

<http://gse.buffalo.edu/programs/edadmin/lifts>

University of Buffalo – Graduate School of Education

Educational Administration Certification - LIFTS

Leadership Initiative for Tomorrow's Schools (LIFTS)

The Department of Educational Leadership (ELP) in the Graduate School of Education (GSE) at the University at Buffalo (UB) offers three graduate programs to prepare candidates to apply to the New York State Education Department (SED) for certification as school leaders:

1. School Building Leader (SBL)
2. School District Leader (SDL)
3. School District Business Leader (SDBL)

LIFTS Program Brochure

Attend a LIFTS Information Session to meet with faculty and current students in the program.

All three programs listed above are guided by the values and principles that define the GSE's nationally known Leadership Initiative For Tomorrow's Schools (LIFTS) approach to the preparation of educational leaders.

LIFTS has a 71% placement rate for all certified graduates and a 100% placement rate for certified School District Business Leader graduates.

The first central tenet of LIFTS approach to leadership preparation is that the selection, recruitment and preparation of future school leaders are a responsibility that should be shared jointly by the university and local school districts. Consequently, in addition to self-nominated candidates, a number of local school districts identify and nominate experienced teachers (or counselors, social workers or other certified professionals) who have demonstrated leadership potential. We also believe that one of the primary goals of our program should be to promote greater diversity in school and district leadership through the identification and active recruitment of outstanding women and minorities. Therefore an effort is made to ensure that the cohort accepted into the program is as diverse as the available candidate pool will allow.

A set of core beliefs about leadership provides the philosophical bases of our programs to prepare school and district leaders.

1. The first of these beliefs is that the primary focus of school and district leaders is high quality teaching and learning, including student achievement that meets and even exceeds state standards, and the development, support and nurturing of teaching that develops students' minds and moral character while being responsive to their cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds.
2. The second belief is that educational leaders must be demonstrably committed and accountable to a set of moral principles that include high standards of learning expectations and outcomes for all students, efficiency and equity in the use of resources, a strong sense of caring for others and an appreciation of cultural diversity.
3. The third is that school and district leaders need to facilitate the collaboration and empowerment of teachers and staff and create a democratic organization and professional learning community that strives continuously to achieve a collective vision of school improvement.
4. The fourth core belief is that school and district leaders should be continuous learners and constantly reflect critically on what they do and why they do it, such that their decisions and actions are informed by thoughtful inquiry and ethical deliberation.

5. Finally, we believe that school and district leaders must encourage and demonstrate a willingness to be flexible and take informed risks.

After an initial summer that introduces students to theories and research on leadership, change and school improvement and engages them in the development of a vision of leadership, good schools and supportive districts, this model provides the curriculum structure for the first academic year beginning with two fall courses addressing authentic teaching and learning and the social and cultural context in which such learning must be developed.

The spring semester addresses both inclusive teaching and learning for students with disabilities and building personal, interpersonal and organizational capacity and external relationships with the community, the district and the state.

The second year involves a full-time or part-time internship supported by a reflective seminar in which students have the opportunity to share their vision of schools and school districts and the understandings and skills they are developing from this experience of what it takes to be an effective leader.

Therefore, the student learning experience will consist of:

- A cohort-based learning environment supported throughout the program by a network of local administrators with many years of school and district leadership experience.
- A focus on teaching and learning and current issues and problems of school and district practice.
- An integration of academic and experiential learning.
- Working with an interdisciplinary faculty of university professors, clinical instructors, and an outstanding local principal or superintendent.
- Student input into the curriculum and involvement in facilitating classes.
- Six credit hour classes each semester for two years, including the summer.
- One evening per week plus occasional full days for school visits and workshops.

In addition, LIFTS is committed to:

- a. Preparing candidates to be educational leaders who understand child and adolescent development and learning and who focus on student achievement including meeting NYS learning standards;
- b. Recruiting and retain candidates from groups historically underrepresented in educational leadership by:
 1. Ensuring that there is minority representation on the committee that interviews candidates for possible admission to the program.
 2. Continuing our existing policy of encouraging districts, especially the Buffalo Public Schools, to sponsor suitable underrepresented candidates to gain direct access to the program.
 3. Providing suitable opportunities for those candidates that may require a minority field-based administrative mentor.
 4. Exposing students to classroom, school and district based experiences with successful minority administrators.
 5. Using teaching techniques and approaches that respect the needs of adult learners from diverse backgrounds.
 6. Modeling inclusivity and respect in our teaching, assessment and support of minority students in full support of UB's affirmative action policies.

Policy With Regard to Credit for Prior Learning

ELP grants no more than six graduate credits for prior learning, as determined through an assessment of a candidate's previous academic record. Candidates will be eligible for advisement in developing an individual plan of study to assist them in acquiring all prescribed knowledge and skills. UB will state on a candidate's academic record all graduate credit that the program has granted for prior learning and determined to be equivalent to a content requirement of the program.