he Fellows Academy program began its pilot year during the 2012-13 school year and was planned to continue through the 2013-14 school year. The program was designed to train fellows to eventually become effective principals using the Destination 2020 Improvement plan and other supporting educational research and materials. The program included 57 fellows and 54 mentor principals. Fellows received professional development training at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year (August through October 2012) and participated in a residency with a mentor principal for the remainder of the year (October 2012 through May 2013). Results of a literature review indicated that the program was based on a strong foundation of educational research.

Program Goals

The Fellows Academy, as implemented, was a school leadership training program, not a principal training program. The five goals of the Fellows Academy program were to: 1) develop a pool of effective instructional leaders to assume campus administrative positions by the summer of 2013, 2) improve the quality of instruction by providing effective feedback to teachers while defining quality instruction, 3) create a positive school culture and climate, 4) align professional development with the goals of Destination 2020, and 5) increase effective instruction. The evaluation for the 2012-13 school year focused on program implementation and shorter-term outcomes, and not on longer-term district outcomes. The first program goal of developing a pool of effective instructional leaders to assume campus administrative positions was measurable during the 2012-13 school year. Determining the degree to which the program reached the remainder of the goals fell outside the scope of the 2012-13 evaluation. The 2013-14 evaluation will focus on these goals.

Demographics

The majority of fellows were African American (63%), female (68%), were internal hires (53%), held Master’s degrees (83%), and held either one or two certifications (32% and 26%, respectively). The majority of mentor principals were African American or Hispanic (35% in each group), female (69%), held a master’s degree (93%), held between two and four certifications (a total of about 87%), and were serving on elementary school campuses (52%).

Program Completion

Of the 57 fellows, 56 were considered to have completed the program. Fellows who left the program early for principal or leadership positions were considered to have completed the program even though they did not complete the full year of training and residency. As of July 24, 2013, of the 57 fellows in the program, 86 percent (33% in principal roles and 53% in assistant principal roles) were placed in school leadership positions (19 principal and 30 assistant principal); another 10 percent (6) were in other positions such as coordinators, instructional coaches, or program development specialists. Four percent (2) of fellows left the district.

Strengths and Areas of Growth

A main strength of the program was the training provided to fellows on Destination 2020 goals and district Core Beliefs. Survey results indicated that the residency component of the program was also an area of strength, with the majority of fellows and mentor principals reporting positive relationships with one another (90% and 100% Mostly or Slightly Positive, respectively).
Fellows and teachers had similar positive relationships (96% and 89% Mostly or Slightly positive, respectively).

Figure 2. Fellows and Teacher Relationship Ratings

Some areas of growth for the program were to better organize the training sessions and increase the focus on building instructional feedback skills. One of the most common reasons school leadership staff indicated that fellows were not offered principal roles was that they lacked administrative experience and needed, when appropriate, additional focus on, and practice with, instructional leadership and giving feedback during training sessions and during their residencies. Fellows suggested during focus groups that more training sessions should be facilitated by the executive director rather than by fellows. While the executive director and director were responsible for training on Destination 2020 goals, fellows led training on their topical, Deep Dive projects. Results of focus groups with fellows indicated that training for mentor principals on the expectations of the mentor role was needed (e.g., shadowing principal duties). Before the end of the 2012-13 school year, program staff had begun making improvements to the 2013-14 program design to address the six recommendations for the program.

**Recommendations**

There were six recommendations resulting from the 2012-13 evaluation. Fellows Academy program staff have already begun addressing these recommendations.

1. **Rewrite program workscope and supporting program documents to more clearly describe the goals, activities, and short-term expected outcomes of the training and residency components of the Fellows Academy program as it exists currently.** Long-term goals related to improved instruction and academic outcomes should be identified as such. This recommendation will improve implementation fidelity, increase clarity of program design for stakeholders, and lead to appropriate procedures being developed in the future. For example, increased clarity in program design would result in clear and specific criteria for the residency/mentor principal experience.

2. **Reconsider allowing fellows to apply for principal positions during the school year in which the program is running.** The program should determine what this change in policy would mean for implementation of the program and how program activities might need to change as a result. Potential questions might relate to the criteria for successful completion of the program and how this change in procedure would impact the Change Project fellows implementing during their residency year.

3. **Consider not allowing fellows to be employed in full-time positions with the district while enrolled in the Fellows Academy program.** In addition, the program should begin evaluating the effects of bringing in fellows who had already participated in a principal training program. Examining these areas may lead to valuable information about selection criteria for the program and could lead to increased fidelity in program implementation.

4. **Electronically track the number of years fellows and mentor principals have been working in teaching and administrative positions.** This will improve the program’s ability to report on the experience of its fellows and mentor principals and potentially determine which characteristics may or may not be most appropriate for inclusion in the program.

5. **Increase the rigor of training by including more operational responsibilities required for the principal role and increase the amount of direct practice to which fellows are exposed so that they are better able to articulate what they have learned once they move into their residency assignments and leadership positions.** In addition, a strong focus should be placed on achieving proficiency in the Spanish language.

6. **Improve the rigor of the residency by providing thorough training to mentor principals about their roles and responsibilities, ensuring that fellows receive the same opportunities and experiences across mentor principals to the furthest extent possible.**

Additional information may be obtained by consulting the Fellows Academy Program Report, EA13-146-2, at:

[http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/15252](http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/15252)