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The Implementation of A Principal Mentoring Program and the Corresponding Impact on Leadership Practice

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PRINCIPAL MENTORING PROGRAM
AND THE CORRESPONDING IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

by
Paula Massey Huffman

September 2017

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PRINCIPAL MENTORING PROGRAM
AND THE CORRESPONDING IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

With the challenges facing principals today, the question of how best to support new principals in meeting these challenges remains. The leadership abilities of new school leaders matter more today than ever with increasing accountability and additional responsibilities. The focus of this study was to determine participants' perceptions of the impact of mentoring on the development on first and second-year principals in a suburban school district located in a fast growing metropolitan area within the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The overarching question of the study was: What impact does mentoring have on first and second-year principal performance? Secondary questions that were explored in the study were: (a) What do principals who participate in mentoring report they learned based on their reflective activities and dialogue with experienced leaders? (b) What changes in professional practice of first and second-year principals did participants perceive to have come from the mentoring? and (c) What activities within the mentoring program did participants find most helpful for first and second-year principal leadership?

The methodology employed to conduct this action research study was a qualitative process focusing on the development and implementation of a newly formed principal mentoring support structure. The study included the following data sources: an Appreciative Inquiry focus session with principal mentors, a district leadership development survey and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 23 principals. Findings of the study were as follows:

- (a) New principals in this study valued the support of an experienced principal mentor and the participation in joint leadership development activities to assist them in navigating the complexities of being a new principal.
- (b) The quality of the mentor relationship is important.
- (c) For the principals in this study, formalizing the mentoring program by building time for mentoring into the calendar at the district level and providing supports such as the mentoring calendar and joint new principal/principal mentor leadership workshops were valued and seen as a positive district change.
- (d) The mentoring program could be improved by differentiating the program by the individual needs of each new principal.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PRINCIPAL MENTORING PROGRAM
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past half-century, there has been a substantial shift from viewing the principal as a building manager to the principal as instructional leader (Hallinger, 1992). When Edmonds (1979) published an article on effective schools for the working poor in which he stated that in “improving” schools, the principal is more likely to be an “instructional leader” (p. 18), a shift in the principal’s role to an instructional leader was underway. While this focus on the principal as lead learner to drive student learning and achievement is beneficial to students (Fullan, 2010), the management responsibilities of school principals remain. In the past, principals were mainly concerned with building management tasks (Hallinger, 1992), but in today’s learning environment, school leaders have increased accountability for student achievement (Townsend, 2011), teacher collaboration (Hallinger, 1992), and closing achievement gaps within their building (Townsend, 2011). In conjunction with an increased level of responsibility for school principals, there is also an increase in the level of principal attrition nationwide with one out of five principals leaving their schools each year (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011).

While this focus on the principal as instructional leader can be seen as a positive transition that has resulted in increased academic achievement for learners (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013), it has become increasingly difficult for principals to successfully balance both roles with limited resources (Stevenson, 2006). Principals report that this changing role has led to feelings of burnout (Combs, 2009) and frustration about their increasing career responsibilities. In a study that explored the reasons for elementary principal burnout, principals listed both the balancing of multiple responsibilities and low teacher motivation as major challenges (Combs, 2009). Combs also found that difficult parent interactions and pressures related to accountability such as curriculum, training, special programs, and monitoring of instruction as work related challenges. Elementary principals listed these tasks as challenging, regardless of whether or not the principal reported symptoms of burnout.

Recent years have seen a rise not only in the level of responsibility within the school principal role but also in the hours within a principal workweek (Sparks, 2016). According to a study of principals across Virginia, 84% of principals described their workweek as exceeding 50 hours a week (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). In a Schools and Staffing Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics (2011-12), principals reported that they now work an average of 59 hours per week, with most work related to internal administrative assignments (as cited in Lavigne, Shakman, Zweig, & Greller, 2016). The Schools and Staffing Survey results show that principals of today's schools manage a variety of different leadership roles and tasks. Principals described how they spent their time at work, categorized by five different types of tasks: "internal administrative tasks, curriculum and teaching-related tasks, student interactions, parent

interactions, and other tasks” (as cited in Lavigne et al., 2016, p. 4). Specifically, principals reported spending 31% of their time on internal administrative tasks and 27% of their time on curriculum-and teaching-related tasks. Principals spent 23% of their time on student interactions versus 13% on parent interactions (as cited in Lavigne et al., 2016, p. 4). This study also indicated that school administrators of schools that made adequate yearly progress spent more time on instructional tasks, administrative tasks, and parent interactions than did school administrators of schools that did not make adequate yearly progress (as cited in Lavigne et al, 2016).

Another point of consideration is that new principals may not be receiving the support they need to transition successfully to their new role. In a collaborative study with the Virginia Department of Education, over 1500 principals and assistant principals were surveyed across the state of Virginia (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Onboarding satisfaction within the survey of new principals indicated mixed results, with only 62.7% of principals reporting that they were Very Satisfied or Satisfied with the level of support as they began their role as principal. Furthermore, new principals reported onboarding support would be helpful in the following areas: “special education law and implementation, increased student achievement on standardized tests, data-driven decision making, assessment using multiple criteria and strategies for faculty and staff development” (p. 54).

Although many educational leaders would agree that the job of principal has become more challenging in recent years, we should also examine the recent increase in principal attrition. In an interview, Gail Connelly, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, reported that the role of the principal is

more complex and multi-faceted than ever (Sparks, 2016). While principals formerly stayed in a school for an average of 10 years even as recently as a decade ago, Connelly reported the current average stay in a school is 3 years. Consistent and experienced school leadership is crucial to student achievement (Hallinger, 1992), but it appears that consistent and experienced school leadership may not be equitable across the United States. In an investigation of longitudinal data from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, researchers found that students who are in poverty, of color, or low-performing are most likely to have a less experienced principal who may also have been trained at a less selective college (Horng, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2009). Additionally, they found that principals who transferred to another school tend to transfer to schools with more advantaged populations. Furthermore, the researchers found that principal vacancies that represented advantaged student populations were filled from within the district, while leadership vacancies that represented less advantaged student population were typically filled with external, less experienced candidates. Although district assignments and hiring practices were somewhat responsible for this occurrence, Horng and colleagues (2009) found evidence that principal preferences were also responsible. Surveys of principal preferences in the area of student demographics showed an “aversion to leading schools with many poor, minority and/or low-achieving students” (p. 30). Although I was unable to separate whether this aversion is based on the high poverty demographics or whether schools with high poverty demographics lacked resources, positive climate, and good working conditions that would entice candidates, the issue of higher principal turnover in these types of schools remains. Principal attrition and transfer increases in schools that serve a higher concentration of poor, minority, and low-achieving students (Horng et al.,

2009). Another factor in principal attrition is administrative salary. In addition to longer hours, the perception of principals regarding appropriate compensation is at odds with the growing demands of the principal role. In a Colorado study on principal attrition, researchers found that attrition increased for larger schools, which pay higher salaries. Principal attrition also increased when principals anticipated receiving greater compensation for a higher-paying education position (Akiba & Reichardt, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

With the challenges facing principals today, the question of how to best support new principals in meeting these challenges remains. In the public school climate of today, school context matters. Some first-year principals encounter strict accountability rules with standardized test score pressure (Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015) while other first-year principals have a lesser challenge to simply focus on maintaining the legitimacy of the organization by keeping the operation running smoothly (Spillane et al., 2015). A recent report from the Wallace Foundation stated that, “especially in their first-year on the job, principals need high-quality mentoring and professional development tailored to individual and district needs” (Mitgang, 2012, p. 24). While professional development programs for aspiring and new principals are often available in larger school districts, many smaller school districts do not have specific professional development programs in place to either groom or support new principals (Hughes, 2010). For those districts that have the ability to provide these programs, research shows variable results in how these programs impact the self-efficacy of beginning principals (Hughes, 2010). Hughes (2010) surveyed 28 principals who were attendees at the 2007 conference for the Virginia Association for Elementary School Principals along with 15 new principals who served in

an urban district in southeastern Virginia. Hughes (2010) worked to measure the principals' sense of self-efficacy after participation in a district principal preparation program using the Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale from the work of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004). Principals with a low sense of self-efficacy do not believe in their ability to influence the environment and when confronted with a challenge are less likely to identify appropriate strategies or look for new strategies; principals with higher self-efficacy believe in their ability to make an impact within their leadership setting (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Hughes (2010) discovered that new principals reported higher self-efficacy, specifically related to their work on management tasks, after attending sessions designated as theory only or skills only based training. In contrast, principals reported lower self-efficacy after attending a preparation program that combined both theory and skills within the training. Although new leaders require both sound leadership theory in addition to leadership skills to be effective, Hughes (2010) recommended revisiting how the theory and skills curricula co-mingle within school districts' principal preparation programs to increase the likelihood of a developing principals' positive self-efficacy. Since principals with a positive self-efficacy are more likely to be persistent in the pursuit of school goals and also more flexible and willing to adapt strategies as needed (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), this result gives information that may prove useful in planning new principal professional development. Although Hughes (2010) reported an increased level of principal self-efficacy specifically for management tasks after district training, it is worth noting that many districts may still struggle to find the funding to create these types of leadership development opportunities

at all, leaving their district without an established program to support and grow new leaders (Hughes, 2010).

Since districts might not have the funding to create a principal training program, a cost neutral alternative is needed to provide the hands on support for new principals to navigate the first-year successfully. Principal mentoring programs might be a viable alternative for districts that do not have additional funding to support professional development programs for new principals. Since most principals receive compensation through a 12-month contract and would not typically receive an additional stipend for other duties as assigned, one relatively cost neutral way for a school district to provide their new principal support is a mentoring program using the expertise of currently employed veteran principals (Wolfe, 2005). Although administrative salaries to pay for mentors would not be a district cost, there will be a cost in terms of administrative time, this should be a district consideration given the current statistics in principal hours per week. The remaining financial costs would typically include initial training along with assigning oversight for the principal mentors to a current district leader/principal supervisor.

New principals have multiple responsibilities to manage and a variety of stakeholder interests to consider. A mentoring program can assist with task management and give insight into effective work with stakeholders. In her work as a veteran educator, Delgado (1999) asserted that one of the most valued components within a teacher-to-teacher mentor relationship was emotional support, specifically mentoring conversations that allowed educators to reflect on decisions and provided them with personal affirmation that they were doing a good job. While mentoring will not solve all of the

problems associated with new leaders, it does provide an important development and socialization tool to support new leadership. Just as a first-year teacher needs someone they can trust to tell the truth about the realities of the profession and to guide them toward finding their own solutions to problems (Delgado, 1999), new principals can also benefit from this socialization opportunity.

Setting of the Study

Lakewood County Public Schools (LCPS) is the selected school district of focus for this study. LCPS is a large metropolitan school system in the Mid-Atlantic region in which the number of new principals hired each year has risen dramatically over the past few years. Within the 2016-2017 school year, there were 16 new principals hired across the elementary, middle and high school levels. During the previous school year, there were 6 new principals hired across levels. District options to provide support for these new principals—such as individual coaching or extensive professional development—were limited by funding constraints. This district chose to provide additional support in a cost neutral way, by providing an experienced principal mentor for each new principal. The purpose of this study is to determine participants' perceptions of the impact of utilizing experienced principals as mentors to first and second year principals.

Evidence of the Problem

LCPS has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of new principals hired within the last several years. There are 89 total principals in the district, with 16 new to LCPS or new to the principal position during the 2016-2017 academic year and 6 new to the principal role for the 2015-2016 academic year for a total of 18% new leadership district wide at the principal level during this specific year, and 25% new leadership

within the past two years. While 14 of the new principals began the school year, one new principal was hired in October of 2016 and two additional principals were hired in March of 2017 due to resignations and promotions within the district. One other principal resigned in December 2016, the school board assigned an interim principal for the remainder of the school year.

LCPS adopted a new strategic framework in June of 2015. Goal 2 within this framework describes the work to cultivate a high performing team of professionals focused on the district's mission and goals. In order to support this new strategic goal and support leadership development given the high increase of new school leaders, a new district administration role was created. The position resides within the Department of Human Resources and Talent Development, collaborating across departments to support both instructional leadership and other leadership roles. With limited budgetary resources to induct new principals, the creation of a formal mentoring program to support new LCPS principals was a primary initiative for the Department of Human Resources and Talent Development. New principals in Year 1 and 2 of service participated in the formal mentoring program.

Probable Causes Related to the Problem

Budget restrictions within the school division have contributed to the lack of specified training to support new leadership until now. Lakewood County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation and much of the county's budget over the past two decades has been dedicated to building new school buildings. As an example, the number of school buildings has increased from 75 buildings in FY09 to an anticipated 90 buildings in FY18. The system recently underwent a strategic planning initiative through

a visioning program. This initiative has resulted in a district mission statement to empower students in establishing capacity to be global contributors with an additional strategic goal to develop staff and leadership capacity to support this mission.

Description of Action Research

Action research allows for a study of a problem of practice through a research process. Creswell (2005) defined the research process in six steps. Researchers begin with the identification of a research problem to establish a focus for the study. The importance of potential results may justify the examination of a current issue and assist the researcher in narrowing down the focus of problem identification (Creswell, 2005). The researcher then reviews the literature to insure that the proposed study extends rather than duplicates existing knowledge. The scope of the study narrows after a thorough review of what other researchers have previously discovered. A purpose statement and research questions are created. In order to answer the research questions, researchers then collect data from individuals using quantitative and/or qualitative methods.

Action research adds to this model by including the observation of current practice, review of literature, and collection of data, followed by some form of action (Mertler, 2017). Typically, the information received from raw data is insufficient for answering research questions; thus, the results are analyzed in order to construct meaning. Meaning is constructed by the examination of the significance of the collected information and is then shared with the audience (Creswell, 2005). Using action research methodology allows the researcher to examine issues, as a solution is proposed and implemented. The researcher has an opportunity to explore the issue, apply a solution, examine the results and determine potential next steps. The use of action research

provides a “holistic approach to problem solving” (Aas, 2014, p. 443). In conducting action research, the researcher defines a problem of practice, implements a solution, and utilizes data protocols to gather data and construct meaning. One methodology used in action research is the expansive learning circle (Engeström, 2001). This expansive learning circle (Appendix A) utilizes a variation on a previous action research design of plan, act, observe, and reflect from Carr and Kemmis (1986). The expansive learning circle allows researchers an opportunity to be deliberative prior to implementing the plan, encouraging the researcher to ask questions, analyze, model, implement, and reflect before—instead of only after—the research is concluded. It is important to remember that action research should assist in the discovery of new ways to solve problems of practice and “should aim not just at achieving knowledge of the world, but at achieving a better world” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 421).

Context of Study

This section provides information regarding the history of Lakewood County, the current demographics and performance of Lakewood County Public Schools, and a description of the newly established principal mentoring program. Modern day Lakewood County is part of a metropolitan area. The county includes a 52 square mile area bordered by the mountains on the west and a river on the northeast. After the arrival of an airport built in the early 1960s, the county diversified from an agricultural county and its population of 20,000 began to grow. The eastern portion is now primarily professional and technical service businesses along with residential developments, while the western portion is a rural environment with strict land use policies. The median household income was ranked as one of the highest in the nation from 2009-2013 and

remains the highest for jurisdictions with a population greater than 65,000. The median age of Lakewood County's population is 35.

Today LCPS is the third largest school division in the state, with over 78,000 students. LCPS is also the fastest growing school division within the state and one of the fastest growing school districts in the United States. Current demographic information is as follows: 52% White, 20% Asian, 7% Black, 17% Hispanic, and 5% Multi-race; 18% Economically disadvantaged; 11% Students with Disabilities; and 15% English Language Learners. Lakewood County boasts a 96% on time graduation rate, above the state average and one of the highest in the state. Currently all schools but one are fully accredited. As a whole, students in the district scored well on the end of year state achievement tests, with a pass rate of 84% in English and 81% in Math, but there are indications of achievement gaps for students who have limited English proficiency and who are economically disadvantaged.

For many years, LCPS has run a principal mentoring program on an informal basis. New principals at the elementary level are assigned to an experienced elementary principal mentor and joint meetings were held with new principals and their mentors following the regularly scheduled monthly principal meetings. At the secondary level, informal mentors were also assigned. In July 2016, a new position was created within the district, with the expectation of providing support to new principals through a formalized mentoring program, titled the Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Program (LLPMP). The leadership development central office administrator worked with Level Directors within the Department of Instruction and other Central Office departments to select mentors who met a pre-established set of criteria. Principal mentors are required to have

been a successful principal for at least 3 years and have a thorough knowledge of curriculum, classroom management, instructional practices, and assessment. Other qualities that selected principal mentors should possess include effective communication, the ability to build trust, and the ability to actively listen and ask non-judgmental reflective questions. The criteria also include an ability to promote a positive view of the principalship and an ability to provide an environment to support risk taking and innovation along with guidance and coaching.

The overall vision statement of the LLPMP communicates a belief that all new principals will benefit from a mentor relationship that guides, nurtures and supports them in their first-years of leadership. There is also a mission statement that communicates a purpose of providing exceptional support for new principals through a quality mentor relationship with an experienced principal in order to increase successful beginnings. The principal mentoring program outlined program goals to provide quality support for new principals—along with encouragement, coaching, and guidance—within a one-on-one relationship. Additionally, the program goals are to ensure all new principals have clear and focused priorities, to promote the principal role, and to retain quality leaders.

The leadership development central office administrator assigns initial roles and expectations within the Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Program and collaborates with other district leaders to select experienced principals who are matched with new principals. The leadership development administrator makes the selection contact, provides the mentor training, coordinates an introductory social event, defines stakeholder roles, maintains regular communication with new principals and principal mentors, coordinates any continued professional development for both groups, and

documents progress. The principal mentor is expected to “establish trust, listen, and offer questions for resolution of mentor concerns, while maintaining strict confidentiality.” Mentors are expected to provide continual feedback and participate in data collection throughout the year. The new principals are asked to be willing to learn, collaborate, share concerns, maintain confidentiality, provide feedback, and also collect data throughout the year. Since the leadership development administrator oversees the principal mentoring program, any relationship or operational difficulties are reported to this office. Training was offered to principal mentors in the area of active listening and trust development.

Theoretical Framework

The study of principal mentoring through an examination of the processes used within the actual mentoring relationship is best supported by the learning theory of constructivism. Constructivism is based on the work of Immanuel Kant, who proposed that we create knowledge by processing the information we experience (as cited in Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Mertens and Wilson (2012) defined the constructivist paradigm as the “belief that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (p. 557). Further, the identification of “multiple values and perspectives through qualitative methods” (p. 557) is a key component.

Awareness that the shared and social construction of a knowledge base can have profound implications for organizational effectiveness is an important consideration. Research can result in the development of shared understandings to improve practices

and adjust to challenges (Hoy & Miskel, 2002). Shared knowledge and understandings must then be distributed across the organization in a systematic method in order for the organization to benefit.

Research Questions

The focus of this study is to determine participants' perceptions of the impact of mentoring on the development of principals in a suburban school district located in a fast growing metropolitan area within the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The overarching question of the study is: What impact does mentoring have on first and second-year principal performance? Secondary questions that will be explored in the study are:

- (a) What do principals who participate in mentoring report they learned based on their reflective activities and dialogue with experienced leaders?
- (b) What changes in professional practice of first and second-year principals did participants perceive to have come from the mentoring?
- (c) What activities within the mentoring program did participants find most helpful for first and second-year principal leadership?

Description of the Intervention

The research focused on the development and implementation of a newly formed principal mentoring support structure, LLPMP. The research focused on principal mentoring program development; information gathered from the principal mentors and new principals will be used to make decisions as the program continues into Year 2. LLPMP is available to address the needs of administrators who are new to the principal role or new as a principal to LCPS. Information was gathered regarding the impact on the

level of leadership support for new principals. This study focused on the impact of a principal mentoring program across all three levels in the school district: elementary, middle school and high school. Since the district currently seeks to provide leadership development through the use of mentoring as a growth practice, the study will also inform both district and school leaders as to considerations for future implementation of this development practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

America is at crossroads in the field of educational leadership. Expectations for school leaders continue to rise (Adams, 2013) and principals are under increasing demands in the area of accountability at the local, state, and national level, while managing budget shortfalls for school funding (Stevenson, 2006). Although universities provide basic certification programs for school administrators, these do not always result in a successful first-year principal experience (Schmidt, 2007). In a study by Hess and Kelly (2007) regarding the instruction of the nation's principal-preparation programs, the survey results of 56 programs and collected syllabi showed that only 2% of principal preparation coursework addressed student accountability. Less than 5% of university principal preparation programs included instruction on managing school improvement through technology, data, or research. Although universities are moving in the direction of increased instructional leadership preparation to build capacity for new leaders to succeed, many districts are now also providing first-year professional development programs for novice principals through specific training for new principals, mentoring, and coaching (Butler, 2008). New principals need professional development to understand specific district initiatives and succeed in their expanded roles, just as new

teachers typically receive professional development as they begin teaching (Adams, 2013).

School and community leaders have a vested interest in supporting new principals, as research indicates the effectiveness of school leaders does impact the area of student achievement. In a meta-analysis of 69 studies focused on 2,802 schools, 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers, a slight correlation was found between principal leadership behavior and academic achievement of students (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). While this shows a slight relationship between broad instructional leadership and student success, it is imperative that successful school leaders develop the ability to select instructional leadership practices that will have the greatest chance to improve student achievement (Grissom et al., 2013). Although principals must balance time between managerial and instructional tasks, a shift to increased principal time on instructional tasks results in positive academic growth for students. Grissom and colleagues (2013) observed the daily routine of 100 urban principals over a 3-year span. The authors found that principals' time spent on broad instructional functions did not indicate increased student academic growth. However, the results showed that specific leadership behaviors such as evaluation, teacher coaching and work on specific instructional interventions did in fact increase student achievement. School leaders may be working hard but not working smart as instructional leadership responsibilities have increased. Effective instructional leadership involves a site-specific approach to intervention design focused on both the context and needs of a specific learning environment (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 97). School leaders must recognize which

interventions will be most successful within their specific environments in order to lead effectively.

The Role of the Principal

In order for novice principals to be successful in their new role, there are key leadership competencies they must master. Earley and Weindling (2004) identified these key competencies as working with change, being proactive with communication/information management, keeping staff well informed, integration of work with leadership teams, delegation, and building staff capacity to lead. In a review of research, Cotton (2003) identified five main components seen in the work of successful school principals. Successful principals:

- Focus on student learning by having high expectations, clear goals, and a vision.
- Emphasize the level of relationships by fostering effective communication, being accessible, focusing on community and family engagement, and offering interpersonal support.
- Support school culture by fostering a collaborative environment of shared decision-making, risk taking, and a focus on continuous improvement.
- Provide instructional leadership through lesson feedback, protecting instructional time, and building capacity for teacher autonomy.
- Demonstrate accountability through collection of data via progress monitoring and utilization of data for school improvement.

When districts hire promising principal candidates and support their acquisition of the above named skills, students and staff benefit from competent and consistent leadership (Cotton, 2003).

Research indicates that some principal skill sets are of great importance for positive school outcomes. In a study that utilized survey responses from principals, assistant principals, teachers and parents to identify which principal skills matter most for student success, Grissom and Loeb (2009) found that organizational management skills do impact instructional leadership ability. In order to be an effective instructional leader, a principal must understand the instructional needs of the school and possess the ability to target resources appropriately. Principals can increase their leadership capacity by hiring the best teachers and providing professional learning opportunities for these teachers. Additionally, principals must demonstrate the organizational management competencies to keep the school running smoothly (Grissom & Loeb, 2009). A key finding from this research is that greater attention should be on organizational management skills in principal preparation and ongoing development.

The role of principal has shifted significantly over the past few decades. Principals are moving from a century-old model of being the school manager to being an instructional leader (Daresh, 2007). With multiple priorities to juggle and competencies to master, professional learning to support new principals in their navigation of the first-year can take multiple paths. Mentoring is one path that seeks to provide guidance for new principals to problem solve independently instead of merely providing content or intervening to solve problems (Daresh, 2007).

Career Stages

Research by Daresh (2007) and Alvy and Robbins (1998) defines two different models of principal career growth. Daresh (2007) has written of the three stages of a beginning principal, building on Huberman's (1989) earlier work on the three stages of a beginning teacher. The first stage is an initial career entry where new principals focus on "not failing" rather than succeeding. While some principals have easy beginnings, other new principals find their beginnings are more painful. The second stage is stabilization. All new principals move here regardless of whether the beginning was smooth or painful and here they find both personal satisfaction and confidence in their ability. At this stage, new principals begin to assume they can do the job. Finally, new principals move into the third stage and decide whether to become risk-taking or risk-avoidant. The risk-takers move toward experimentation and instructional improvement while the risk-avoidant stick with becoming the conventional image of the modern building manager (Daresh, 2007).

A separate model has identified three different stages in the development of a new principal (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). The first stage is *anticipatory*. The principal accepts the job and must begin the process of severing ties with current colleagues. The next stage is that of *encounter*, where the principal encounters the daily routines, establishes relationships, and deals with issues that arise. It has been said that the "success of beginning principals largely depends upon how adeptly they transition into their role and environment" (Lovely, 2004, p. 56). While the induction period of encounter is short, it does become increasingly difficult for the new principal to recover in following years if they are unable to change patterns and habits that are ineffective in establishing

relationships. The final stage of the new principal transition is that of *insider*. Only after this period of transition through the anticipatory and encounter stages, can the principal transition to insider and become accepted by the students, staff, parents, and community. In her reflection regarding the beginning principal stages defined by Alvy and Robbins (1998), Lovely (2004) asserted that effective principals who progress to the insider stage have the opportunity to work to reshape culture, but also understand and respect the culture that currently exists.

Principal Characteristics

Researchers have examined the question of whether the success of a new principal is dependent on their personal qualities, such as approachability and friendliness, or their engagement with instructional practices in order to gain faculty trust. In a study using survey data from 64 elementary, middle, and high schools in two school districts, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found a relationship between faculty trust in the principal and the perceptions of both collegial and instructional leadership. Additionally, a relationship was found between faculty trust and factors of school climate such as community engagement, academic press and teacher professionalism.

The work of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) demonstrated that relational and instructional leadership competencies are considered equally important. In addition to the principal's possession of effective personal qualities and instructional knowledge, the manner in which principals engaged with faculty members regarding instruction was also crucial. This finding might potentially inform planning for professional development and mentor support for novice principals in terms of increasing a professional learning focus on effective relational qualities and instructional practices. It seems that both

relationship qualities and competency in instructional practices are important to a principal's success in gaining the collective trust of a faculty. Faculty trust in the principal paves the way to move the school forward academically, while the overall school climate links to principal attributes and behaviors (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). This study illustrated the concept that “collegial leadership, instructional leadership, and trustworthy behavior on the part of the principal were all related to teacher professionalism” (p. 17). In cases where teachers held the belief their principal would be open to providing assistance in instructional matters, the colleagues were perceived to be more committed, thus raising the perception that the school climate was positive. Since both instructional leadership and principal relational skills contribute to principal success, the question of how to insure that all new principals have a common skill set in both areas of relational interactions and instructional leadership is an important one.

Improving Capacity through Professional Learning

One potential solution to increase the likelihood that new principals will begin their tenure with a high level of relational and instructional knowledge, and addresses the problem of high principal attrition is to provide an increased level of training. While principals may express interest in increasing leadership and relational skills, many districts are not always able to provide this resource or the learning focus is not on specific competencies needed by new principals. In a study of California superintendents, over 65% of superintendents listed poor interpersonal skills as the most common reason for principal failure, with the second most common reason listed as poor decision-making (Davis, 1997). Professional learning programs could address both of these reasons for

principal failure. In a study from the Educational Research Service ([ERS], 2000), principals most frequently requested professional learning opportunities to network and exchange ideas, evaluate job demands, and implement school-wide change by taking theories of change and actually putting them into practice.

In the Schools and Staffing Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics, Lavigne and colleagues (2016) found that although all principals reported participating in professional learning during the 2011-2012 school year, the method of delivery varied. Only a quarter of principals reported participation in university courses. The most frequent form of professional learning was either a workshop or a conference format, with over 90% of principals having participated in this type of professional learning during the school year. Half of the 6000 principals surveyed reported engaging in mentoring. This survey result suggested that professional learning for principals is frequently more short-term, such as a workshop or conference format, rather than in a continuous program, such as mentoring.

Chicago Public Schools developed comprehensive training programs for principals aimed specifically to meet the needs of three types of leaders: aspiring principals, those in their first-year as principals, and experienced principals. An effort was made to address the specific needs of each group (Peterson & Kelley, 2001). The training included multiple aspects of effective practices for adult learning, including reflective analysis, coaching, case study, and simulation. California's Pajaro Valley Unified School District has also had experience in the area of principal professional development (Casey & Donaldson, 2001). The district utilized Professional Standards for Administrators, establishing clear goals for its principals. An Administrative Cycle of

Inquiry is established at the beginning of each academic year and includes self-assessment, personal goal setting, professional development, and evaluation.

Additionally, the principal has an opportunity to self-reflect and meet with a supervisor and mentor (Casey & Donaldson, 2001). In order to tailor the professional learning to each principal, zone assistant superintendents gather information from principals regarding their personal interests in professional learning. The Pajaro Valley Unified School District's professional development practice—to differentiate for each group of leaders based on experience level—highlights the need to consider specific issues that are relevant to the professional learning needs of individual principals at different stages of their career.

Principal attrition influences a school in a number of different ways and highlights a need for additional professional learning. In a review of leadership transitions within a number of schools, Fink and Brayman (2006) examined some of the issues that arise during leadership succession. Several concerns are noted, one of which was frequent leadership turnover creating issues with staff trust and the continuation of school initiatives, which aligns with the work of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) who state that trust in the school leader is crucial for school initiative success. Recommended practice includes district consideration of extending longer principal tenures to schools that are beginning to demonstrate improvement so the improvement process will not be disrupted (Fink & Brayman, 2006). An additional concern noted in the research is:

in an environment of runaway reform demands, these successors are being denied the time to engage in an entry process that would help them to engender the trust

of their staffs and gain insight into the cultures and micro-politics of their schools. (p. 23)

Additionally, inexperienced and unprepared principals tend to stick with implementing district level mandates instead of working collaboratively with the new staff to develop internal goals or to even work toward making the outside mandates align with internal goals. The authors noted that the teachers interviewed in the study characterized the school leaders of today as leaders who do not stick around long enough to make an impression, focusing instead on the district initiatives and positive career trajectories. The authors suggested that principals need considerable time and autonomy to make lasting change (Fink & Brayman, 2006). The question of whether mentoring could impact the rate of leadership transition for new principals to successfully align internal school needs with district initiatives and also lower principal attrition by providing extensive support to new principals is one to consider.

The Practice of Mentoring

The entry of a new principal into the profession is not a one-time event, but a transitional process; thus, mentoring efforts must focus on providing ongoing guidance to the new principal instead of merely intervening to solve problems (Daresh, 2007). Mentoring is critical, as it provides “the bridge between theory learned in graduate school and the complex realities of contemporary school leadership” (Searby, 2008, p. 2). The mentoring relationship must be based on trust and provide critical feedback so that the mentor becomes the mirror that the practitioner uses to initiate reflective practice (Efron, Winter, & Bressman, 2012) and the practitioner is able to use the critical feedback to make adjustments.

In her work as an educational professor, Searby (2008) created a framework for aspiring administrators to use in their role as protégés within a course on mentoring. Students in the course were required to approach an experienced educator and enter into a mentoring relationship. Searby then studied the journals and reflections of aspiring principals as they moved through the mentoring process. Searby discovered that a key to success is whether the protégé is open to the mentoring process, with trust being a key component. Erdem and Ozen Aytumur (2008) studied cross-gender mentoring pairs and discovered several factors that influenced a protégé's trust in his or her mentor, including mentor competency, consistency, fairness, sharing of control, showing interest, and communication.

Trust

Trust is essential to school success because of the interdependence between parents, teachers, leaders, and students as they collaborate to move a school forward. Trust is defined as the act of making oneself vulnerable and believing that one's interests will not be harmed (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). School leaders will almost certainly not be as effective without trust.

The establishment of a trusting relationship also enables mentors to effectively support novice principals (Searby, 2008). Zachary and Fischler (2009) also speak to the reciprocal and trusting relationship that must be in place between a protégé and a mentor. The authors remind the reader that a partnership should form with the purpose of working collaboratively on “achieving mutually defined goals, developing your skills, abilities, knowledge, and thinking” (Zachary & Fischler, 2009, p. 2). Mentoring relationships must contain the following elements: “reciprocity, learning, relationship, partnership,

collaboration, mutually defined goals, and development” (p. 2) to be successful. The authors remind the reader that “relationships don’t happen by magic” (p. 2) and that, without trust, a good mentoring relationship is not possible. Without trust, a mentoring pair will simply be going through the motions of mentoring instead of truly implementing the process (Zachary & Fischler, 2009). The perception of mentor ability is a notable factor in the development of trust within the mentor relationship, as is a positive track record of accomplishment. Ability is influenced by behaviors—notably behaviors that demonstrate a willingness to learn, such as openness, following advice, and being willing to take criticism (Leck & Orser, 2013).

Mentoring programs are viewed as a primary vehicle to transfer organizational knowledge from experienced employees to new employees. The ability to effectively establish trust also impacts the ability of a mentor to successfully transfer knowledge. Fleig-Palmer and Schoorman (2011) found a positive correlation between mentoring, trust, and knowledge transfer in a study of mentoring among hospital employees. If the perception of the job-related mentor support was high, the reported trust in the mentor was also high, as was the knowledge transfer. The perception of mentoring support and corresponding impact on the level of trust demonstrates the need for mentors to possess a high level of emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence

In order to establish an effective mentoring relationship, both the mentor and protégé must have social intelligence, or more specifically, emotional intelligence. Leading effectively through social intelligence is “less about mastering situations—or even mastering social skill situation sets—than about developing a genuine interest in and

talent for fostering positive feelings in the people whose cooperation and support you need” (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008, p. 2). Goleman (1998) lists five essential emotional intelligence qualities for leaders: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. *Self-awareness* refers to understanding one’s own weaknesses, strengths, and motivations and how these impact others with whom you interact. *Self-regulation* is the ability to monitor one’s emotional state and impulses. *Motivation* is interest in achievement. *Empathy* is the ability to identify and understand the motivations of others. Finally, *social skills* determine one’s ability to establish rapport and use this rapport to move the other party in a desired direction. Goleman (1998) posited that emotional intelligence tends to increase with age in the form of what is typically defined as maturity, but can also be influenced by individual coaching. Chun, Litzky, Sosik, Bechtold, and Godshalk (2010) concluded from a study involving 147 formal mentoring partnerships that a higher level of emotional intelligence in mentors enhances the overall mentoring process through increasing the level of trust of the protégé. One recommendation from this study is that the establishment of a formal mentoring program included specific training on the concepts of emotional intelligence to insure that the emotional needs of new leaders will be met through the mentoring feedback conversations (Chun et al., 2010).

Another area of mentor support is that of supporting novice principals in the area of managing the increasing emotional demands of the position. According to Maxwell and Riley (2016), “school principals continuously meet multiple stakeholders at different developmental levels: children, adult employees, peers, parents and supervisors/employers; all of whom may sometimes display extremely high levels of

emotional arousal. This is emotionally demanding” (p. 2). Increasing demands in the field of education, with a corresponding loss of resources, can increase the daily stress of all school administrators, especially those new to the profession. School administrators deal with day-to-day emotionality from the community, requiring them to often hide their true emotions. The hiding and faking of emotions can result in increased amounts of emotional labor and eventually lead to decreased levels of job satisfaction and increased levels of burnout (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). Including explicit education to help school administrators manage emotional demands is recommended (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). In order to increase their likelihood of a successful beginning, new principals should be able to accurately reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and make adjustments as needed (Searby, 2014). This ability of the new principal to reflect and make adjustments in practice is known as the mentoring mindset.

Mentoring Mindset

It is important to note that the practice of principal mentoring offered from the standpoint of the wise sage (experienced principal) and passive recipient (new principal) is changing (Searby, 2014). One anticipated relational component, which is required within this newly defined mentoring relationship, is that the new principal must have a mentoring mindset (Searby, 2014). New principals should be able to accurately reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and make adjustments as needed (Searby, 2014). Searby (2008) provided protégés with an opportunity to develop this mentoring mindset through lectures and discussion about the mentoring relationship and cognitive coaching training to develop capacity for reflection. Mentoring teams should consider this mindset descriptive of a partnership where both parties bring their relative strengths to the

relationship. The newly named principal can bring fresh ideas learned recently within a university preparation program and experience as an assistant principal or teacher leader, while the experienced mentor principal brings valued perspective from years spent in the principal role. Searby (2014) has written about the paradigm of the new principal as initiator and taking charge of setting the goals for the mentoring partnership.

Searby (2014) describes how a new principal needs to develop an appropriate mindset so that he or she is able to embrace the mentoring process and benefits of the mentoring relationship are maximized.

- Is the new principal curious and does he or she ask good questions, or believe there is nothing new to learn?
- Is the new principal able to accept his or her weaknesses and actively seek feedback?
- Does the new principal reach out to the mentor throughout the process, or only when there is a crisis?
- How does the new principal perform in the area of setting priorities, seeing the big picture, and picking up on social cues?
- Can he or she be an active listener?

Searby (2014) stated that these questions could be indicators of either the presence or absence of a mentoring mindset, which speaks to the new principal's readiness for mentoring and potential to benefit from it. Mentoring relationships are most productive when the protégé has the mindset for learning, which is defined by characteristics such as taking initiative, relationship skills, reflective practice, and having a learning orientation. New principals who lack initiative, are not goal setters, and lack relational or reflective

competencies, might not see the same level of benefits within a mentoring program that new principals with mentoring mindsets experience. A nationwide interview process demonstrated that while desired mentoring outcomes can vary, an overarching central theme is that of “developing the protégé’s strengths and abilities by deliberately compelling him or her to engage in accurate and productive self-reflection” (Hall, 2008, p. 451).

Barriers

In addition to the new principal not having a mentoring mindset, there are three barriers can also impact the success of the mentoring process. The barriers of time, compatibility and gender influence the effectiveness of mentoring partnerships.

Time. Nearly 70% of principal mentors and new principals surveyed nationwide cited lack of time as a barrier to the mentoring relationship (Hall, 2008). Effective mentor programs arrange for regular meeting times and require a certain amount of time as a pre-requisite for participation (Texas Teacher Mentoring Advisory Committee [TTMAC], 2015).

Compatibility. Another factor to consider is whether the mentoring parties are well matched in terms of compatibility. While compatibility is somewhat of a nebulous quality in terms of arranging a mentoring match, Hall (2008) found that the lack of compatibility was a key reason mentoring relationships failed.

Gender. Differences in the perception of ability might also play a role in the development of trust within mentoring relationships of the opposite gender. A study of trust within the mentoring relationship of 24 partnerships points to the differences in how

men and women build trust and develop trust with the opposite gender (Erdem & Aytemur, 2008).

Feedback

Mertz, Welch and Henderson (1990) has shared that “the essence of mentoring is the realization of potential” (p. 16). Mentors must be able and ready to provide feedback on professional manner in terms of communication, performance, and many other factors. The mentoring program provides an avenue for protégés to obtain information about themselves on a regular basis. The critical feedback must be both specific and honest and “should deal as much with strength and positive attributes, if possible as it does with weaknesses and areas in need of improvement” (Mertz, Welch, & Henderson, 1990, p. 17). If feedback addresses areas in need of improvement, the mentor should provide solutions to alter the inappropriate behavior.

Crafting effective feedback is a key competency area for an effective mentoring partnership. Stone and Heen (2014) describe the three different types of feedback as appreciation, coaching, and evaluation. *Appreciation* is related to relationships and human connection, involves acknowledgement and connection, and provides motivation. When a supervisor provides additional direction to expand capability and skill this is *coaching*. Rating an employee against a set of standards, informing decision making, and aligning expectations is *evaluation*. Mentoring typically involves coaching in order to expand capability and skill.

Eller, Lev, and Feurer (2014) found communication and accessibility as the most common themes in a study of key components of an effective mentor and protégé relationship among 117 mentor-protégé dyads. Receiving positive mentor feedback was a

major focus for protégés in this study, although mentors focused on the merits of providing both positive and negative feedback.

Feedback conversations are a priority within teacher mentoring programs too. In the previously referenced findings of the TTMAC (2015), the committee reported that new teachers need frequent, focused, and structured time to receive feedback. TTMAC (2015) recommended that, at a minimum, mentors and new teachers meet once a week for 45 minutes, or for 12 hours each semester. The focus on instructional delivery and student achievement should include interactions between mentors and new teachers that provide knowledge about district orientation, data driven instructional practices, instructional coaching cycles, professional development, and professional expectations. Although the recommendations from this TTMAC (2015) report pertain to classroom teachers, the work of mentoring principals to be effective instructional leaders would also require a focus on the above-mentioned best practices. Requiring a minimum meeting time for principal mentoring would also insure time for new principals to show clear competence in their understanding of these skills and the ability to lead others to implement these expectations.

Promising Mentoring Models

At this time, the practice of principal mentoring is not currently widely implemented. However, several nationally recognized models of practice provide some implementation strategies for new programs to emulate. One nationally known principal mentoring program is that of Albuquerque Public Schools Extra Support for Principals (ESP) program. Weingartner (2009) described program specifics and how the program was established, recommending that the first meeting between the new principal and the experienced principal mentor be approached as a celebration. In this way, new principals

are reassured that there is no hidden agenda and that there is a program in place to support them in their new role, not to add to their stress load. The new principal chooses his or her mentor from a list of experienced principals with at least five years of leadership experience. After the selection, the mentor coordinator instructs the mentor using the ESP handbook. Training sessions include information on mentoring versus coaching, time management, and suggestions for mentors who work with new principals. The ESP program requires at least three hours per month for support for the new principal. Weingartner (2009) cautioned that it is easy for mentoring teams who do not schedule regular meetings to get off track. Albuquerque Public Schools recommends that 95% of the mentoring time should be specific to the new principal's needs. The district hosts a new principal, mentor social in mid-October of each year, then follows up with two "lunch and learn" professional development talks in winter and spring. To finish the year, the mentor coordinator visits each new principal to gather information about the level of support and effectiveness of the program. Each participant receives a framed award for participation; the mentors also receive a stipend each semester. The overall goal for the ESP program is to give new principals a positive view of the principal role, create momentum for pursuing challenges, relieve stress, and promote professional growth. Lessons learned from the Albuquerque Public Schools ESP in the areas of overall goals, training needs, monthly support, allocating time specifically for new principal needs, and having follow up meetings throughout the year provide key reminders for the Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Program.

Another nationally known mentoring program is the National Principal Mentor Program sponsored by National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP],

2017). NAESP lists their mentoring program goal as “to develop novice principals for 21st century leadership” (NAESP, 2017). Leaders attend a 2-day Leadership Immersion Institute where principals learn how to integrate best practices in mentoring and adult learning with their personal experiences. Those principals who choose to become certified mentors continue under the watchful eye of a trained mentor by choosing a new principal protégé to mentor and participating in the Mentor-In-Training experience over a 9-month internship. The mentor-in-training then engages in listening and questioning strategies with the protégé and communicates with his or her coach throughout the year. Principals who complete both portions of the training receive the NAESP National Principal Mentor Certification. NAESP touts this as a win-win situation where mentors give back to the profession, and experienced, formally trained mentoring professional guide new principals. The NAESP approach to mentoring training provides a thorough process to facilitate effective listening and questioning strategies.

In a report from the Wallace Foundation, Mitgang (2012) found that since 2000, over half of U.S. states had enacted a mentoring requirement for new principals due to concerns over attrition in high needs schools and an appreciation for the role that a school leader plays in creating an effective instructional environment. One example of this is Gwinnett County, Georgia’s largest school district. The Wallace Foundation has recognized Gwinnett County as having a strong mentoring structure in place (Mitgang, 2012). All leaders, new and experienced, meet together each summer for several days to learn and collaborate with national experts on topics related to student achievement initiatives. New principals are assigned a 2-year mentor in the form of a highly effective retired principal who has a record of accomplishment of positive school improvement.

Another example is the New York City Leadership Academy, which offers coaching to all new principal hires, either through a principal supervisor or a retired principal (Mitgang, 2012). At the beginning of the year, new NYC principals complete a self-assessment in leadership competencies so that they can identify three major goals as part of the required “Individualized Growth Plan” (p. 27). New principals can also access specialized coaches from the NYC Leadership Academy to assist them with school budget or school data interpretation needs (Mitgang, 2012).

Formal mentoring programs outside of education have expanded to include mentors not just within one’s current company, but also across a particular profession. Ensher and Murphy (2005) have recommended a new type of mentoring, where companies rethink the formal mentoring program and instead provide the structure for mentoring relationships to form organically. Ensher and Murphy (2005) have argued that protégés should have access to different groups, not just one mentor. Furthermore, the authors offered a reminder that employees often demonstrate loyalty to professions, not necessarily corporations. This new development could open mentoring relationships to include competitors in the corporate world or potentially other districts in education. The goal should be to further the development of the profession, not only the specific corporation. Protégés could then take an active role by choosing mentors, not simply waiting to be chosen (Ensher & Murphy, 2005).

Fullan (2009) has stated that effective systemic reform to address student achievement gaps or other system-wide needs typically involve as many as a half dozen improvement factors interacting together to produce change. Systems should never focus on only one factor, as the interactions between factors produces a significant impact. In

reviewing the different components of effective mentoring, there are a number of different factors mentioned in literature as influencing new principal success through a mentoring program. These factors include initial training for mentors (Weingartner, 2009; Zachary & Fischler, 2009), establishing programs that have a time requirement (TTMAC, 2015; Weingartner, 2009; Zachary & Fischler, 2009). Other factors include establishing an individualized growth plan for protégés based on individual need (Mitgang, 2012), ensuring that trust is developed in the relationship through demonstration of emotional intelligence (Zachary & Fischler, 2009; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008), and focusing on reflective dialogue to grow in the areas of relational and instructional skills (Zachary & Fischler, 2009; Searby, 2014).

Fullan (2009) wrote that new leadership paradigms are continuing to emerge along with the new leadership who exemplify them. The new paradigm includes listening (including listening to voices of disagreement), having respect for differences (and continuing the work to reconcile those differences), looking for win-win scenarios, taking the higher ground, having humble confidence, and fostering hope for the future. This new paradigm of school leadership is consistent with using mentoring as a strategy to influence and improve leadership performance, especially in the work to support new principals (Fullan, 2009).

A review of relevant literature indicated that there are principal mentoring programs that have promise for developing future school leaders (NAESP, 2017; Mitgang, 2012; Weingartner, 2009). These programs involve professional development for the principal mentors so that the mentors have a clear understanding of their role and the ability to mentor effectively (NAESP, 2017; Mitgang, 2012; Weingartner, 2009).

Utilizing mentoring as professional development allows both relational support for new principals and the opportunity to build independence through reflective questioning and improvement in local decision-making. The success of new and future school leaders is dependent on an effective induction period where they can move through the stages of the beginning principal to become a future risk-taking—not a risk-avoidant—school administrator (Daresh, 2007). Finally, the practice of mentoring has the potential of transforming the leadership performance of today’s school leaders so that they are equipped to meet the changing role of school administrators from building manager to instructional leader. The principal mentoring program to support the increased arrival of new principals in Lakewood is designed to implement the above recommendations in terms of training and program guidelines. The purpose of this study is to discover whether or not the principal mentoring program has a corresponding impact on the practice of Lakewood’s new leaders and if the reflective dialogue experienced within the mentoring program played a significant role in their first-year experience. Table 1 presents an overview of the review of literature for principal mentoring programs and leadership practice.

Table 1

Review of Literature Matrix: Principal Mentoring Programs and Leadership Practice

Topic	Findings	Author(s)
Correlation of principal leadership and student academic achievement	Correlation of principal leadership and student academic achievement is .25. Principals must be able to successfully select the interventions that will impact student achievement.	Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005
Key leadership competencies	Effective principals develop shared values among their staff. Key competencies included working with change, being proactive in the area of information management within the school setting, keeping staff well informed, seamless integration of work with leadership teams, building leadership capacity within their staff and delegating leadership responsibility.	Earley & Weindling, 2004
Five components are seen in successful school leaders	The five components are: (1) having high expectations, clear goals and a vision; (2) placing emphasis on the level of relationships by fostering effective communication, being accessible, focusing on community and family engagement and interpersonal support; (3) fostering a collaborative environment of shared decision making, risk taking, and focusing on continuous improvement; (4) providing instructional leadership through lesson feedback, protecting of instructional time and building capacity for teacher autonomy; (5) demonstrating accountability through collection of data via progress monitoring and utilization of data for school improvement	Cotton, 2003
Role of principal and stages of leadership	The role of principal has shifted from building manager to instructional leader. There are three stages of principal leadership. The first stage is an initial career entry The second stage is stabilization. The third stage is whether principals decide whether to become risk-taking or risk-avoidant. The risk-takers move toward experimentation and instructional improvement while the risk-avoidant stick with becoming the conventional image of the modern building manager.	Daresh, 2007
Three stage development model of principal growth	The first stage is <i>anticipatory</i> . The next stage is that of <i>encounter</i> , where the principal encounters the daily routines, establishes relationships, and deals with issues that arise. The final stage of the new principal transition is that of <i>insider</i> .	Alvy & Robbins, 1998 Lovely, 2004
Two major competencies for educational leaders	Relational effectiveness and instructional leadership are equally important for principal competency. The manner in which principals engage with faculty members regarding instruction is crucial.	Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015

California superintendent survey that identified reasons principals fail	65% of California superintendents listed poor interpersonal skills as the most common reason for principal failure. The second most common reason was poor decision making skills.	Davis, 1997
Professional development for principals	In the Schools and Staffing Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics, 90% of principals participated in a conference or workshop. Fewer than 50% participated in mentoring.	Lavigne, Shakman, Zweig, & Greller, 2016
Chicago Public Schools Leadership Training for aspiring, new, and experienced principals	A separate program was designed for all three groups, which included reflective analysis, case study and simulation	Peterson & Kelley, 2001
Pajaro Valley Unified School District Leadership Program	The Administrative Cycle of Inquiry is established at the beginning of each academic year and includes self-assessment, personal goal setting, professional development and evaluation. Additionally, the principal has an opportunity to self-reflect and meet with a supervisor and mentor. Special focus is given to each leadership transition.	Casey & Donaldson, 2001
Local impact of principal attrition	Inexperienced and unprepared principals tend to stick with implementing outside mandates instead of working collaboratively with the new staff to develop internal goals or to even work towards making the outside mandates align with internal goals. The study suggests that principals need considerable time and autonomy to make lasting change.	Fink & Brayman, 2003
Principal growth can be facilitated through mentoring	The entry of a new principal into the profession is not a one-time event, but a transitional process where mentor efforts must focus on guiding the new principal instead of merely intervening to solve problems.	Daresh, 2007
Specific factors inspire protégés to trust their mentor	Some initial findings on the factors that inspire a protégé to have trust in a mentor were found to be mentor competency, consistency, fairness, sharing of control, showing interest and communication.	Erden & Ozen Aytemur, 2008
Mentor trust of the protégé is also important and is based on the mentor's perception of protégé ability	Ability is influenced by behaviors, notably behaviors that demonstrate a willingness to learn such as openness, following advice, and being willing to take criticism.	Leck & Orser, 2013
Emotional labor is high for principals	Including specific training on managing emotional labor for principals is recommended.	Maxwell & Riley, 2016
Texas Teacher Mentoring Advisory Committee has new	Key criteria include selection, assignment, defining roles and responsibilities, training, program design and program	TTMAC, 2015

teacher mentoring recommendations that may also be relevant for principals.	delivery, funding and accountability. Meetings should be for 45 minutes each week or 12 times per semester.	
New principals with a growth mindset may benefit more from a mentoring relationship	A mindset for learning is defined by characteristics such as taking initiative, relationship skills, reflective practice and having a learning orientation.	Searby, 2014
The availability of time and partner compatibility has an impact on the mentoring relationship	Over 70% of surveyed principals indicated that lack of time was a barrier to mentoring. Effective mentoring programs arrange for regular meeting times and require a certain amount of time as a pre-requisite for participation. Lack of compatibility can contribute to failure.	Hall, 2008
Emotional intelligence impacts both the mentor and protégé	There are five essential emotional intelligence qualities for leaders: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.	Goleman, 1998
Extra Support for Principals from Albuquerque Public Schools	Qualified mentors are selected by protégés and teams spend a minimum of three hours together per month. Initial training is provided on mentoring versus coaching and time management. Data collected at the end of the school year on level of support and participation.	Weingartner, 2009
Principal mentoring program	NAESP provides a two-day training for all mentors and includes a nine-month mentor-in-training program.	NAESP, 2017
NYC Mentoring program	Principals have the opportunity to complete a self-assessment in leadership competencies to determine mentoring needs. An individualized growth plan is created for each principal who is mentored by an experienced retired principal for two years.	Mitgang, 2012
Power mentoring program	Organic mentoring program where relationships form naturally and are not pre-determined	Ensher & Murphy, 2005

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In Chapter 3, I outline procedures and design for an action research study in which I examined the implementation of a principal mentoring program and its corresponding impact on leadership practice. The literature has evidenced the great need for support for the growth of new principals to lead schools effectively and also to decrease principal attrition by supporting principals during their first-year of service. Upon taking a principal role, today's new leaders are met with complex challenges and conditions. Moreover, a review of the literature suggests that a shift in thinking about how districts successfully prepare, support, and sustain principals is much needed. Principal preparation should be job embedded, collaborative, and provide application of practice and feedback in a trusting relationship. The establishment and investigation of a newly implemented and formalized mentoring program for new principals focused on improving the support currently provided to new principals within Lakewood County Public Schools (LCPS). The use of an action research methodology allowed for an initial implementation of a new instructional practice for a certain designated time followed by a qualitative process to measure the impact of the new instructional practice. I gathered

data to determine the impact of this mentoring program on the leadership practice of first and second-year principals within the district.

Research Design

Through my role as a leadership development administrator, I facilitated the creation and implementation of a formalized principal mentoring program to provide support for first and second-year principals within LCPS. Because I developed the mentoring curriculum and program through my current role, there was no additional cost to the school district other than training materials, such as book study texts and binders to organize mentoring materials. Principal mentors were not reimbursed for any additional time spent in mentoring but did receive professional credit to use towards licensure renewal.

In order to implement a leadership development initiative such as mentoring, it is important to understand the current strengths of the system already in place in LCPS. Prior to the study, one of the initial data measures was collected in the summer of 2016 through the use of Appreciative Inquiry. The method of Appreciative Inquiry is described as “the study of what gives life to systems when they function at their best” (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 1). This method of Appreciative Inquiry gathered an initial data set from the principal mentors to allow them to envision a positive future of support for new principals through mentoring. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) describe the process for Appreciative Inquiry as a method that allows group members to hear other group members’ ideas, facilitates community, and helps members discover their group’s positive core, while also exploring possibilities. One of the basic tenets of Appreciative Inquiry is described as the use of human communication through inquiry and dialogue,

providing a venue for people to “shift their attention and action away from problem analysis to lift up worthy ideals and productive possibilities for the future” (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 2). A leadership development survey was also sent out to all school based administrators in the district to gather input regarding support for new principals. The results from both the Appreciative Inquiry session and the leadership development survey are detailed in chapter four.

In terms of actual program planning, I designed the initial training for principal mentors in July 2016 within my role as a central office administrator, which included the Appreciative Inquiry measure. There was also a focused time during the meeting in July 2016 to create mentoring documents such as a monthly calendar agenda for principal mentors to review with each new principal (Appendix B). The initial training agenda for the Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Program was developed in order to provide an overview of the program and specific training in mentoring (Appendix C). I utilized the work of Weingartner (2009), who established the ESP mentoring model used in Albuquerque Public Schools. Weingartner (2009) stated that not all successful principals are considered successful principal mentors. There are certain strengths in effective principal mentors such as “being effective listeners,” possessing “sound communication skills,” and an ability to be “creative problem solvers” (p. 62). Effective mentors maintain a low profile by focusing their attention on the mentee, understand the art of asking thought-provoking questions, and the follow the principles of sound time management (Weingartner, 2009). After reviewing these recommendations from Weingartner (2009) for the Albuquerque Public Schools mentoring program, I utilized these concepts of effective mentoring to focus the initial LCPS principal mentoring training in the areas of

time management, building trust, emotional intelligence, and listening skills. Each principal mentor was also given guidance in developing a Mentoring Priority Plan for his or her new principal based on individual needs, school priorities, and district initiatives (Appendix D). Expectations were set for a meeting frequency of once per week during the first month of school, followed by once per month from October through June. The importance of maintaining confidentiality was reviewed with the principal mentor group along with specifics regarding role clarification. I shared the program expectations with the new principals. One additional mentoring training was held in October 2016 and joint meetings with new principals and principal mentors were held in December 2016 and March, April and May 2017. These meetings provided a check in time, group and mentor pair reflective activities and professional learning activities.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 new principals and 11 principal mentors in the spring of 2017. Since I also served in the role of facilitator of the Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Program, it is important to note that I knew all participants through my work role. I am currently on staff as a leadership development administrator. While I did provide ongoing support for new principals through the facilitation of the Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Program and the New Principal Cohort, I did not directly supervise any new LCPS administrators or principal mentors. I anticipated that participants would be able and willing to provide candid answers to interview questions with the guarantee of confidentiality. My research goal was to improve the current program through analysis of data collected via the semi-structured interview process. The research questions were designed to be specific to the mentoring program, but also general enough to allow unexpected topics to arise. Within my current

role as a member of the Department of Human Resources and Talent Development, many conversations already require a level of confidentiality, depending on the specifics of the situation. This continued confidentiality would be an anticipated practice given my current role.

Research Questions

The focus of this study is to determine participants' perceptions on the impact of mentoring on the development of principals in a suburban school district located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The overarching question of the study is the following: What impact does mentoring have on first and second-year principal performance? Secondary questions that will be explored in the study are as follows: (a) What do first and second-year principals who participate in mentoring learn based on their reflective activities and dialogue with experienced leaders? (b) What changes in professional practice of first and second-year principals did participants perceive to have come from the mentoring? (c) What activities within the mentoring program did participants find to have been most helpful for first and second-year principal leadership?

Method

Action research is a method for learning more about a problem or practice, through putting a solution into action and the studying the impact of the solution. Action researchers are “custodians of the practice for their times and generation,” with this specific methodology providing an avenue for “practitioners to fulfill their stewardship” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 421). Action researchers continually change and evolve in order to adjust to new demands within society and communities. Although one overarching goal of action research has been to develop our understandings of practice, Kemmis (2010)

stated that the principal justification for research is “direct contribution to transformative action and to changing history” (p. 420). New developments within our society generate new questions. Researchers examine these questions to attempt to solve problems of practice. Action research focuses on the “new way of doing things, new ways of thinking, and new ways of relating to one another and to the world” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 420) in pursuit of the greater good. In this action research study, I worked to implement a district-level principal mentoring program and collected information to inform future practice in effectively supporting new principals during their first and second year. This research provided the opportunity to examine a new way of relating to and supporting new principals through the role of an experienced principal mentor.

Action Research Timeline

The development of the research proposal took place after consideration of background information of previous research in the area of principal mentoring and the creation of program specifics within the LCPS Principal Mentoring Program. The specific methodology used for action research in this study was the expansive learning circle (Engeström, 2001). The expansive learning circle (Appendix A) provides the researcher with an opportunity to be deliberative prior to implementing the plan. Using the expansive learning circle allowed me to ask questions, analyze, model, implement, and reflect before—instead of only after—the research was concluded (Engeström, 2001). The seven steps utilized in the expansive learning circle correspond with the three cycles of the action research and are highlighted below.

The first cycle of the action research process took place in July and August of 2016. This cycle represent the questioning and analysis portion of the expansive learning

circle (Engeström, 2001). An initial Appreciative Inquiry session was held with principal mentors and the distribution of the district survey on leadership development priorities. For the initial Appreciative Inquiry session, the principal mentors responded to questions regarding leadership development, sharing their wishes on how to support the development of new principals. This information and a general survey regarding leadership development district needs was then used to plan the initial leadership development supports for the 2016-17 school year; both are included in the research question findings. Following the Appreciative Inquiry session, I proposed two potential documents for the principal mentors to use with new principals. The first was a sample mentoring calendar which I asked the principal mentors to review and also suggest potential items to add. There was ample time to add items both during this session and up to one week after this session in order to allow time for reflection. I received several additions and changes to the calendar to make this document more relevant for the new principals. The final mentoring calendar created by the principal mentors was then used as a tool throughout the year (Appendix B). The second document shared with the principal mentors was the Mentoring Priority Plan (Appendix D). I proposed a sample plan that contained a dialogue format for the new principal and mentor to discuss district priorities, school priorities and individual priorities of the new principal utilizing a Leadership Growth Planner tool. The instructions on the Mentoring Priority Plan (Appendix D) asked the principal mentor and new principal to discuss the priorities within each area and to decide on two high-priority areas of focus for mentoring. The principal mentors reviewed this document during the July training session and also had time to comment during the following week. I received minimal changes to this

document and no suggestions for improvement so moved ahead with the proposed format. This Mentoring Priority Plan was used as a mentoring tool for the LLPMP. In terms of program time commitment for the first cycle, principal mentors were asked to work with the new principal for an extended session of several hours, up to a half day, prior to school opening because the August list for the mentoring calendar is extensive.

The second action research cycle was from September through December 2016 and corresponds to the expansive learning circle steps of modeling the new solution and examination of the new model (Engeström, 2001). Mentoring pairs were asked to meet weekly during September and then monthly during October, November, and December. I provided an additional check-in session and mentoring training in October with a guest speaker who is a professor at a local university. I also reviewed the mentoring program expectations and placed emphasis on active listening and reflective questioning during this session. In the fall, all new principals and principal mentors were asked to read selected chapters in the book *Hacking Leadership: 10 Ways Great Leaders Inspire Learning that Teachers, Students, and Parents Love*. In December, there was a joint meeting of new principals and principal mentors to discuss the readings, share reflections and Skype with one of the authors. This meeting also provided dedicated time during the school day for principal mentors and new principals to engage in the planning process for the second half of the school year. The mentoring calendar was used as a planning tool for this discussion. Modeling the new solution (Engeström, 2001) was demonstrated through the monthly mentoring meetings and an examination of the model was highlighted through the mentoring discussions at the October training and December book study small group sessions. I also had the opportunity to talk with principal mentors

at the training and observe actual mentoring conversations during the scheduled December book study time.

The third cycle of this action research took place from January 2017 to June 2017 and provided opportunities for two of the final three steps of the expansive learning circle: implementing the new model, reflection on the process and consolidating the new practice (Engeström, 2001). Mentoring pairs continued with monthly mentoring meetings during this cycle along with two full days of professional learning in March and April 2017, titled *Fierce Conversations*, and a reflective meeting of all new principals and principal mentors in May. An LCPS certified trainer provided the workshop, which focused on communication skills for leadership. Participants learned how to conduct team, coaching, delegation, and conflict conversations. New principals and principal mentors were asked to attend together. In May 2017, there was an end of the year reflective activity with all new principals and principal mentors, which included dedicated time for new principals and principal mentors to plan for summer tasks and the upcoming school year. An additional reflective process was the research question interviews conducted with the new principals and principal mentors in May and June 2017. The final step of consolidating the new practice will take place in the fall of 2017 with any implemented changes. A visual representation of the action research cycles is referenced in Appendix E.

Engeström, Miettinen, and Punamäki (1999) described the expansive learning process as the involvement of multiple contradictions and tensions in a complex process of construction and resolution to create meaning. Providing opportunities for formal and informal reflection throughout the year through the Appreciative Inquiry session, October

mentor training, and December book study allowed me opportunities to ask questions and analyze the initial data, as well as model, examine, implement, and reflect prior to the year ending. An additional formal reflection was provided through the semi-structured new principal and principal mentor interviews in May and June 2017.

Participants

The participants in this study were all licensed administrators with LCPS, who were either new principals or principal mentors in the LCPS school system. The participants included 11 principal mentors and 12 new principals. The participants varied in age, level and location of prior experience, race, and gender. Participants in the study included 10 females and 13 males. The participants were selected so that at least one mentor-protégé pair from each school level was represented. My goal was to recruit pairs who are representative of the demographic distribution within LCPS. Table 2 provides characteristics of the principal mentors and Table 3 provides the characteristics of new principals.

New principals. New principals were either beginning their first-year in the principal role or beginning their first-year in the principal role within LCPS. Second year principals were working within their second year in the principal role or their second year in the principal role in LCPS. New principals in the study had a range of experience from one year to over five years, as some new principals were new to the role and others were experienced principals who were new to the district. Since the mentoring program was formalized this year to support principals in years one and two, Year 2 principals and their informal mentors from the previous year were also included. In July 2016, principal mentors participated in an initial training session and an Appreciative Inquiry session was

conducted. The principal mentors responded to questions regarding leadership development and were asked to share wishes on how to support the development of new principals. Additionally, a general survey regarding leadership development district needs was given to all school based administrators in August of 2016 and was used to plan the initial leadership development supports for the 2016-17 school year.

Principal mentors. Principal mentors were experienced principals with at least three years of successful leadership experience at the principal level. Successful leadership experience was defined as a principal in good standing who is professional and collaborative with district leadership across departments. Principal mentors in the study were either in their first or second year of working with their new principal. This was the district's first year implementing a formalized mentoring program but three of the mentors interviewed were working with second year principals and had worked informally with their new principals during the 2015-2016 school year. Principal mentors, all current principals of three years or more within Lakewood County Public Schools, provided yearlong mentoring to new principals who were in either year one or two of service within LCPS. Principal mentors selected had been a successful principal for at least three years and demonstrated a thorough knowledge of curriculum, classroom management, instructional practices, and assessment. Selected principal mentors also possessed effective communication skills and demonstrated the capacity to build trust and to actively listen and ask non-judgmental reflective questions. Additionally, principal mentors were selected based on their perceived ability to promote a positive view of the principalship and to provide an environment to support risk taking and innovation along with guidance and coaching.

Table 2

Participants' Characteristics: Principal Mentors

Principal Mentors				
Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Mentoring Program Status	Level
Principal Mentor P	F	W	Year 1	ES
Principal Mentor L	M	W	Year 1	ES
Principal Mentor V	F	B	Year 1	ES
Principal Mentor C	F	W	Year 1	ES
Principal Mentor G	M	W	Year 1	MS
Principal Mentor M	M	W	Year 1	MS
Principal Mentor S	M	W	Year 1	ES
Principal Mentor Z	M	W	Year 2	ES
Principal Mentor E	M	W	Year 1	ES
Principal Mentor H	M	W	Year 2	HS
Principal Mentor W	F	W	Year 2	ES

Note. F=Female M=Male W=White B=Black ES=Elementary MS=Middle HS=High

Table 3

Participants' Characteristics: New Principals

New Principals				
Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Principal Experience	Level
New Principal F	M	W	>5 years	ES
New Principal R	M	W	1 year	HS
New Principal E	M	W	1 year	ES
New Principal Q	F	B	4 years	ES
New Principal Y	F	B	1 year	MS
New Principal L	F	W	>5 years	ES
New Principal V	F	B	1 year	ES
New Principal A	M	M	2 years	ES
New Principal M	M	W	2 years	ES
New Principal N	M	W	1 year	ES
New Principal U	F	W	1 year	ES
New Principal B	F	W	>5 years	HS

Note. F=Female M=Male W=White B=Black ES=Elementary MS=Middle HS =High

Data Sources

An Appreciative Inquiry process was used to provide initial focus for the program by focusing on the previous positive experiences of the principal mentor group. The inquiry process gathered information regarding the relationship that experienced principals had with their own previous (formal or informal) mentors, either in LCPS or other districts. The Appreciative Inquiry process was also used to gather information regarding any successful strategies the district is already using within the area of leadership development. An open-ended survey was also sent to all school based administrators within LCPS for initial program development input. I obtained permission to use both the Appreciative Inquiry information and the results of the school based administrator survey as extant data within the action research process. The semi-structured interviews took place in the Spring/Summer 2017 with new principals and principal mentors.

Appreciative inquiry and leadership development survey. An initial data set was collected through an Appreciative Inquiry process, which was used with Principal mentors to determine program development needs. At the Principal Mentor Orientation Session in July 2016, the Appreciative Inquiry process was used to identify current leadership development strengths within LCPS. Each principal mentor in attendance participated in paired interviews as well as small group discussions to summarize a collective response to the following four question sets:

- (1) Tell me a story of your best experience of being a building leader, either here or in another division. Who was involved? What challenges did you face? What strengths did you discover in yourself and others? Describe the event in detail.
- (2) What leadership strengths do you believe our newest principals share? What has worked well about our current leadership training to develop these strengths? Tell me a story of a new leader success story.
- (3) What conditions do you think help our newest LCPS principals to be their best? Tell me a story about yourself or a new principal who initially struggled and eventually overcame those struggles. What assisted him or her to become successful?
- (4) What wishes do you have that would strengthen the development and support of our principals and assistant principals?

Leadership development survey. Additionally, an open-ended response survey was sent to all administrators in LCPS in August 2016 with the following prompt: What do you believe should be our district priorities as we move forward in planning for leadership development in LCPS? Please feel free to share both general comments and/or specific topics such as professional development needs in the area of leadership.

Principal mentor interviews. The third data source was a semi-structured interview tool used to gather participant perceptions from the viewpoint of 11 selected principal mentors in the Spring/Summer 2017. A training session on listening and trust building strategies was presented to principal mentors in July 2016. The 11 selected principal mentors were asked to give perceptual data regarding different parts of the

mentor training and to determine the degree to which the mentor training sessions supported the development of self-efficacy for principal mentors. Principal mentors were asked to describe the mentoring experience in terms of the level of collaboration, support, and understanding of the program focus.

I developed semi-structured interview prompts to be used when collecting data from principal mentors who served as mentors from July 2016 through June 2017. The semi-structured interview format allowed me to expand the interview and ask further questions as needed (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interview prompts for principal mentors are as follows:

1. Tell me a story about your best experience of working with your new principal this year.
2. Tell me about any challenges you have faced in the mentoring process this year and how you met that challenge.
3. Tell me about the training you received at the beginning of this program. What was the best thing about that training? What do you wish had been part of that training?
4. If you were designing the program to train principal mentors, what would it look like?
5. Is there additional information about being a mentor that would have helped you in your role?
6. What did you learn about yourself as a result of being a principal mentor? What, if any, changes will you make to your leadership practice?
7. Is there anything you would like to tell me that I have not asked?

New principal interviews. In May and June 2016, semi-structured interviews with 12 new principals were conducted. Participants were asked to describe their mentoring experience in terms of the level of collaboration, support, and understanding of the program focus.

I developed semi-structured interview prompts to be used when collecting data from the new principals who participated in the mentoring program from July 2016 to June 2017. Semi-structured interview prompts for new principals were as follows:

1. Tell me a story about how a time that mentoring had an impact on your leadership performance. Tell me about that experience in detail.
2. Tell me about any strengths you have developed as a result of the mentoring process.
3. To what extent did you feel there was sufficient time allocated to mentoring?
4. Which of the activities you participated in as part of the mentoring program did you find most useful?
5. What were your expectations of the mentoring process in July 2016?
6. Describe your current expectations and impressions of the mentoring process.
7. What information could you have received prior to beginning the mentoring process that would have been helpful?
8. Is there anything you would like to tell me about the mentoring process that I have not asked?

Data Collection

Data collection began in May 2017 following IRB approval from The College of William and Mary (Appendix F) and approval from the LCPS Research Department to

conduct research in the district. Through this permission process, both LCPS Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Talent Development and the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction were made aware that I would be collecting data in this area. I collected all interview data personally. I was also responsible for the collection of the previous Appreciative Inquiry and leadership development survey data. I did not offer any incentives for participation, but did provide food at meetings.

Once I obtained permission to proceed from IRB and LCPS, I held an information session for potential study participants explaining the purpose of the study and sharing an information letter. The letter to the participants informed them about the nature and purpose of the study along with the risks and benefits of participation (Appendix G). The letter also provided information regarding the confidentiality of the study and contained an informed consent agreement to participate in the study. I provided confidentiality by using pseudonyms to refer to participants, stored materials in a locked file at my residence, and used password protection for all digital files. When the participants agreed to the interview process, I scheduled a time for a 60-minute interview and collected all informed consent paperwork and verbal recorded consent prior to beginning the interview. The interviews with principal mentors and new principals were anticipated to be 60 minutes in length.

Data Analysis

I recorded all interview sessions and also took extensive notes during the interview process. The recordings were then transcribed. I then conducted an analysis of transcripts and coded the interview data. I used a four-step method to interpret data. First, I read and organized the raw data by creating a database and breaking large themes into

smaller units of study. Next, I unpacked the smaller themes by examining the specific detail given within the interview and reflecting on this detail to begin the classification process. Next, I classified the data into themes, categories, patterns, and surprises to begin answering the research questions. Finally, I synthesized the data into charts to illustrate what the data did or did not show, while also looking for information to support the significance of the mentoring program and to provide information to inform the next steps in program continuation and/or implementation. I also analyzed the previously collected Appreciative Inquiry data and the initial leadership development survey given. I organized the summary into a chart and synthesized the data, looking specifically for answers to the previously stated research questions.

Ethical Considerations

The confidentiality of new principals and their relationship with principal mentors was maintained. I used pseudonyms to refer to the district program and also when reporting individual results. Each new principal and principal mentor was assigned a specific pseudonym to maintain confidentiality during the interpretation and reporting of results. It is important to note that while I am a member of Central Office leadership, I am not the supervisor of principals and do not provide evaluation or performance information to the principal supervisors. My role focuses on leadership development by providing onboarding activities, supervising the mentoring program, providing professional learning support and participation in coaching conversations. I am currently required to maintain confidentiality in all of my conversations since I work for the Department of Human Resources and Talent Development. Since I currently model this practice in my school visits to new principals and my conversations with principal mentors throughout

the year, I anticipated that principals would be candid in speaking to me about the mentoring program knowing that confidentiality would be maintained. I also framed the interviews as an opportunity for me to receive valuable feedback in order to improve the mentoring program, which was implemented within the first three weeks of my assuming this new professional role.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Data collection from only new principals and principal mentors within LCPS limited the ability to generalize the study results. A larger portion of the study subjects being at the elementary level since more new elementary principals were hired at the level at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year. Additionally, the collection of data at the end of the first school year of a formal program is a limitation since a longer study would potentially reveal additional findings. The LCPS principal mentor program is designed to provide support for two academic years. While I did include new principals and principal mentors who are in their second year of service, it would have been informative to follow a new cohort of principals through the full two years of mentoring.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine participants' perceptions on the impact of mentoring on the development of principals in a suburban school district located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The participants for the study were 11 principal mentors and 12 new principals who had participated in a yearlong formal mentoring program as part of a leadership development initiative for new principal support.

Participants were asked to participate in an Appreciative Inquiry focus session, leadership development survey and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed by the following four dimensions: (1) new knowledge acquired as a result of mentoring, (2) changes in professional practice as a result of mentoring, (3) examination of activities the new principals and principal mentors found most helpful, and (4) recommendations for improvement of the mentoring model used in the participating school district.

Findings

The following data represent the findings from the Appreciative Inquiry session, the leadership development survey, and the face-to-face semi-structured interviews of the principal mentors and new principals. Although the Appreciative Inquiry process and leadership development survey results formed a foundation for this study, it was not the

central focus so the findings reported here are general. The interview findings reveal first- and second-year principals' perceptions of the impact of mentoring on performance.

Twenty-three principals were interviewed in May and June of 2017 using the semi-structured interview questions for new principals and principal mentors. The questions were designed to elicit detailed answers regarding the participants experience within the mentoring program and have been transcribed, reviewed, and coded.

Research Question 1a *What do first and second-year principals who participate in mentoring learn based on their reflective activities and dialogue with experienced leaders?*

The major themes discovered include effective decision-making, the importance of trust, emotional support, leadership competencies and LCPS specific processes and the value of mentoring and reflection in general.

Effective decision-making. Twelve of the respondents spoke of how their mentoring conversations have led to more effective decision-making. New Principal Y talked about how a conversation with her mentor helped her realize the ripple effects that a decision to create an “administration only” parking place may have on her community. She stated the following:

In talking to my mentor about my excitement over this parking place, he said, “I understand what you are saying but think about this. You are all about community and this collaboration and you don’t really want to have yourself be different than anybody else.” I think that discussion made me think about the overall picture and what this role is and that even the smallest thing, like a parking place, has a ripple

effect in how you are seen or the decisions that you make and the feel of the building.

New Principal N described how a meeting with his mentor regarding a decision to move a student to a different grade level helped him realize that this decision would set a precedent for moving other students within his school. He described this experience as follows:

I think I'd have to go back to the beginning of this school year when I first accepted the position, we had a student who was having a difficult time in 4th grade and I felt the need to move that student after the end of the first 9 weeks. I felt that need and I talked to my mentor in detail about it and we talked kind of about what that is setting the standard for. So if I'm willing to move a student after the school year has started, is that something that I'm going to want the rest of the community to know about?

New Principal N went on to state that the student was moved and that it was ultimately for the right reasons but that it had made him re-think the reasons why.

All of the LCPS new principals and principal mentors were invited to attend a two-day workshop in March and April of 2017 titled Fierce Conversations. A certified trainer, who is also on staff in LCPS, taught the workshop. The workshop focused on how to frame effective conversations and gave specifics on team, coaching, delegation, and conflict conversations. New Principal A described an instance where this mentoring activity had helped him in making a decision:

My mind goes straight to a time when I had information that...an initiative that I wanted to do at the school, I believe it was peer observations, I was just going to

come right out of the box and tell my teachers, hey, I do think this is important, let's do these peer observations. Because I do have a staff that's very willing to do things like that, there's not a lot of hesitation. One of the things my mentor and I talked about, we were in a Fierce Conversations training, and during that training we discussed—we used that beach ball protocol—basically a protocol where you allow the staff to have input on what the problem is that you've identified...I adjusted it and basically it was “who would serve you best to be a peer observation with.” They really liked it and found their match and were able to do those observations...It worked out really well.

By using the beach ball protocol presented in the coaching conversation portion of the Fierce Conversations workshop, New Principal A utilized a tool that enabled him to bring in staff perspectives prior to making a professional learning decision. Principal Mentor C also mentioned the importance of the protocols learned in Fierce Conversations with her new principal. She spoke of how it enabled her to help her new principal to make better decisions:

I think all of those things have contributed to being active listeners and not quick responders, which is beneficial when you are mentoring teachers or principals.

Taking the time to listen and not necessarily answering right away...some of those that we've been learning about in Fierce Conversations...how you frame the question so it helps them be a part of the solution, rather than just giving the answer or how you would handle it.

Building trusted relationships. Eleven of the new principals and principal mentors mentioned the importance of building trusted relationships as the second major

area learned from the mentoring program. New Principal U appreciated having someone to call as needed and having someone to sit with at large principal meetings:

I think it's a great program. It far exceeded my expectations and I think it was helpful to have somebody in that big room of principals that you knew and you could to, to ask questions. I feel like from now on I could always continue to go to her.

Being able to trust their mentors was also crucial. New Principal R talked about how important it had been to have someone to count on:

I would say that having a person that you know you can contact, that you don't feel like you're bothering someone is extremely helpful when intricate and difficult disciplinary and sometimes personnel items come up. I'm not one that is quick to ask for help, I'm probably someone who would try to slug through it myself because fear of bothering somebody else. Opening up that channel of communication allows you to say, yeah, this is normal to ask questions, things are going to come up, sometimes you want to talk to someone other than your boss about things so you can ask the right questions and can be as articulate as possible when you do have to go up that chain of command.

New Principal B is not a brand new principal but instead new to LCPS. She stated that she was initially skeptical of needing a mentor since she was so experienced. By the end of the school year, New Principal B appreciated the relationship building opportunities that having smaller mentor meetings such as the Hacking Leadership book study group discussion and the electrocardiogram map, EKG end of year reflection afforded within a larger district:

For me personally, it's helped me get to know...when we meet as principals, we meet once a month for a few hours. It's hard to really get to know people that way and it's such a huge...you know like 200 people in the room when we have those principal meetings. These smaller programs like the mentor program help you to build relationships. Like my mentor, I would have no problem picking up the phone and calling him, yet a year ago I barely knew who he was and I wouldn't have been that comfortable calling him. The strength for me that came out is, especially being new to LCPS and not having any history with anybody here, it's helped me develop some relationships.

New Principal E also mentioned the mentor group meetings and the opportunities for dialogue with multiple experienced principals as helpful:

The table I was at, I've now created three or four more contacts that I know; now not only am I talking to my mentor, instead of a one to one conversation it became a one to seven conversation or whatever and we're all talking to each other and sharing ideas, that was really helpful.

Principal Mentor V talked about how her new principal had appreciated having a mentor with a non-judgmental attitude:

Sometimes too I want to the mentee to feel that you can reach out no matter when that is—and one comment she made to me—she said thank you for answering and there's no judgment. You know we're all in this and it's hard work.

Principal Mentor V also mentioned that conversations and spending time together had led to building this trusting relationship, “and you know, we had different experiences and so

for me it was sort of hard in the beginning, you know establishing that trust and really being honest. But that didn't take long, talking on the phone, finding time."

Emotional support. Four of the new principals specifically mentioned that being principal was a lonely job. For some, mentoring had provided much needed emotional support. New Principal N mentioned that "being in a principal role is pretty isolating and I don't think I necessarily thought through that before accepting the position." New Principal M talked about how the support had enabled him to handle the tougher parts of the role, provided reassurance on decisions he had made and was a strength of the mentoring program:

Like I said the emotional support that goes behind a lot of the things that you deal with because in our role as elementary principals especially we're emotional people, we didn't get into teaching elementary because we are hardened you know. I think that we tend to look at it differently than a secondary administrator. I think we can feel oftentimes attacked and how you maneuver that emotional piece of it is important. And when you have someone you can go to and say what do you think about this... and sometimes the truth is hard to hear but that's what a true mentor does, what a true friend does. So that would be the strengths.

Learning new leadership competencies. Eight of the participants mentioned the value of learning about new leadership competencies. The leadership competencies included were collaboration; scheduling; organization; evaluation; planning; delegation; managing two schools simultaneously (one new principal had managed two small schools); designing professional learning; and communication strategies to work with staff and the community. New Principal E spoke about how the organization of the

workday day is different as a principal than as an assistant principal. The mentoring program helped him develop an understanding of how roles are different along with strength in the area of organization as a new principal:

As an AP, the organization was based on what meetings your schedule was set up. I knew Child Studies, I knew IEPs, I scheduled those at the beginning of the year, I knew what those were, those guided my day, being organized in that fashion made my job easy. Our [job] as principals is determined by what phone call, what email, what person comes to your door; you can't really schedule that, the organization has to be different, you have to have a general plan, you can't say today I have a Child Study followed by an IEP, you can't do that. I think that would be the biggest thing, the strength is knowing, just knowing that's the case so you have to relook at how you do certain things. I'm looking out much further than I may have done in the past in my previous job, because I have to be prepared if something comes up in the meantime, so I'm doing lots of things.

New Principal N spoke of how his leadership competency in the area of collaboration had increased through the mentoring process. He shared how this has impacted his leadership skills set in different areas:

I think one of the biggest strengths I've developed throughout this process is I think the ability to collaborate...the collaboration when it comes specifically with scheduling, when it comes to evaluations, when it comes to observations, just ideas of ways to tackle all of those certain pieces that collaboration is definitely a strength that is developed.

New Principal L mentioned being able to effectively plan for the year ahead with her mentor and shared that developing this leadership competency impacted how her staff saw her in her new role. She describes this experience as follows:

What it really helped me understanding were the important showcase events that were coming up in the fall that I needed to be aware of and start planning for in my building. So for example, American Education Week. That is something that I had not celebrated in other districts where you bring in parents and there is some type of product or performance or engagement with parents. But it was clear from my conversation early on with my mentor that this was a big event and that we needed to start planning early for that. And so after I met with my mentor I was able to come back and speak coherently and sound as if I knew what I was doing with my own leadership team in order to plan effectively for it. So it wasn't an event taking place without any of my knowledge, so I could also set expectations and that was really helpful. So I guess the impact it had on my leadership performance is that my staff thought I was really on the ball because I was planning ahead for November back in September. If I hadn't had that mentoring conversation, I wouldn't have had any idea it was coming up until it was already on top of us and then it would have been whatever they had done before.

Specific LCPS processes. Six of the participants mentioned specific LCPS processes as the fourth major area of learning within the mentoring program. The types of LCPS specific processes listed included getting new information, how to do business in LCPS, navigating the complex system, locating silos of data, understanding processes, understanding LCPS politics and culture, networking, applying skills within a new

district, and noticing that schools with similar demographics often had similar challenges. While new principals and principal mentors mentioned how helpful it had been to learn more about specific ways of “doing business” within LCPS in terms of mastering specific LCPS processes, they were sometimes frustrated with the organizational structure and would have appreciated additional onboarding. New Principal F spoke of his experience in working with his mentor to assimilate into the LCPS culture:

Technical strengths definitely. Lakewood has [these] really complex silos of data. I’ve developed the technical strengths of learning how to do business in Lakewood definitely as a result of the mentoring process...My expectations were met through the process. There’s other things that I would have liked but that’s more onboarding, it’s not mentoring. I know I keep bringing this up.

New Principal B is a highly experienced principal who was new to LCPS and from another state. She spoke of how she experienced frustrations regarding seat time requirements and state regulations. The conversations with her mentor helped her navigate the differences and address her frustration between the current state requirements and the requirements of her previous state regarding seat time. She shared this experience as follows:

I’m positive that I’m older than my mentor. I’ve been in education a long time. So he realized that, so my experience was more to adjusting to LCPS. That’s where my mentor was able to give some good feedback and it is good feedback because I’m not from [here]... Things are different and I will say that even over the year, any time that I felt a little bit frustrated or yes, I guess frustrated is the best word—it usually had to do with either the [current state] or LCPS way of doing

things because I don't feel though, there's a lot more rules here than there were in [previous state]. There's a lot more....Some of the rules I'm ok with and some of the rules are a little frustrating, especially if you are trying to do alternative education because there is a lot of restriction here on seat time, for example...in [my previous state], you can be extremely creative and try to meet every kid with whatever they need. But here I keep getting a lot of pushback from data people when it comes to seat time and attendance people and that type of thing. So these are the type of things that my mentor could give me like the history of different things.

The opportunity to mentor also provided learning opportunities for experienced principals and the realization that schools within LCPS can face similar challenges. One of the principal mentors mentioned that she had learned from her new principal that they both had encountered similar situations with parents. She shared that the opportunity to mentor created an opportunity for both of them to learn and dialogue with each other regarding potential solutions. She noted, "I could learn from him in the way that he was handling these situations and take that information."

Comparison of leadership competencies and processes. During the Appreciative Inquiry focus session, principal mentors mentioned the need for professional development to support and create a stronger and more experienced principal group, while also mentioning the need to tier training for new principals coming in since some are very experienced and others are brand new. Of the respondents who listed *learning about leadership competencies*, the majority of the new principal respondents were novice principals in their first year of service in the role. New

principals who listed learning about LCPS specific processes during the mentoring program were slightly more likely to be experienced principals who were new to LCPS (see Table 4) but not new to the principal role. All of the new principals in their first two years of service had already served as assistant principals within the district, whereas the more experienced new principals had come from outside the district and may have had more specific-to-LCPS process questions.

Table 4

Principal Responses for Leadership Competencies and LCPS Specific Processes

Response to Research Question 1a	Participant Information
Answer included learning new leadership competencies	4 Principals in Year 1-2 of service (New Principal N, New Principal V, New Principal R, New Principal E)
	2 Experienced Principals new to LCPS (New Principal L, New Principal F)
	2 Principal Mentors (Principal Mentor P, Principal Mentor Z)
Answer included learning about LCPS Specific Processes	2 Principals in Year 1-2 of service (New Principal E, New Principal A)
	3 Experienced principal new to LCPS (New Principal L, New Principal F, New Principal B)
	1 Principal Mentor (Principal Mentor W)

Value of mentoring and reflection. The final major learning theme shared from six of the principal participants in the mentoring program was the value of mentoring and reflection in general. New Principal V shared a specific conversation with her mentor where she was expressing concern about the decline in school morale during the long winter months. New Principal V spoke of how her conversations with her mentor helped her define what success “looked like”:

One of our conversations was probably around the end of January and the first of February. I just felt the pulse of our building felt really low, our climate felt really low, we'd been in school, there were no snow days at that time, I just said I feel really disconnected from our staff and that they feel the same way as well and asked what ideas do you have that I can connect with them? And so the question to me was what did success look like when you were connected to your staff and what has changed since then? Just that question alone I held on to because one, it brings back to the positive, so it really helped boost my morale during that conversation but it also for me helped me do the same thing to my teachers as well.

The mentoring conversation focused on guiding questions and reflective conversation starters to define success and to describe what increased school morale had looked like. This conversation guided the new principal into solving her problem independently. New Principal V went on to share how that reflective practice with her mentor had carried over to conversations with teachers who had students who were struggling with behavior. New Principal V would ask a reflective question such as, "What did it look like when they were behaving?" or "What are some strategies that you put in place at that time that probably aren't in place right now?" She shared how her mentor did not give direct answers but created an opportunity for her "to think and reflect on my own instructional practices or my own leadership practices." New Principal M noted that it was clear that the district valued the mentor role and the importance of supporting new principals in general:

If our leadership is saying step away, this is important, take care of yourself, that's what I feel mentorship is, really it's your personal growth and that in turn helps everyone grow so I think that was important. The mentorship program too this year I really liked that it provided us resources but didn't provide extra work. I really didn't feel that it was a burden on me as far as my position or time generating things for that part of my role, for me it was invigorating because I felt like I got good information and I could turn around and utilize it, I didn't feel like it was a class I was taking.

New Principal M noted that part of the program's success was providing resources but not additional work. Principal Mentor P and Principal Mentor Z both noted that they had knowledge to share that could benefit new principals. Principal P stated,

Sometimes when you are in a big division like this, it's easy to have some people who naturally are always offering ideas or thoughts...and some of just sit back, we know what we are doing but we are not going to share it.

She continued, "Maybe I do have things I could share and maybe others would benefit if I shared some ideas." Principal Mentor Z talked of how he worked with his new principal to "brainstorm ideas off of one another." He continued, "that's probably been my best experience and then growing in relationship with him. Now we are really good friends because of the experience."

In summary, the major themes discovered within the LLPMP through reflective activities and dialogue included effective decision-making, the importance of trust, emotional support, leadership competencies and LCPS specific processes and the value of mentoring and reflection in general. New principals who listed learning about *LCPS*

specific processes during the mentoring program were slightly more likely to be experienced principals who were new to LCPS while the participants who listed *learning about leadership competencies*, were typically novice principals in their first year of service in the role.

Research Question 1b *What changes in professional practice of first and second-year principals did participants perceive to have come from the mentoring?*

During the Appreciative Inquiry focus session, the respondents were asked about specific leadership development topics that would increase leadership capacity, which could then potentially be covered within a mentoring program. It is interesting to note that many of these topics were covered during mentoring sessions as evidenced by the interview data. Multiple topics were listed by principal mentors and within the leadership development survey which included building instructional leadership, handling difficult conversations, observations/evaluations, designing school based staff development, budget and finance, school improvement planning, data analysis, hiring, development of business partnerships, how to set high expectations, and managing facility needs. Within the Appreciative Inquiry focus session, principal mentors supported the need for ongoing professional development to support and create a stronger and more experienced principal group. The three major areas of change evidenced within the principal interviews were the development of a mentoring mindset, organization and planning, and increased reflective practice. Principal mentors also reported growth in their own leadership capacity.

Development of mentoring mindset. In terms of developing a mentoring mindset, New Principal Y believed that her readiness to be mentored played a part in the success of the program. She stated the following:

Yes, it was like a perfect storm. Because I know I'm not afraid to ask questions or to make myself vulnerable. I'm not really familiar but I'm very self-aware.

New Principal U was also open to being mentored and described how mentoring had helped in having to navigate conversations and the personal reactions of others to decisions she had made. Having a mentor and having the opportunity to discuss tough decisions was appreciated. She describes this positive reception to mentoring as follows:

I definitely think talking [helps] when times get tough and you feel like you might be kind of alone in the process, because it can be a lonely job. [It's helpful] to talk to other principals or former principals and realize that you really aren't [alone] and that the decisions you are making are the right decisions even if they are hard decisions.

Becoming more open to the mentoring process and asking questions was also a change for New Principal E. He talked about a mind shift from thinking that he needed to always solve his own problems to a willingness to throw out a problem to ask for support. He stated, "I came into this job with *I'll solve the problems [by myself]*. My mind has shifted, so now, my go-tos if I have a question, I throw a go-to out there." Principal E now has a support system of colleagues to ask questions. Principal E now has a support system of colleagues to ask questions. Principal Mentor Z talked about how the mentoring program had provided an opportunity for you to choose the level of leadership development through the use of the mentoring plan form. The mentoring plan forms

could be completed briefly or you could use the forms to guide a deeper conversation. Principal Mentor Z spoke of how the goals set for the new principal on the form, can also align with the mentor goals for his or her personal development so that the pair can grow together. New Principal M spoke of the value of the program and said he would like to serve as a principal mentor in the future. New Principal M also provided a reminder that it is important to stress that the program is for support, not accountability. He recommended that the program provide a purpose statement and stated that some new principals may not understand the program purpose:

I think the way I viewed the mentorship and I think most people do, hopefully they don't but they might, is that it's for accountability. I think that's all, but I think this year it had nothing to do with accountability but with support and growth. I think just taking the stigma out of it, maybe. I think to me that just knowing what the focus is from the leader, I think every time you're the leader, if things go unsaid, people make assumptions and I found the longer I'm a leader, the more I have to explain little things.

Organization and planning. Organization and planning was an area mentioned frequently within the Appreciative Inquiry session, leadership development survey and a topic, which two new principals and one principal mentor specifically mentioned as an area of change during their interview. Initial data from the Appreciative Inquiry focus session with the principal mentor group included information regarding the perceived leadership strengths of the newest LCPS principals. The principal mentors mentioned that new principals typically have strengths in building relationships and with collaboration, but also mentioned the managerial strengths of new principals which include having new

ideas, “new ways to think about things,” and being tech-savvy. Principal mentors mentioned that more clarification regarding the mid-year support process for struggling teachers, and mid-year support for struggling administrators would be helpful. The principal mentor group also expressed frustration over how to determine who to call in central office with one mentioning, “there are so many new roles and positions—we really don’t know who to call for what.” The district leadership development survey results in the area of organization and planning recommended that training for new administrators should include identifying clear protocols and procedures, more initial training for Child Study and Special Education and consistent procedures for evaluation.

New Principal V talked openly about moving from assistant principal to principal within the same school and the challenge of having the staff see her as the principal. She stated,

My mentor does an exceptionally good job in just giving me ideas on ways she has done that at her school or just seeing the interactions that she has with her teachers whether I go there for a meeting or whether we’re together in a teacher classroom.

New Principal V and her mentor delegated responsibilities in planning by sharing the workload to create self-reflection forms for staff. New Principal V describe the relationship as a “colleague relationship” noting that sometimes with mentoring it can be more mom/child, father/son. Principal Mentor M mentioned a change in the area of planning after noting how his conversations with his new principal had centered on how to get staff buy in. He realized that his planning practices had changed after mentoring a new principal. Now he is more conscious of planning a change process by first emailing

staff and talking to staff at faculty meeting to be sure to give them “the why” regarding the change. He stated,

Whenever I needed the buy in, I always gave them the why. It’s good for students, it’s why we are doing it, it’s a research based why. I didn’t realize I had developed into that type of principal until I started mentoring.

While it is clear that the new principals benefitted from both discussions and modeling around the areas of organization and planning, this mentor also became a more reflective practitioner in the area of planning for change after serving as a principal mentor.

Increased reflective practice. The third area of change from the mentoring program increased reflective practice among new principals. New Principal L shared that mentoring had helped her become better at listening to other ideas and specifically understanding how those ideas fit within the LCPS organizational system. A specific example was using strategies to work with teachers in need of assistance and having more attention to detail in that area than in previous roles. As already mentioned, New Principal V relied on the reflective process used in her mentoring sessions with teachers who needed to talk through student issues and New Principal A used reflective protocols to make staff decisions on the focus of professional learning opportunities. Principal Mentor Z spoke of the difference in reflection for year 1 and year 2 of a new principal role and how important it is to continue to reflect so that a leader does not become shortsighted:

Year two, you know your school now, you have a vision for where you want it to go, here are some practical ideas, but even looking beyond that to ok, I’m in my school two to three years. If we are too short sighted, we need to be two to three

years down the road. Vision, you need to have that in your mind, because you have to start making decisions today, which are going to take you there. Even me, as an experienced principal who's had some success, I sometimes still get wrapped up in today or next week versus taking ok this step and sitting back and reflecting on ok where have I come, where are the challenges that I've dealt with, where do I want to go, what are the road blocks that are going to get in my way, I can already anticipate. Can I start to maneuver certain people and places...?

Principal Mentor C also spoke of the conversation frameworks in the Fierce Conversations course and how the process of framing the question allowed the new principal to be a part of the solution instead of just giving the answer or how you as a principal mentor would handle it.

Increase in principal mentor capacity. It is interesting to note that principal mentors also reported growth in their own leadership capacity as a result of the mentoring process. Mentors reported increased ability to be active listeners and ask open-ended questions, which was also helpful when having dialogue with staff members. The process of mentoring new principals also supported the work that principal mentors were doing to build the capacity of their own administrative teams, such as work with their assistant principals and deans. Principal Mentor P shared that she would talk with her new principal about a specific area and then have a follow up conversation with her assistant principal so that he would also have an opportunity to learn about the discussed topic. She stated, "When I was doing that for another principal it brought that to light, it was a reminder to loop him and bring him in and build his capacity as well." Principal Mentor S and Principal Mentor V both expressed that serving as a mentor had been a positive mid-

career growth opportunity. Principal Mentor V specifically mentioned the five-year mark being the right time, stating,

I definitely feel that professionally speaking it was the right time. I think five years is the good basis, because in terms of where I am in my own professional development, I'm more confident. I feel like I can share and know what I am talking about. I think that it was the right time.

Principal mentors also shared examples of learning about effective leadership practices from a new principal. Principal Mentor W talked about how her new principal would call her to discuss an issue but would always already have some potential solutions ready to propose to her. She stated the following:

What I thought was really great was when we would work together this year or last year. Whenever there was a lot of talk on the phone, he would call me a lot about particular situations that would come up...I am having this situation, this is what's going on, but this is what I'm thinking about as far as solving, this is what I've done already, this is what I'm thinking about doing. He would always have a solution for the problem already developed and formed and just kind of wanted to know from me if that was ok, if I would have done it that way. And I thought that was fantastic, and that was a great experience and so I actually learned from that and really I like it so much. I thought, I really need to start in my practices to make sure I am doing that as well.

This provided a clear example of how mentoring increased leadership capacity with Principal Mentor W sharing how she had learned from her new principal to provide initial solutions so that others understand your thought process when requesting advice.

In summary, the development of a mentoring mindset, organization and planning, and increased reflective practice were the three major areas of change evidenced through the mentoring program. It was interesting to note that principal mentors also reported growth in their own leadership capacity.

Research Question 1c *What activities within the mentoring program did participants find to have been most helpful for first and second-year principal leadership?*

Respondents stated the Fierce Conversations workshop, school visits, mentoring conversations and the Hacking Leadership book study as the four major activities found to be most helpful.

Communication workshop. The Fierce Conversations workshops were held for full day sessions in March and April of 2017. New principals and principal mentor pairs attended the workshop together. The workshop was based on information from the book *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life one Conversation at a Time* by Susan Scott. An LCPS staff member from the Department of Instruction, who is a certified trainer for the program, led both of the sessions. Fourteen of the respondents listed Fierce Conversations as being a helpful activity. The principals used the protocols later to engage staff in decision-making, stating that it was an activity they were able to turn around and utilize. New Principal Q appreciated the relevancy of the workshop, and she stated as follows:

I found Fierce Conversations to be phenomenal and so did [my mentor]. It was nice, although the leader would say let's have a real conversation with someone you don't know or normally talk to, my mentor and I used those opportunities to have real fierce conversations about relevant issues that were occurring in our

building. I think that might have been the most practical experience during the mentorship.

New Principal Y talked about how the workshop gave her multiple perspectives, stating, “I loved the Fierce Conversations. Again, because it gave an opportunity to meet with other administrators in the county, to problem solve and role-play different situations. You got a lot of perspectives. I think every administrator should have that.” Principal Mentor V mentioned that it was excellent that she took the workshop with her new principal so that it gave them a chance to talk.

School visits. The second activity that participants found helpful was visiting schools. The initial guidelines of the mentoring program had recommended that principal mentors and new principals visit each other’s schools during the year. Five new principals and one principal mentor commented on the positive outcome of school visits. New Principal M stated that it was a positive to be able to visit his mentor and have her visit him. Principal Mentor G spoke of how important it was for a new principal to observe the processes in order to make appropriate decisions moving forward. He stated the following:

She had time to think about all the little things, especially philosophically, she would like to do. She had time to observe processes and meetings and so forth so she could form her own opinions about how to do those and I think that was probably the best part of it, especially early on...she had time to do a lot of visits, to do some observations, I think it was really powerful.

New Principal Q talked about the school visits and how it was helpful for each partner to see the other in his or her own space. She highlighted one particular experience where she

visited her mentor's school and had the opportunity to see the school's data wall. She stated, "to be in her building, essentially she was modeling the interaction and leadership with that process, it was helpful."

Mentoring conversations. Respondents also mentioned principal mentor and new principal conversations as a helpful activity. Hearing other's experiences during mentor meetings or in their one-on-one conversations were listed as important. Principal Mentor Z stated, "I absolutely love that time of just talking and hearing other people's experiences, I grow more from that than from anything." The initial Appreciative Inquiry focus session with principal mentors highlighted the importance of conversations in creating leadership capacity. Although not all conversations directly involved a formal mentor, the collaborative conversations with others provided a growth experience that shaped their leadership ability. One respondent spoke of building a strong Veteran's Day recognition program through a collaborative conversational effort with PTA, which was well received by the community. Another principal mentor spoke of a tragic event that occurred very early in his principal tenure involving the loss of life of a student. While this event was very difficult to navigate, the leader was encouraged by the community support that he received. By allowing others in the community to provide support, this event also served to highlight the way he would handle personal communication, show respect, and do the "right thing" in difficult situations. It also personally defined the type of leader he would be and the importance of schools in the community during tragedy. Another principal mentor spoke of the time he was the new leader of a focus Title 1 School working to embrace a difficult challenge, build trust, and build relationships through conversations with staff. He spoke of establishing high expectations to continue

the culture of excellence and sustain growth. He also talked about connecting and communicating with the people on a journey, even though the journey was not one they would have chosen. All of these examples highlight the importance of conversation and relationship in developing new leaders.

Mentoring conversations also provided reassurance and reaffirmed that the principal's vision was on track. New Principal F described an impromptu mentoring conversation that helped him think about a complex problem of structuring collaborative learning team meetings with a staff who was reluctant to participate. He stated the following:

What was great about this impromptu mentoring conversation is that it affirmed that my vision was on track and helped me feel that [there] was another person I could fall back on who is three years ahead of me as a leader in Lakewood County, who went through this same hurdle of teachers working in silos, and don't make my work transparent.

New Principal F had encountered the difficult challenge of creating collaborative structures that would work effectively for teacher meetings while also seeking teacher buy in for the process. Speaking to a principal mentor about how he had experienced this same issue and hearing that he had been able to overcome this hurdle with his staff provided reassurance to the new principal that he was on the right track.

A calendar of topics was created by the principal mentor group and provided to guide conversations throughout the year (Appendix B). While many mentoring conversations focused on mentoring calendar topics, many were also organic in nature. Principal Mentor V stated, "as helpful as the monthly checklist, it was kind of a pressure,

because things didn't happen on that [schedule]. It was organic, so when we met there were other things that we needed to talk about.”

One of the conversations was structured as part of a wrap up mentoring meeting held in May to reflect on the previous year. All new principals and principal mentors were invited to attend. Principal mentors and new principals were asked to reflect on the year using an EKG activity where they mapped the highs and lows of the year. New Principal R mentioned liking that activity even though he had numerous “high-level stress” events throughout his first year. He stated, “I did like that little activity, the EKG activity. And another new principal was sitting next to me and she said why is it all high, why do you have high events all over the place? I explained each of them and she said ‘oh.’” He went on to mention that the mentoring calendar was helpful but that it could have provided more specific information for mentoring conversations regarding school events stating, “I would say maybe more intentional...really forcing the individual, and saying write down for me what does October look like, what does November look like, especially at this level.”

Leadership book study. The final activity that participants found to be helpful was the book study conducted in December 2016. Principal mentors and new principals received the book *Hacking Leadership: 10 Ways Great Leaders Inspire Learning That Teachers, Students, and Parents Love* by Sinanis and Sanfelippo (2016). Participants were asked to read selected chapters and attend the principal mentor/new principal meeting in December of 2016, ready to discuss. In the book, the authors describe 10 common issues that are faced by school administrators and short-term and long-term solutions or “hacks” to solve the problems. The first hour of the December mentoring

meeting was spent discussing the chapters in small groups and the second hour was spent Skyping with author Tony Sinanis. While one new principal stated that any reading assignment would be too lengthy during a principal's first year, several of the new principals were very positive about the activity and spoke of how they had implemented the author's suggestions into their own practice. New Principal M related the following:

I really liked the *Hacking Leadership* book. I found it both helpful and overwhelming cause you know...the one principal asking his staff...write down words you associate with the principal and they wrote down evaluator and more negative connotations and that just made me think, *How does the staff view me as their principal?*...So I did that activity at a staff meeting, at the end, "Hey, [there are] half sheets on the table, please write down any words you associate with my leadership or our school's leadership. It's anonymous, just put it in the basket on the way out, it's going to help me grow." And I read the blurb from the book. And it was really good, I got some good feedback, I got some I was surprised about.

New Principal A stated that he liked the book study and the at home component and the working together component since it built in an accountability piece for reading. He stated the following:

That there was an at home component and a together component, almost like an accountability buddy/accountability partner. If I didn't read my book and I came to that meeting, my mentor was going to be like, "Hey, I read the book on Saturday because I was going to be ready for this meeting."

New Principal A also enjoyed Skyping with the author stating, “I think just meeting Tony through Skype and the author of the book and talking to him and having lightheartedness about it a little bit, I think that was probably the most impactful.”

In summary, the participants found the December Hacking Leadership book study, school visits, mentoring conversations and the two full day Fierce Conversations workshops to be the most helpful activities within the mentoring program.

Overarching Question of Study *What impact does mentoring have on first and second-year principal performance?*

The participants had strong opinions that can best be summarized this way: all described a “significant incident” of practice in which the principal mentor had provided guidance and support. A significant incident presents an account of something in one’s work that was puzzling, rewarding or challenging and sheds new insights about one’s work or practice. The significant incidents included choosing professional learning opportunities for staff, structuring collaborative learning teams, planning the school year, addressing disciplinary issues, making decisions, improving school morale, defining the instructional leadership role, navigating tough conversations, and establishing schedules and procedures. In each case, the new principals described how their mentors had provided support and guidance through problem solving and opportunities for dialogue. Although the participants served at different school levels and varied in whether they were new to the role or new to the district, in each case, the new principal experienced the benefit of guidance and support by participation in the mentoring program. The principal mentors also benefitted through the building of leadership capacity, growth in

the reflective process and learning new leadership competencies from their new principals.

Summary

I conducted a qualitative study to examine the impact of a principal mentoring on first and second year principal performance. The data were generated from principal mentor Appreciative Inquiry sessions, a district leadership development survey, and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 23 new principals and principal mentors. In summary, several findings emerged within this study relating to new principal and principal mentor perceptions of the impact of mentoring on new principal performance.

The first finding is that new principals in this study valued the support of an experienced principal mentor and the participation in joint leadership development activities to assist them in navigating the complexities of being a new principal. New principals gained a variety of skills through mentoring activities. New principals benefitted from the support and guidance offered from an experienced principal in multiple areas such as decision-making, collaboration, organization, planning, and communication. Principal mentors who had been a part of the original Appreciative Inquiry focus group, which helped to plan the mentoring program, had listed the skills they felt that principals needed exposure to in order to be ready for the principalship, mentioning competencies such as handling difficult conversations, designing school based staff development, and budget/finance. During the new principal interviews, several who were new to the principal role credited the support of their mentor and the mentoring program activities with assisting them in gaining experience in these previously mentioned areas.

Another finding revealed by this study is that the quality of the mentor relationship is important. The participants mentioned that being a principal is a lonely and stressful job and having an available mentor provided both emotional support and a reflective partner. The ability of the principal mentor to establish rapport and trust played a role in the quality of mentoring interactions and the level of comfort of the new principal. The openness of the new principal to the mentoring process also played a role in success. One mentoring pair did not establish rapport early on due to some extenuating circumstances, which had impacted the availability of the mentor. New Principal U mentioned this in her interview stating that she “probably could have used more [time] than I received only because my mentor wasn’t available early on. As time went on and the relationship developed, I feel like I had plenty of time.” Principal Mentor S mentioned the importance of rapport stating that “without a rapport, you are less likely to open up and share.”

The third finding is that, for the principals in this study, formalizing the mentoring program by building time for mentoring into the calendar at the district level and providing supports such as the mentoring calendar and joint new principal/principal mentor leadership workshops were valued and seen as a positive district change. Several of the Year 2 principals and mentors expressed positive statements regarding having structured meetings and time set aside during their second year. While they had participated in an informal mentoring program during their first year, this revamped program required scheduled meetings and activities with a specific focus on their needs as new principals. The program was described as supportive without providing additional work.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the mentoring program could be improved by differentiating the program by the individual needs of each new principal. During the Appreciative Inquiry focus group sessions, principal mentors mentioned the need for tiered professional development for new principals coming in since some have experience as principals in other school districts and some are brand new to the role. During the semi-structured interviews, I noted that principals new to the role had different priorities than experienced principals who were new to the district. The leadership context of each school also varied greatly among the new principal group. Providing specific information to the principal mentor regarding school needs, while also including the specific leadership growth areas of the new principal, would potentially improve the level of support within the mentoring relationship by providing greater focus. Chapter 5 offers an overview of the research study, and a discussion of findings, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the study including research questions, findings, discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications, recommendations, and concluding thoughts. This chapter is organized to include a discussion of how the research findings related to the review of the literature. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for additional study and final thoughts.

Summary

A topic of great interest across the field of education today is the evolving and increasingly complex role of the school principal. Principals are under increasing demands in the area of accountability with increased leadership expectations (Adams, 2013) and there is a growing awareness that new principals need specific support during the first years. Both the level of responsibility and the number of hours within the principal workweek have increased in recent years (Sparks, 2016). Principals reported that they now work an average of 59 hours per week, according to the Schools and Staffing Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics (2011-12), with most work related to internal administrative assignments (as cited in Lavigne et al., 2016).

Since 2000, over half of U.S. states have enacted a mentoring requirement for new principals due to concerns over attrition in high needs schools and an appreciation for the role that a school leader plays in creating an effective instructional environment (Mitgang, 2012). Mitgang (2012) stated that, “especially in their first years on the job, principals need high-quality mentoring and professional development tailored to individual and district needs” (p. 24). In order for novice principals to be successful in their new role, there are key leadership competencies they must master. Earley and Weindling (2004) identified these key competencies as working with change, being proactive with communication/information management, keeping staff well informed, integration of work with leadership teams, delegation, and building staff capacity to lead. Having a quality principal mentor can assist with the development of leadership competencies and thus contribute to a successful beginning.

The purpose of this study was to determine participants’ perceptions of the impact of mentoring on first and second year principal performance in a suburban school district located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. To that end, I conducted Appreciative Inquiry focus groups with principal mentors and conducted face-to-face interviews with 11 principal mentors and 12 new principals during the principals’ participation in the mentoring program. I analyzed the interview responses, Appreciative Inquiry session and leadership development survey to respond to the research questions.

An Analysis of Research Findings

This study revealed several findings relating to the perceptions of the impact of mentoring on new principal performance. The first finding is that, for the new principals in this study, the guidance and support offered through mentoring was valued. All new

principals were positive about the mentoring experience and felt that it had been a valuable program to help them navigate through the challenges within their new role. Conversations and shared experiences between the principal mentor and new principal provided opportunities for skill building and an understanding of how specific processes work in Lakewood County. Specific leadership growth in areas such as collaboration, decision-making, planning, organization, and communication were cited frequently. Conversations around decision-making were also mentioned as a helpful activity as the new principals confronted unfamiliar situations.

Another finding revealed by this study is that the quality of the mentor relationship is important. Several participants mentioned that being a principal is a lonely job and can be described as isolating. The availability of having an experienced principal mentor with whom to share reflections and ask questions provided both reassurance and emotional support. A number of new principals and principal mentors mentioned the importance of being able to quickly establish rapport and trust within the mentoring relationship. Being comfortable with each other before sharing personal reflections was clearly important to both parties. One surprising finding was the importance of a mentoring mindset regarding principals new to the district. Several of the new to district principals were highly experienced and were paired with principal mentors who were less experienced than they were. Their willingness to seek assistance from a younger and less experienced mentor as they navigated learning how to conduct business within Lakewood contributed to their success and feeling comfortable within the district.

The third finding is that Year 2 principals and principal mentors saw formalizing the mentoring program in LCPS as a positive district change. The act of building time for

mentoring into the calendar at the district level and providing supports such as the mentoring calendar and leadership workshops was seen as valuing the development of our newest principals. Several of the Year 2 principals and mentors expressed positive statements regarding the change of now having structured meetings and time set aside for their specific professional growth during their second year. While they had participated in an informal mentoring program during their first year, this revamped program required additional time for scheduled meetings and their participation in mentoring activities. The program was described by one of the Year 2 principals as supportive without providing additional work.

Finally, the study revealed, the current mentoring program could be strengthened by differentiating supports based on new principals' individual needs. Principal mentors mentioned the need to offer tiered supports for new principal professional development during the initial Appreciative Inquiry focus group sessions. I noted that principals new to the role had placed a greater focus on conversations that centered on the development of leadership competencies such as decision-making, planning, and organization. In contrast, the conversations of experienced principals who were new to the district focused more on obtaining information about specific LCPS processes and events. Additionally, variation existed regarding the student achievement levels, transiency, and demographic makeup of the different schools that had new principals. New principals and principal mentors who had more similar types of schools mentioned that this was a positive since it gave them an area of connection and shared experience in handling different community expectations or concerns. Careful selection of the principal mentor and new principal pairs along with providing specific information to the principal mentor regarding the new

principal's school needs may be an area for consideration. Including additional information regarding the specific leadership growth areas of the new principal could potentially improve the level of support within the mentoring relationship by providing greater focus on areas for growth.

Discussion of Research Findings

The findings of this study confirm that mentoring was valued by the cohort of new principals within LCPS and that the mentoring program is a promising practice for guiding, supporting, and improving their leadership capacity. This finding aligns with extant literature and is supported by the work of Daresh (2007) who stated that the entry of a new principal into the profession is not a one-time event. The entry is a transitional process in which the focus of mentor efforts should be on guiding the new principal instead of a problem solving intervention methodology. All of the new principals shared instances or activities in which they appreciated and valued working with their principal mentor. Searby (2014) confirms the importance of including reflective practice within mentoring work where she states that in order to increase their likelihood of a successful beginning, new principals should be able to accurately reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and make adjustments as needed.

The findings of this study also align with previous findings related to the importance of a high quality mentoring relationship based on trust and positive rapport. Eleven of the new principals and principal mentors expressed the importance of trust as a factor in having a successful mentoring relationship. Erden and Ozen Aytemur (2008) found that the factors that inspire a protégé to have trust in a mentor were mentor competency, consistency, fairness, sharing of control, showing interest, and

communication. New principals spoke of how having a trusted colleague provided reassurance when making difficult decisions or the reassurance to have someone available to call or even to sit with at large district meetings.

Additionally, in order to establish an effective mentoring relationship, both the mentor and protégé must have social intelligence, or more specifically, emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Goleman (1998) lists the five qualities of emotional intelligence as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. New principals related how the role of principal can be isolating and having the support of an emotionally supportive mentor was helpful to navigate the challenging emotional terrain of the first year. Similarly, Chun et al. (2010) studied 147 formal mentoring partnerships and concluded that a higher level of emotional intelligence in mentors enhances the overall mentoring process through increasing the level of trust of the protégé. Several of the new principals and principal mentors referenced the importance of the mentoring relationship being a supportive relationship built on trust. The findings in this study also indicated the importance of a mentoring mindset in which the new principal is open to participating in the mentoring process. Searby (2014) observed that mentoring relationships are most productive when the protégé has the mindset for learning, which is defined by characteristics such as taking initiative, relationship skills, reflective practice, and having a learning orientation. This mentoring mindset was observed within the study when New Principal Y, New Principal U and New Principal E each expressed how their own openness to the mentoring process combined with their ability to engage with their mentor had positively contributed to their ability to grow and learn. New principals who lack these competencies might not see the same level of

benefits within a mentoring program that new principals with mentoring mindsets experience (Searby, 2014).

Providing structures to formalize a mentoring program with set meeting times, a mentoring calendar and joint professional learning workshops for both new principals and principal mentors was seen as a positive district change and the third finding in this study. The formalization of a mentoring program is reflected in the work of Weingartner (2009) in his design of the ESP program for Albuquerque Public Schools. Training sessions for Albuquerque Public Schools are specific; use a prepared handbook; and include information on mentoring versus coaching, time management, and suggestions for mentors who work with new principals. This program also requires at least three hours per month for support for the new principal, cautioning that it is easy for mentoring teams who do not schedule regular meetings to get off track (Weingartner, 2009).

Principal Mentor P spoke of how scheduling meeting times in advance with her new principal contributed to mentoring success by staying on track with meeting. New Principal A spoke of how having the mentoring meetings on his calendar as a non-negotiable really helped. This finding is also supported by the examination of other principal mentoring programs which involve professional development for the principal mentors so that the mentors have a clear understanding of their role and the ability to mentor effectively (Mitgang, 2012; NAESP, 2017; Weingartner, 2009). Over the course of this study, I provided professional learning in the form of initial mentoring training, a Fierce Conversations workshop and a leadership book study. The activities were reported as a positive and impactful use of time by both new principals and principal mentors. Implementing a principal mentoring program as part of a supportive professional learning

experience for new principals allows for both relational support and the opportunity for new principals to gain independence through reflective questioning and improvement in decision-making. Helping new principals navigate successfully through an induction period to where they can become a risk-taking, not risk-avoidant, school administrators is a worthy goal (Daresh, 2007).

The work of Alvy and Robbins (1998) identified three different stages in the development of a new principal. The first stage is *anticipatory* where the principal accepts the job and is followed by the next stage of *encounter*, where the principal encounters the daily routines, establishes relationships, and deals with issues that arise. Lovely (2004) referred to the model and states that beginning principals must handle this transition effectively in order to experience success and transition to the third stage, that of *insider*. Although the encounter period is short, Lovely (2004) stated that beginning principals who do not effectively manage the relationship component during stage two will have trouble in transitioning to the final stage. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that relational and instructional leadership competencies are considered equally important within the principal role. From this research from Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) there is an indication that professional learning for new principals would need to include both instructional leadership competencies and professional learning in managing and developing relationships. The findings from action research focused on the LLPMP indicated that new principals had a variety of different needs that they encountered over the course of the year. While all new principals gained knowledge from the mentoring program, some of the new principals focused on learning new leadership competencies such as how to implement organizational structures or effectively handling staff or

student concerns. Other new principals, including those with prior experience, were interested in learning about procedural knowledge specific to LCPS.

Implications for Practice

Determining the relative strength of both relational skills and leadership competencies of each novice principal prior to beginning a mentoring program and providing differentiated mentoring support may potentially improve the focus of the mentoring program. Since both instructional leadership and relational competencies are important in terms of a principal's success in gaining the collective trust of a faculty (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015), determining the relative strengths and weaknesses for each new principal in both areas may provide an opportune starting point for mentoring work. Using this information to then provide differentiated mentoring support for each new principal would then provide an opportunity to build specific competency for both areas, increasing the leadership strength of new principals and also the potential for faculty trust. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that faculty trust in the principal paves the way to move the school forward academically and is crucial for school initiative success. Providing this differentiated support for new principal professional learning may potentially have an impact on the overall school success. An additional consideration is to be more explicit in providing an explanation of the purpose of the mentoring program to new principals. New Principal M had mentioned his initial belief that the purpose of the mentoring program was an accountability tool to monitor new principals. This misconception that mentoring is an accountability tool could potentially be clarified with other new principals by providing an overview of the program goals and the research behind mentoring as a supportive process. Providing a

more substantial background regarding the purpose of the program may also potentially increase the chance of creating a new principal “mentoring mindset” (Searby, 2014).

Another consideration for practice is the selection process for principal mentors. As previously mentioned, rapport between the new principal and principal mentor was determined to be very important to the mentoring relationship. Currently, the criteria for selection of principal mentors is considered subjective with criteria including traits such as successful tenure, knowledge of curriculum, classroom management, instructional practices and assessment. Additional qualities that principal mentors should hold to serve in LCPS include effective communication, trustworthiness, active listening and the ability to ask reflective questions. Mentors are expected to be positive and promote risk taking and innovation. One possibility to create a more objective process for mentor selection could be to expand the selection criteria to develop a common district definition of the qualifying leadership criteria. The selection process could then utilize a rubric of desired mentor qualities to come to consensus on potential mentor selection among district leadership.

The findings in this study may be instructive for school districts, higher education institutions, and other agencies that are interested in the selection, preparation and retention of quality leaders for our nation’s schools. I found insights that speak to the potential impact of a formal principal mentoring program as a job-embedded professional learning activity and the effect on principal leadership. School districts that are creating or revising programs to provide new principal onboarding and professional learning support for new principals within a one-to-one setting will be interested in the study findings.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. To help school districts plan successful mentoring programs, further study is needed to explore the value and benefit of increased mentor training.
2. The district should have a plan in place to continue to gather data in the examination of mentoring pair relationships to insure ongoing clear lines of communication, trust and collaboration. Pairs should receive additional support from the district if gaps are evident in any area.
3. Further studies could reveal additional information regarding the selection of mentoring pairs and the correlation between school demographics, school proximity, gender, age, and ethnicity of principal mentors and new principals.
4. Further studies on the topic of principal mentoring at other sites are recommended. This study included only one school district.

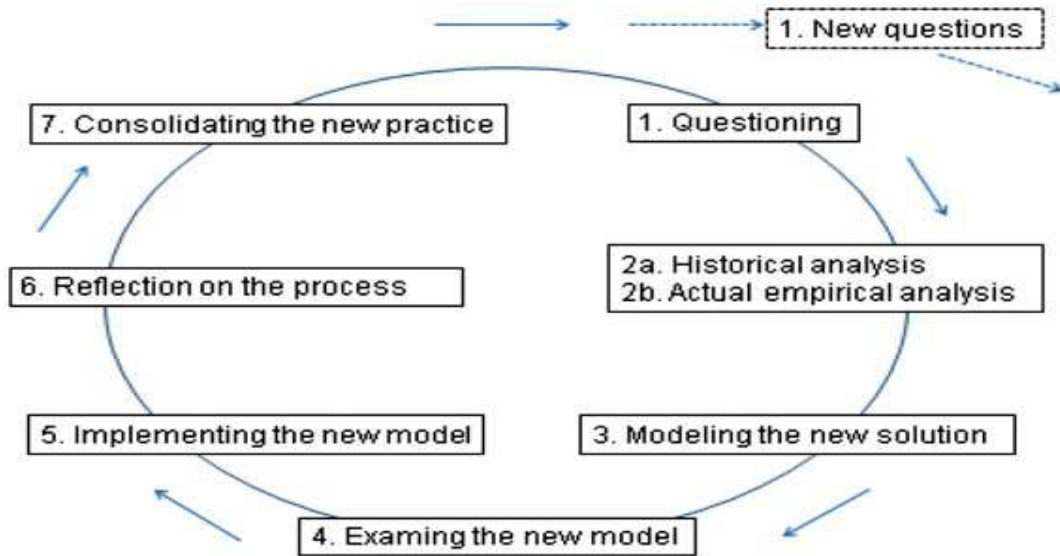
Conclusion

The practice of mentoring for new principals is a promising development for support of principals in their first two years and beyond of service or during their transition to a new district. Within this mentoring pairing between an experienced principal and a new principal, it is clear that the level of trust and rapport contributes to the overall mentoring success. In order to provide specific goals, selection processes, mentoring documents, and periodic scheduled meeting times it is best to formalize the mentoring program so these structures are included. New principals and principal mentors viewed this formalization as a positive addition to district offerings and recognized that this change demonstrates that the district values providing support for

new principals. Finally, initial supports for the mentoring program, such as mentor training, planning documents, and joint professional learning opportunities on leadership competencies contributed to the success of the program. We continue to look to the future where the possibility of the addition of a new principal needs assessment in the areas of relational competencies and instructional leadership as well as providing information to the mentor about the new principal's school may also potentially provide an improved experience through a differentiated focus on specific new principal needs.

Appendix A

Engeström Expansive Learning Circle



Appendix B

Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Calendar of Topics (August-October)

July/August

Principal Mentor Orientation Meeting

Meet Your Mentor Lunch Event

August

- Mission/Vision
- Strategic Goals/Action Plan Review
- School Improvement Plan
- Assessment of School Needs/Data Analysis/PBIS Planning
- Staff Considerations
- Fine Tuning Master Schedule
- Planning Retreat for Leadership Team/Faculty
- August Staff Development/Welcoming Staff
- Preparing for a Successful Evaluation Process-notification of formal/informal lists
- Health Training for Staff
- Standard 7 Goal Setting- initial assessment plans
- Communication Strategies/Organizational Structures
- Meet with Admin Team to clarify roles
- Instructional Leadership Planning
- New District and School Initiative Planning
- Setting Expectations
- First Day Procedures
- Arrival/Dismissal/Transportation
- Back to School Night/Open House
- Kindergarten Orientation
- Sub Folders and Procedures
- Update Website/Teacher Bios
- Meet with PTA
- Textbooks/Materials
- Yearly Calendar: CLT, School Bees, Assemblies, Picture Day, etc.

September

- Faculty Advisory Team/School Leadership Team
- Building a Culture of Collaboration
- Building Relationships
- School Safety Issues
- Walkthroughs
- Giving Feedback to Staff
- Communication
- Learning to Delegate
- Developing Leadership Capacity
- Standard 7 Goal Setting
- Finalize School Field Trips
- Celebrate Success!

October

- Time Management
- Communication Strategies
- Review Staffing Considerations
- Discuss results of goal setting conferences
- How to review and discuss data to prepare instructional strategies with faculty
- End of quarter grading timelines
- Report Cards/Conferences
- Review planning for staff meetings for remainder of year
- Preparing for any December support teachers
- Walkthrough Data
- First Round Teacher Observations/Conferences
- Building a Culture of Collaboration
- American Education Week Plans
- Celebrate Success!

Appendix C

Lead Lakewood Principal Mentoring Program- Collaborative Planning Session

July 28, 2016

Administration Building- Central Office

1. Welcome/Mentoring as Effective Practice
2. What do great listeners do differently?
3. Strategies to Build Trust
4. The New Principal-Stages of Development
5. Overview of the program

BREAK

6. Appreciative Inquiry/Focus Group sessions- Telling our story
7. Program Design
8. Calendar Creation
9. Creative Ways to Overcome Time Limitations and Other Barriers
10. Wrap Up

Meet Your Mentor Lunch

Appendix D

Mentoring Priority Plan

Directions: This worksheet should be completed collaboratively between the New Principal and the Principal Mentor. To prioritize your areas of development, consider your own assessed areas for improvement, along with district and school needs. You will need to analyze multiple data points to ensure that attention is given to the most critical needs that impact student learning and growth. With the help of your mentor and evaluator, select areas which best align with the most pressing agreed upon needs.

Based on your self-assessment using the Leadership Growth Planner, what are two developmental needs that you would like to address?

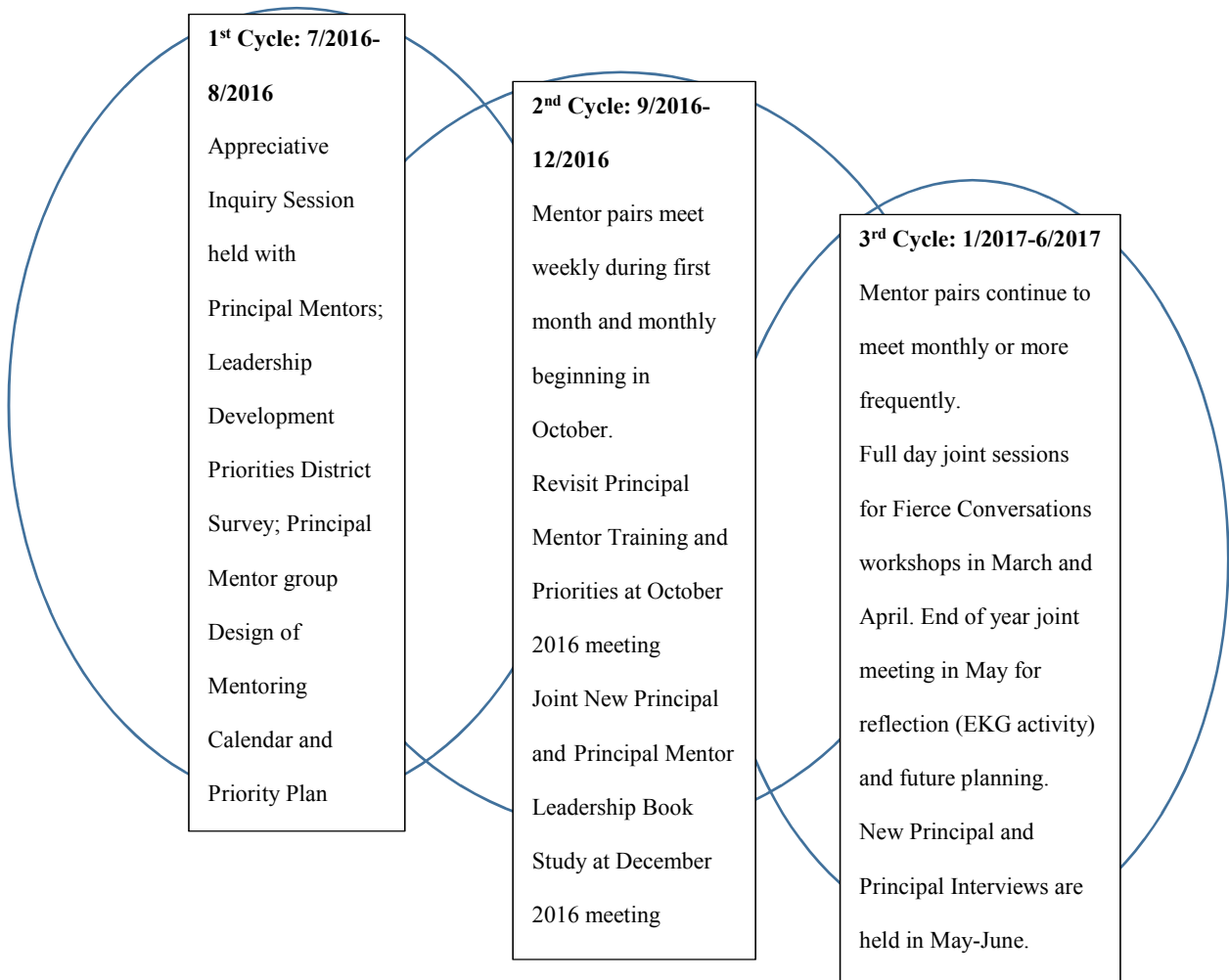
Based on discussions with the district staff, what are two areas that the district would like you to develop? (Example: One to the World, Personalized Learning)

Based on discussions with the district and school staff, what are areas in which the school has the greatest needs this year? Use multiple data sources (e.g., student learning data, perception data, demographic data, and school process data) to determine one or two areas of focus.

Final decision on high-priority indicators: Which two or three areas do you and your mentor agree should be the ones you work on this year?

Appendix E

Action Research Timeline



Appendix F
IRB Approval Notification

From: <compli@wm.edu (WM Compliance)>

Date: April 17, 2017 at 11:43:05 AM EDT

To: mxtsch@wm.edu, pmhuffman@email.wm.edu, edirc-l@wm.edu

Cc: <mxtsch@wm.edu>

Subject: STATUS OF PROTOCOL EDIRC-2017-04-16-12063-mxtsch set to active

Reply-To: <compli@wm.edu (WM Compliance)>

This is to notify you on behalf of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee (PHSC) that protocol EDIRC-2017-04-16-12063-mxtsch titled The Implementation of a Principal Mentoring Program and the Corresponding Impact on Leadership Practice has been approved through the EXPEDITED review process with a start date of 2017-05-03.

This protocol will expire on 2018-05-03 at which time work must discontinue.

Should there be any changes to this protocol during the project period or if you wish to continue the protocol after this expiration date, please submit your request to the committee for review using the Protocol and Compliance Management application (<https://compliance.wm.edu>).

Please add the following statement to the footer of all consent forms, cover letters, etc.:

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON
2017-05-03 AND EXPIRES ON 2018-05-03.

You are required to notify Dr. Jennifer Stevens, Chair of the PHSC at 757-221-3862
(jastev@wm.edu) if any issues arise with participants during this study.

Good luck with your study.

Appendix G
Consent Letter

May 2017

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided to you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this researcher.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a dissertation research project in a doctoral level program. The procedure will be an action research project involving the implementation of a principal mentoring program. The process will be conducted to look at the mentoring program impact on the leadership practices of principals who are in their first year in the principal role or within their first year of district service as a principal. Data collection will involve a 60-minute interview with new principals and principal mentors. Transcripts of interviews between the researcher and new principals/principal mentors will be provided to the principal to review.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about this study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. I will be happy to share my findings with you after the research is completed. However, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the researcher will know your identity as a participant. All names of participants and the name of the district will use a pseudonym.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the information about the experiences of participating in an action research study and the opportunity to participate in an action research study.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep. In signing this consent form, you agree that:

“The general nature of this study entitled "THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PRINCIPAL MENTORING PROGRAM AND THE CORRESPONDING IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP PRACTICE" conducted by Paula M. Huffman has been explained to me. I understand that I will be asked to answer semi-structured interview questions. My participation in this study should take a total of about 60 minutes. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential, that my identity and responses will be known only to the investigator and will not be divulged. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation in the interview at any time. No questions

will be asked pertaining to a participant's reasons for withdrawal, and there is no consequence for choosing not to participate in the study. Potential risks resulting from my participation in this project have been described to me.

If you have additional questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Dr. Tom Ward at [757-221-2358](tel:757-221-2358) (tjward@wm.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Stevens at [757-221-3862](tel:757-221-3862) (jastev@wm.edu), chairs of the two William & Mary committees that supervise the treatment of study participants. If study subject has any questions concerning this project, please contact the Principal Researcher directly: Paula M. Huffman, 571.252.1367.

I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.”

_____ Participant (Printed Name)

_____ Participant (Signature)

_____ Date

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone [757-221-3966](tel:757-221-3966)) ON 2017-05-03 AND EXPIRES ON 2018-05-03.

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VITA

Paula Massey Huffman was born in East Point, Georgia on September 18, 1968. She attended Berry College in Rome, Georgia, and graduated in 1990 with a B.S. in Early Childhood Education and a minor in Psychology. Paula taught elementary school at Eastside Elementary School in Coweta County, Georgia from 1990-1994. During this time period, she attended Georgia State University, earning her Master's in Library Media in 1994. Paula worked as a media specialist at East Coweta Middle School in Coweta County and then at Nicholson Elementary School in Cobb County, Georgia, until 2004.

During her service as a media specialist, she attended Lincoln Memorial University and earned an Ed.S. in School Administration in 2002. Paula made the transition to school administration in 2004, serving as Assistant Principal at Rocky Mount Elementary School in Cobb County, Georgia. She transferred to Garrison Mill Elementary School in 2007, becoming principal there in 2008. After serving as principal for three years, she relocated to Williamsburg, Virginia, and served as the principal of J. Blaine Blayton Elementary School in the Williamsburg-James City County school division. Paula relocated to Purcellville, Virginia, in 2014, serving in Loudoun County Public Schools first as the principal of Frederick Douglass Elementary School, then moving in 2016 to Supervisor of Leadership Development, and currently serving as Director of Talent Development within the Department of Human Resources and Talent Development. In 2017, Paula completed her doctoral coursework at The College of William & Mary, earning an Executive Ed.D. in K-12 Administration and Supervision.