



Newsletter

Issue 2

October 2026

Director's Note

Twelve candidates make up Cohort One. Twelve leaders, each carrying a real problem out of a real district and into this program, every week.

We meet as a full cohort every week. We also meet in three smaller groups of four, formed by the region each group serves. Those groups exist to expand the learning. They exist to challenge one another. They exist to build meaning that travels home into a candidate's own district. That meaning does not stay behind in a single Teams room. Rather, it resides in small communities, living inside a larger one.

There is a research reason too. Lecture, on its own, transmits very little. Active engagement, candidates working together to build and test meaning, transmits far more. What reason would we have not to model that in doctoral work?

When we know the practices that produce genuine learning, integrating them into everything we do is not optional. It is a responsibility. That responsibility carries particular weight in a doctoral program built around educational leadership. It applies to our small groups. It applies to our weekly full-cohort meetings. It applies to how we sequence this work, iteratively, across semesters. It applies at scale, as this program grows.

Semester One is a beginning. Our first milestone, the Problem of Practice, is being taken apart right now and rebuilt, piece by piece. These problems of practice are provisional. They will change as our learning changes. We will disassemble them and reassemble them through a series

Important Dates

- **September 2026**
Cohort 2 Applications Open
- **October 27-30, 2026**
CPED Convening
- **November 19, 2026**
Webinar: Is an Ed.D. the next right step?
- **Summer 2027**
Cohort 2 Begins

of tests, frames, and lenses that compose meaningful rigor. Every candidate in this program works inside a framework we call S2SIAR: two rounds of Study, then Strategize, Implement, Analyze, Reflect. Six phases. One purpose. Move a real problem, inside a real system, from first understanding to lasting change.

Cohort One is in the first Study phase now. We call it Constitutive Study. Constitutive Study is not a passing phase. It runs across multiple semesters. It is a high-level interrogation of everything that surrounds a problem before anyone is allowed to touch a solution: our context, our positionality, our assumptions, and a wide range of other sources. The goal is precise. Identify a problem of practice worthy of doctoral-level study, and identify it correctly, before building anything on top of it.

Before we ask a candidate to solve a problem, we ask them to sit inside it first. Its community. Its history. Its politics. The people who live the problem every single day. We are also asking candidates, early and on purpose, to name their own place inside the systems they study. Where one stands changes what one sees. We want that understood before a single solution gets proposed.

None of this is comfortable, and I say that on purpose. It is engaging. It is demanding. We are living the dichotomy between comfortable and demanding. A doctorate built for growth asks more of a person than a doctorate built for credentialing. Credentialing rewards speed. Growth rewards the willingness to sit inside a hard question longer than feels natural. That's the doctorate we're building at Sul Ross.

Cohort Two begins summer 2027, and applications are already arriving. I am excited, gratified, and edified that our approach to doctoral education is resonating. Small cohorts. High-touch. A focus on leadership. Built for context. Grounded in evidence. These are the ideas finding a home in leaders who seek something that carries meaning and makes impact. Those are exactly the leaders I invite to apply for Cohort Two. We are capped at fifteen. We will admit on a rolling basis until we reach that number. If this finds a home with you, or with someone you know, I encourage you to reach out.

With gratitude,

John Decman, Ed.D.

Program Director, Ed.D. in Educational Leadership



Program Highlight

Improvement science moves beyond theory to disciplined, evidence-based practice. Candidates will learn to identify the root causes of persistent problems, design targeted interventions, test them in real contexts, and build organizational capacity for lasting change.

This is not a credential. It is a methodology for leading differently.

Finding Community in Cohort 1

When asked what it means to be joining this cohort, a common theme emerged: **community**.

While each member brings unique experiences and perspectives, many spoke about the importance of learning with and from one another. Their responses highlighted a shared commitment to collaboration, support, and growth as they begin this doctoral journey together.

Here is what a few members of Cohort 1 had to say about their new community:

Joining this cohort is almost like joining a secret society. It's an amazing feeling to be with like-minded individuals who are dedicating their time (though limited) towards the field we are all passionate about. It's an exciting feeling to be one of the firsts and, in my case, break the glass ceiling. – N. Mesquita

Joining this cohort means becoming part of a community of educators who will learn, challenge, and grow together. It is an opportunity to collaborate, share perspectives, and build lasting professional relationships while working toward improving outcomes for students and schools. – A. Johnson

To be joining this cohort means to me that I am becoming part of an active educational community that will help each other be better educators. This cohort will help me be a better educator through diverse perspectives, shared experiences, and providing feedback. – A. Avila

Preparing for the Future: Admissions

Process for Cohort 2

As we prepare to welcome our second cohort in the Summer 2027 semester, we want to make our audience aware of a change to the admissions process. Rather than accepting applications until a given deadline and reviewing for program acceptance all at one time, we are adopting a rolling admissions system.

As we receive full application portfolios, our admissions committee will review and make an acceptance determination. This process will continue until our cohort cap of 15 is reached. At that time, admissions for cohort 2 will close. Applications will still be accepted, but program eligible applicants will be placed on a waiting list.

Admission requirements remain the same.

Admissions Requirements

- Master's degree from a regionally accredited institution
- Minimum graduate GPA of 3.0
- Valid Texas Principal or Principal as Instructional Leader certification
- At least three years of P-12 leadership experience
- Current school district role must be administrative leadership and able to effect meaningful district-level change

As members of the EdD community, you play an important role in helping us identify future candidates. If you know a leader who demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement and student success, please consider sharing information about the program. With only 15 seats available in each cohort, early application is strongly encouraged.



**Lead. Research.
Inspire.**

**Sul Ross State University
Doctor of Education
in Educational Leadership**

Alpine, Texas

educationdoctorate@ sulross.edu



Waypoint

Meaningful improvement is rarely the result of a single leader acting alone.

The communities served by this doctoral program deserve more than isolated expertise.

They deserve networks of leaders willing to learn together, challenge assumptions, share responsibility, and pursue improvement over time.

Cohort One is the beginning of that work.

Cohort Two will build upon it.

Future cohorts will build upon both.

The journey continues.