been an evolution in thinking about the important ingredients and benefits of curriculum for the 21st Century leader. Lashway (2002) advanced the idea of totally revamping the leadership preparation program to stay current with the ever-changing world. Jacobs (1997), through her work with curriculum, saw a need for obtaining course overviews. Cunningham & Cordiero (2000) envisioned futurist thinking for the practitioners and purported changing the pedagogical models to include more collaboration, technological tools, authentic learning, and problem solving. The American Association of School Administrators (1993) identified the critical elements needed for students of the 21st Century: academic content, behaviors/dispositions, and oral and written communications skills. Kouzes & Posner (1995) felt that those who collaborate are able to more effectively accomplish. Blanchard and Muchnick (2003) revealed the techniques for effecting change and increasing commitment when the pressure is high. Dufour and Eaker (1992) asserted, and the leadership faculty concurred, that the key to school improvement is people improvement.

Educational Leadership faculty began by designing a wall-sized matrix which served as a framework for analyzing and aligning Educational Leadership Program curricula with standards, principles, and assessments (see Figure 1). A collaborative approach was utilized as a necessary requirement for successful program adaptations and applications. The curriculum improvement process was complex and required ongoing program evaluation with hands-on charting and alignment.
Alignment began with attention given to enhancing the leadership faculty knowledge base. This included Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) professional development meetings, the Educational Leadership Constituent Consortium (ELCC), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and the Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership (SAPEL) standards plus the review of curriculum standards, principles, instruction, and assessment in current use. The second alignment phase was internal, requiring a review of curriculum goals and objectives, instructional strategies, syllabi, course content (validity studies), and curriculum-embedded assessment instruments.

Members of the leadership team organized weekly collaborative sessions to study alignment data presented visually on the curriculum alignment matrix. Curriculum for one course was compared with curriculum of other courses within the MEd. and EdS. programs. Item analysis changes were made within the framework. Faculty collected assessments, studied best practices, and focused on the performances, skills, and dispositions necessary for the 21st Century school leaders. Sometimes the information came together in bits and pieces, although there were times when there were sudden bursts.

Curriculum alignment continued into the second year with changes occurring in course content, artifacts/products, and other program aspects as the need became apparent. Program evaluations were ongoing. Assessment measures have been designed as indicators for changes to the programs. Input from students, faculty, community leaders, standards commissions, and candidates was encouraged. Leadership faculty worked cooperatively to interpret and use assessment data, research, and their own professional expertise when making decisions regarding curriculum alignment. The curriculum matrix facilitated the process of curriculum alignment by providing a visual representation of the information to be assessed and movement of data and information from one cell to another. It also provided visual documentation of standards and program content evaluated. The visual framework remains for the next phase of the improvement process.

Many benefits were derived from the curriculum alignment process other than program improvement. The words of Blanchard and Muchick (2003) describing the emerging collaboration among educational leadership faculty state, “perfecting the blend of integrity, partnership, and affirmation” (p. 109). Therefore, “Leadership is not something you DO to People, It’s something you DO with them” (p. 110).

**References**


