

Running head: Principal Preparation

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

**Preparing the Next in Line:
New Principals' Perceptions of a School District's
District-Run Principal Preparation Programs**

**A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Education**

Of

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

**In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of**

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

By


Sharon Hargro Porter

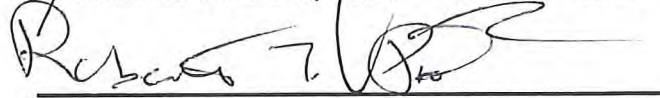
Washington, D.C.

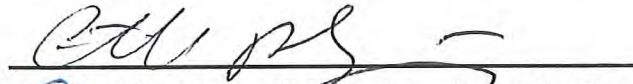
April 2017

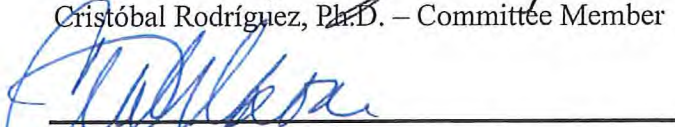
HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION


DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

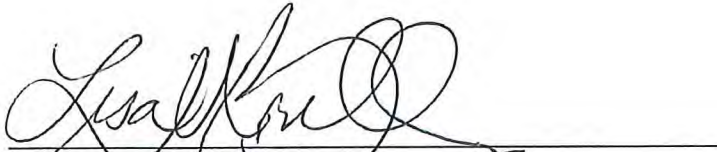

Kamilah M. Woodson, Ph.D. – Committee Chair


Robert T. Palmer, Ph.D. – Committee Member


Cristóbal Rodríguez, Ph.D. – Committee Member


Celeste Malone, Ph.D. – Committee Member


Kishawn L. Smith, Ed. D. – External Examiner
Assistant Principal
Prince George's County Public Schools


Lisa M. Stillo, Ed.D.
Dissertation Advisor


Candidate: Sharon H. Porter

Date of Defense: April 24, 2017

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the perceptions of new principals toward their learning experience in one or more of a Perfect Time Public Schools (PTPS) district-run principal preparation programs. The research design uses a qualitative approach to identify in-depth information to describe new principals' perceptions of their learning experience in district-run principal preparation program. The participants consist of principals in their first through third year as a principal in PTPS and were participants of one or more of a district-run principal preparation program.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband, Larry, who supported my efforts from the very beginning to the very end. I could not have completed this work without your understanding, love, and above all your patience. I love you!

I dedicate this work to my parents, Joann H. Hargro and the Late Fred J. Hargro, Sr., quitting was never an option in our household. You both instilled a sense of pride, integrity, and humility in the lives of me and each of my siblings. Thank you for your support, encouragement, guidance, and belief in all I do. I love you!

I also dedicate this work to my siblings, Lois Noël, Fred Jr., and Frederick Jay. Your undeniable support in all that I set out to do in life is greatly appreciated. I love you all immensely.

Additionally, I dedicate this work to my beloved Bichon Frise, CoCo “Cotton Love” Porter who was right by my side (or in my lap) all through the night for months and months as I completed this dissertation. I love you CoCo!

Finally, I dedicate this work to God. For three years, I was not able to be as active at my Place of Worship as I focused on completing this work. I am so grateful that HE knows my heart. I relied totally on my faith throughout this process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am fortunate to know what true leadership is. I believe there is a lesson in everything. This was evident throughout the process of writing this dissertation. I have increased my scholarly knowledge and found a new passion for research.

I would like to thank my husband for holding down "*Porter's Palace*" while my focus and attention was placed on completing this dissertation.

I would like to thank my greatest supporter in life, my mom! I just don't know where I would be without you!

I would like to thank my school district for allowing me to be a part of this cohort and partnership with Howard University.

I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Educational Leadership & Policy Studies in the School of Education at Howard University who took any part in the completing of this process. Specifically, I would like to thank my dissertation committee members: Dr. Robert Palmer, Dr. Cristobal Rodriguez, Dr. RC Saravanabhavan, Dr. Celeste Malone, and most of all my Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Lisa M. Grillo, for their guidance, encouragement, and support. I would like to give an additional note of thanks to Dr. Grillo for her specific guidance and her willingness to respond to my many texts, emails, telephone calls, and numerous meetings at Wegmans. I know I worried you tremendously!

I would like to thank my external dissertation committee member, Dr. Kishawn L. Smith, who agreed to serve three years ago when I started this journey. I appreciate you!

I would like to thank EAGLE 3 Cohort 2—GroupMe will never be the same! I want to specifically acknowledge Dr. LaChon C. Winston. You are a great colleague, cohort mate, and friend. We have been together EVERY step of the way, from application to dissertation. I guess we can say we are “line sisters” now! We did it!

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Tara Lobin for stepping in when I needed it most. Your willingness to moderate my focus group without hesitation is commendable and I thank you! In addition, thank you to Dr. Cheryl A. Hughes for your encouragement and checking on me often.

I also, would like to thank the principals in the school district that participated in the interviews, focus group, and questionnaire for their willingness and cooperation to assist with my data collection.

I would like to acknowledge The Wallace Foundation and their research around school leadership. The Principal Pipeline Initiative was launched in an effort to build the bench for the Next in Line to Lead.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. M. Terry Orr for taking the time to speak to me regarding her research around principal preparation and leadership development. It is one thing to read the work of a researcher, but to have the opportunity to speak one-on-one with the researcher is priceless. I am deeply honored I had the opportunity.

I would like to acknowledge Wegmans in Woodmore Towne Center, Lanham, MD. I spent many weekends in the “Fireside Community Room” without interruption and being able to work (and eat) in an environment that was both comfortable and inviting. Thank you for allowing me to be there.

Last, but certainly not least I am thanking God now, but I have PRAISED HIM IN ADVANCE!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	2
	Statement of Problem.....	6
	Research Questions.....	7
	Purpose of Study.....	8
	Significance of Study.....	10
	Theoretical Perspective.....	11
	Research Method.....	14
	Definition of Key Terms.....	15
	Delimitations of the Study.....	16
	Limitations of the Study.....	17
	Positionality of the Researcher.....	18
	Chapter Summary.....	20
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
	The Role of Principal.....	22
	The Role of Assistant Principal.....	23
	Principal Preparation Programs.....	27
	Qualities of Effective Principal Preparation Programs.....	29
	Principal Succession.....	31
	Principal Retention.....	32
	Chapter Summary.....	36
III.	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	38
	Theoretical Framework.....	39
	Researcher Epistemology.....	43
	Research Questions.....	44
	Rationale for Qualitative Research.....	44
	Research Design.....	46
	Research Participants.....	48
	Researcher's Role.....	48
	Instrumentation.....	49
	Data Collection.....	49
	Data Analysis.....	52
	Credibility of Research.....	53
	Ethical Considerations.....	54
	Chapter Summary.....	56

IV.	RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	58
	Presentation of Themes.....	61
	Theme 1: Mentoring and Coaching.....	61
	Theme 2: Relationships/Networking/Collaboration.....	62
	Theme 3: Application of District Initiatives.....	63
	Theme 4: Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity	65
	Theme 5: Better Understanding of District Initiatives...	66
	Theme 6: Budget/School Finances.....	67
	Theme Frequency and Potential Implications.....	68
	Findings Related to Research Questions.....	70
	Summary.....	92
V.	DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION	96
	Discussion.....	98
	Findings and Interpretations.....	105
	Conclusions.....	108
	Limitations.....	110
	Implications for Leadership Practice.....	111
	Policy Implications.....	114
	Implication for Future Research.....	117
	Summary.....	117
	References.....	119
APPENDIX A:	One-on-One Interview Script.....	134
APPENDIX B:	Interview Questions.....	136
APPENDIX C:	Interview Email Invitation.....	138
APPENDIX D:	Focus Group Script.....	139
APPENDIX E:	Focus Group Questions.....	141
APPENDIX F:	Focus Group Email Invitation.....	143
APPENDIX G:	Open-Ended Survey Email Script.....	144
APPENDIX H:	Open-Ended Survey Questions.....	146

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Demographics of Participants.....	73
2. Core Leadership Practices.....	100

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

1. Activity System.....	14
-------------------------	----

Chapter I

Introduction

The literature widely acknowledges that the role of the principal is crucial to a school's effectiveness (Mitgang &Maeroff, 2008; Levine, 2005; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Walstrom, et al., 2004; Andrews & Soder, 1987). The traditional transition to the principalship is from the position of assistant principal. Recent reports from many professional and educational organizations have also indicated that the role of principal is becoming more demanding as a result of successive waves of school reform (Fullan, 2002). Principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools. No matter what the strategy for improving schools, all schools, effective, ineffective, or those in school improvement status, rely on the leadership exercised by a single individual, the school principal (Ashby, 1996). As Abbott (1994) explained principals are asked to be "Renaissance Principals". Abbot describes the wide range of duties and responsibilities of today's principals are not only expected to accomplish, but are expected to master (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

New principals often discover there is much about being a principal that is not taught in schools of educational administration (Wilmore, 2004). Training programs for principals are generally viewed to be inadequate (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2009). Too often principals fail in their first year because they do not receive orientation and support (Elsberry & Bishop, 1996). Bush and Oduro (2006)

contend that untrained new principals experience great difficulty in adapting to the very different demands of the leadership role.

Principals most commonly are chosen from the pool of assistant principals (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007; Research indicates that the assistant principal position does not provide appropriate training or preparation for assistant principals to become principals Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2007). Christie, Thompson, and Whiteley (2009) assert “getting the right people to become school leaders is very important, but so is providing these people with the right set of skills to be effective leaders” (p. 4). Mitgang and Gill (2012) contend that it is imperative that getting pre-service principal training right is essential. Sun (2011) notes that given the impact school leadership can have on student outcomes, providing every school with an effective principal should clearly be among the top priorities.

The effectiveness of principal leadership relates to the success of teachers and students (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Michlin & Mascall 2010). There is an undeniable connection between the principal’s ability to lead learning and the support they themselves receive in their day-to-day work (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006). Marshall and Olivia (2006) contend that principals need guidance, encouragement, examples, and support to practice leading discussion with community groups and politicians. The authors also note that capacity building for social justice leaders requires a blending of theory, research, reflections on practice, tools for teaching

and other interventions, strategies for engaging passion and emotion and realistic engagement with challenges in real-world practice.

It is important to understand newly appointed principals' perceptions of how the school district is preparing them for the principalship. In years past, the assistant principal was frequently perceived as the administrator who would oversee day-to-day management tasks such as discipline, substitutes, attendance and cafeteria duty (Weller & Weller, 2002; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Weller and Weller (2002) surveyed 100 assistant principals to find out how they felt on a variety of topics, including their primary responsibilities. Approximately 77% of the respondents identified discipline or attendance as their major job assignment. Assistant Principals are playing an integral role as instructional leaders and ensuring that overall student academic achievement is improving. The role of the assistant principal has shifted from managerial only to include more instructional leadership responsibilities. It is unclear whether assistant principals are prepared adequately to assume the role of principalship (Madden, 2008). In the 2007 article *Next in Line: Preparing Assistant Principals for the Principalship*, 10 principals were interviewed. The authors assert that in order to prepare assistant principals to lead schools on their own, they must have opportunities to see all aspects of how to run a school.

Assistant principals are playing a greater role in student academic achievement due to the implementation of leaders standards in which assistant principals are now being evaluated. Tasks such as participating in the formal classroom observation process

which includes observing teachers and providing feedback is still among one of the common instructional duties of the assistant principal. Additional instructional tasks are now part of assistant principals' duties and responsibilities; such as overseeing professional development, curriculum, instruction, student learning, and handling personnel matters (Owen-Fitzgerald, 2010). Assistant principals should serve as an effective training ground for the principalship. Preparation for principalship depends on the experiences and responsibilities of assistant principals (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012). "Leadership is second to only classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3). The importance of attracting, selecting, and retaining effective principals is essential. While many factors contribute to school reform, instructional change, and strong visions, leadership is the catalyst for powerful impact and growth (Leithwood et al., 2004).

"Leaders are effectively being thrown into the deep end of the pool without adequate continued support, impacting schools, teachers, students and our country" (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 2). Principal retention has a direct impact on teacher retention. Schools whose principals remain successfully at the campus also have high teacher retention rates (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010; School Leaders Network, 2014; Young, 2009). School Leaders Network (2014) published a recent report entitled *Churn*. The report outlined the effects of principal retention on students and teachers. According to this report, principals account for 25 percent of the

total school influences on student achievement. Because of the high turnover in principals students achieve less in both math and reading during the first year after leader turnover. Principal turnover brings about readjustment for all staff. Both administrators and teaching staff are typically affected throughout the succession (Meyer & Macmillan, 2011). Additionally, the study investigated the effects of strong preparation on principal retention. A school district in Kentucky indicated principal preparation may have contributed to the reduction in principal turnover in the region by 70% between 2005 and 2010.

School districts must prepare to fill openings beyond the current school year. As retirements and promotions occur, there is a great impact on schools and school districts. In a study on the retention of principals (Fuller & Young, 2009), findings show that 90% of principals who leave a school actually leave the principalship. Up to 40 percent of principals are expected to retire within this decade (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr 2007). Principals are currently being replaced and by many times by a leader who is inexperienced and has not had the leadership opportunities to develop their skills to the needed level (Fuller & Young, 2009). The increase of research on succession planning indicates there is beginning to be a shift and focus on principal preparation and forecasting for principal vacancies.

Statement of the Problem

Perfect Time Public Schools (PTPS), a large urban public school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States includes over 200 schools and centers with a

student enrollment of approximately 130,000. District-run principal preparation programs are becoming more common in large school districts, but the literature on district-run principal preparation programs is scarce (Joseph, 2009). There are fewer qualified candidates available to assume the role of principal in American schools (Hallinger, 2003). The Wallace Foundation (2012) reports that preparation programs have shifted from teaching management skills to developing leadership skills that can promote learning for all students (Programs that include standards-based content are more effective (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007). To this end, it is imperative to conduct research on the district-run principal preparation program to contribute to the literature on principal preparation programs and analyze new principals' perceptions of their readiness to assume the role of principal after participating in these programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions assisted in investigating the perceptions of newly appointed principals regarding their learning experiences in district-run principal preparation programs:

1. What aspects of the district-run principal preparation programs were most meaningful for newly appointed principals' in terms of their preparation for the principalship?

2. In what ways did the learning experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs influence the current practice of newly appointed principals?
3. To what extent, if any, did the components of the district-run principal preparation programs impact newly appointed principals' readiness to assume the principalship?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of newly appointed principals regarding the development and preparation as provided to them by PTPS while serving as assistant principals. PTPS was one of six urban school districts selected by the Wallace Foundation to participate in a \$75 million principal pipeline initiative (PPI) in 2011 (Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, and MacFarlane, 2013). The PTPS district was selected because the district already had efforts in place to develop qualified principals. The Principal Pipeline Initiative aimed to help school districts develop a corps of effective school principals and to determine whether this improves student achievement across the district. PTPS was awarded \$12.5 million over the span of five years to build four key parts of a PPI that can develop and ensure the success of a sufficient number of principals to meet district needs. One of the major components of the PPI is high-quality training for aspiring leaders. The grant has allowed PTPS to further define the role of principal and assistant principal more deliberately and provide high-quality training for aspiring principals.

In examining the perceptions of the newly appointed principals, I identified the effective learning experiences of the district-run principal preparation programs as perceived by the participants and compared those perceived components with what is identified as best practices from the literature. The primary contributions of this study may provide information that may assist the school district in making necessary adjustments to its district-run principal preparation programs for the development and preparation of assistant principals for the principalship. The Wallace Foundation created a Principal Pipeline Initiative that details how six school districts either created or revamped their in-district principal preparation programs to specifically build a stronger bench for the principalship and develop a larger corps of highly-qualified, effective school leaders (Mendels, 2016). PTPS places a deliberate focus on development of assistant principals with emphasis on preparing assistant principals for the principalship.

The Wallace Foundation launched a \$75 million initiative to help six urban school districts develop a larger corps of effective principals. PTPS was one of the six school districts awarded the Wallace Foundation Grant. Over five years, the six districts' goal was to fill at least two-thirds of the principal vacancies with highly qualified school leaders (The Wallace Foundation, 2011). Wallace identified four key parts of a principal pipeline that can develop and ensure the success of a sufficient number of principals to meet district needs: rigorous job requirements, high-quality training, selective hiring, and on the job evaluation of and support (The Wallace Foundation, 2011). This study focused on the second key part: high quality training. The

six school districts clarified standards for school leaders and operationalized the standards as competencies that school leaders should demonstrate (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Each district introduced new leadership-preparation opportunities and began focusing on the position of assistant principal.

PTPS created two positions of School Leadership Development Coach for the 2014-2015 school year. The primary role of this position was to coach first and second year principals and assistant principals. That same school year PTPS created a district-run induction program, namely the Assistant Principal Induction Program, for first and second year assistant principals within the district to ensure that all assistant principals develop skills in instructional leadership. PTPS also worked with School Leaders Networks to provide professional development opportunities for assistant principals focused on problems of practice. The Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS) was created as a strategic partnership with the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) to develop and conduct a program, which prepares aspiring principals to lead district schools to excellence. This program was revamped into a district-run principal preparation program within the last three to four years.

Significance of Study

This dissertation study may be of great importance to PTPS and may also benefit school districts across the United States that have implemented district-run principal preparation programs or plan to implement such programs. While the study's focus pertains to one school district, findings may be useful for districts with similar

characteristics and needs as they develop in-district programs. The findings of this study may help to reshape the conversation about the role of districts in principal preparation and help to grow the literature, which is lacking in this area. There is a focus on high quality school leadership in all school districts in the nation (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001) provided state education agency and local school districts with money to improve principal leadership through recruitment and professional development in addition to improvement of teacher quality. Educational leadership is more difficult than it has ever been (Thomas & Bainbridge, 2001).

It will be specifically instrumental to the district's Office of Talent Development of the PTPS in its efforts in assessing and adjusting program curriculum to meet the needs of the school district as it relates to principal preparation.

Theoretical Perspective

This study was focused on the sociocultural aspects of human learning and development. It embraces the epistemological stance that cognitive development can only be explored in relation to the context, culture, and communities where the development takes place (Vygotsky, 1978). Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Activity Theory) is a multi-disciplinary research framework and is rooted in the works of Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Engeström (Engeström, 2016). It is applied in various disciplines and domains of practice, such as healthcare, information systems in organizations, and information systems development. However; its historical roots are closely intertwined with transformations in education (Engeström, 2016). The model of an activity system makes

visible the context of the educational processes under investigation. Context is represented as a systemic formation within which specific components and their relations can be identified and examined in detail (Engeström, 2016). This perspective takes in account that all human action is mediated through the use of cultural artifacts and tools. It is a theoretical framework for the analysis and understanding of human interaction through the use of tools and artifacts. This study examined new principals perceptions of their interactions and experience in district-run principal preparation programs. The sociocultural perspective considers the prime unit of analysis to be mediated action with the focus of research being the individuals carrying out the activities (Wertsch, 1995).

To conduct this research, I used Activity Theory to analyze and examine the perceptions of the development of newly appointed principals in district-run principal preparation programs. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that humans interact with their environment through the use of tools and cultural artifacts that mediate efforts to achieve goals or objectives. Activity theory is often viewed as an evolved theory with contemporary variants grounded in the early work of Vygotsky (1978). Leont'ev (1978) expanded Vygotsky's theory to incorporate human activity and the interactions within practical activity. Leont'ev viewed all activity as being comprised of actions carried out by a subject through the use of tools (Gedera & Williams, 2016). In this study, the newly appointed principals as assistant principals (subject) participated in various district-run principal preparation programs (tool) in order to increase their readiness or preparation for the principalship (object).

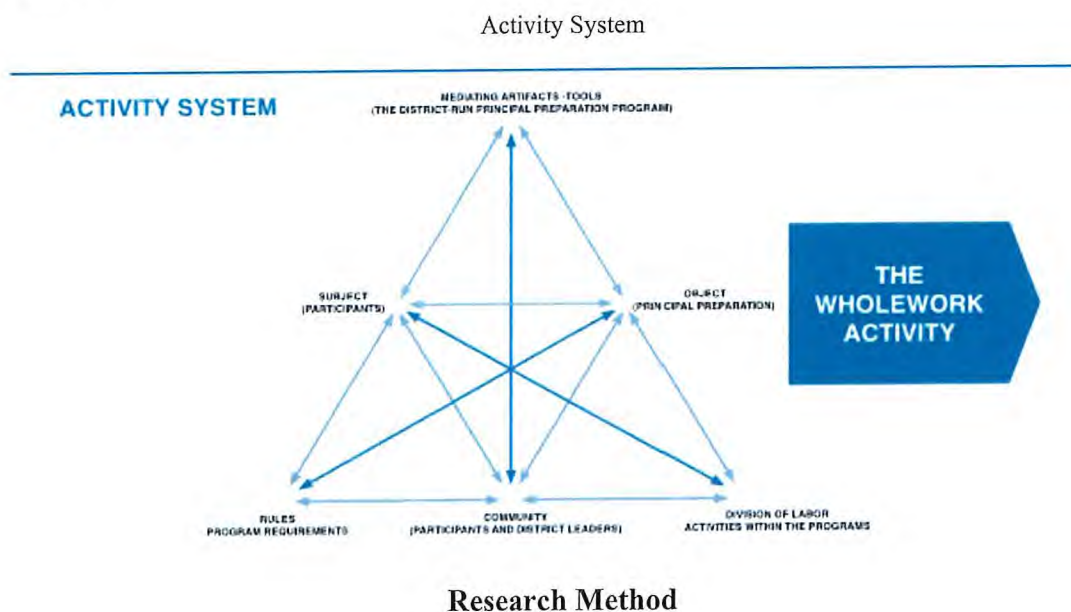
In using Activity Theoretical Approach to analyze and understand new principals' perceptions of their experiences in district-run principal preparation programs, I accounted for the multiple perspectives and interactions. This approach was aimed at understanding the individual. According to Engeström (2016), activity theory can best be summarized through an explanation of five key principles: 1) the prime unit of analysis is a collective object-oriented system mediated through the use of tools 2) activity systems are multi-voiced; 3) activity systems have historicity; 4) contradictions are central to transformation and development; 5) long term expansive cycles of transformation are possible in activity systems.

The first principle, prime unit of analysis, indicates that in order for an activity theoretical analysis to take place, a specific object-oriented activity system must be the prime unit of analysis. The activity system for this study was the delivery of activities and learning experiences within the district-run principal preparation programs. The minimum elements for an activity system includes subject, object, mediating tools, rules, community and division of labor (Engeström, 2016). In this study, I analyzed the activity system of each participant.

Leont'ev saw activities in a hierarchical system where activities comprised actions or chains of action, and where these actions comprised actions. Therefore, in this study the activity is the body of work and learning experiences of newly appointed principals. The activity had a motive; in this case the subjects (newly appointed principals as assistant principals) were motivated through the need to develop as a leader

in order to be prepared to assume the role of principal. The action had a goal, in this case to develop leadership behaviors that will increase the level of readiness for the principalship. The tools are integral in the transformation of the object toward reaching the outcome. Tools may be cognitive artifacts, knowledge and procedures. “Activity Theory uses the whole work activity as the unit of analysis, where the activity is broken into the analytical components of subject, tool, and object” (Hashim, 2007 para. 2).

Figure 1



Creswell (2014) identifies five common qualitative research designs and recommends the qualitative researcher choose from designs such as narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory. I used a phenomenological research approach to analyze the research questions.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are used in this study:

1. Newly Appointed Principal: A principal who is in the first through third year as principal in PTPS.
2. Leadership Development Opportunities: Professional learning provided by the school district for assistant principals in order to develop their leadership skills.
3. Principal Preparation Programs: Programs designed specifically to prepare individuals for the principalship.
4. District-run principal preparation program - Principal preparation programs designed and implemented by the school district to prepare assistant principals for the principalship which includes Assistant Principal Induction Program, Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success, and Resident Principal Program.
5. Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP) -A PTPS district-run required two-year program for all first and second year assistant principals in the school district.
6. Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS) - A PTPS district-run multi-faceted program for assistant principals with a minimum of two years experience as an assistant principal, with no unsatisfactory evaluations on record and hold Administrator I and II certification. Participants must apply and be accepted into the program.

7. Resident Principal Preparation Program- A PTPS district-run principal preparation program for assistant principals. Chosen assistant principals shadow a principal for the first semester of the school year and assume the role of the principal for the second semester. The principal is placed in another department or office for their field experience.
8. Internal Candidate -An individual that works in the PTPS school district at the time of hire in a new position.
9. External Candidate- An individual that does not work in the PTPS school district at the time of hire in a new position.
10. Leadership Development Team- A team of at least four former school administrators that serve to support and guide first and second year assistant principals in the PTPS district-run principal preparation programs.
11. Office of Talent Development- An office within the PTPS school district that offers professional and personal development opportunities to enhance performance of professional educators within the school district.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited by the choice to only use participants' experience from the district-run principal preparation program. Some participants had experience in alternative principal preparation programs, university principal preparation programs, as well as district-run principal preparation programs. In addition, not identifying where the participants obtained their administrative licensure or when it was obtained was also

identified as delimitation. Patterns and commonalities could have emerged from the accounts of the individuals according to where they attended or when they received their licensure. The participants all were a part of the school district's district-run principal preparation programs; however prior experiences are also factors in the readiness level to assume the principalship.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this qualitative research study were as follows:

1. The sample size limits transferability.
2. Gender, race, and school levels of all participants could not be identified due to the limited number of respondents and principals that are males, of a specific race, and in specific leveled-schools that participated in this study.
3. Four of the participants were a part of the ALPSS first-third cohort when the program was transitioning from a national leadership program to a district-run principal preparation program. The program has been overhauled within the last three years. The responses of the four were often times not aligned with the other members of their program, simply because the changes that occurred to the program in the last three years.
4. The two APIP participants were a part of the beginning of APIP. APIP was initially not designed as a principal preparation program, but a program that inducts newly appointed assistant principals into administration. Its original design was that of a leadership development program.
5. At least three participants had experience with other principal preparation programs either before or during their experience with the

district run principal program. That additional experience could have influenced their level of readiness for the principalship.

6. Although no commonalities among newly appointed principals that did not participate in this study was found, their perception of their program may have been less enthusiastic than those who did participate.

7. The use of the focus group may also be considered a limitation. Participants in some instances just agreed with another participant's response versus stating their own perception.

8. My role and experience as a Leadership Development Coach, coordinator of APIP, and member of the office that sponsors these programs may be viewed as influencing the interpretation of the participants' experience. To minimize the bias, I used reflective practice, solicited the assistance of moderator to conduct interviews with participants of APIP, allowed the interviewed participants to verify the accurateness of the interpretations, conducted one-on-one interview sessions, a focus-group session, and an online anonymous questionnaire. In addition, I disclosed my personal experience in Chapter III.

Positionality of the Researcher

I currently coordinate the Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP) for PTPS first and second year assistant principals. In this role, I work directly with first and second year assistant principals. I meet with APIP participants monthly as a cohort. Additionally, I am a member of the Leadership Development Team (LDT) for some members of the Cohort. Each Leadership Development Coach in the Office of Talent Development is assigned to the LDT of each participant of APIP. To this end, I will have a direct relationship with new principals that participated in APIP. Prior to the creation

of this induction program, the school district did not offer a structured program for new assistant principals. The induction program has been in existence for three years, with only one cohort of assistant principals completing the two-year program. Identifying ways in which to improve the program's effectiveness is critical to increasing the number of internal candidates that are selected for the principalship within the school district and having those candidates prepared to assume the position of principal.

I have been the only coordinator of the Assistant Principal Induction Program to date since its inception. There have been assistant principals appointed to the principalship directly from the induction program; without participating in any other principal preparation program after or during the induction program. There are, of course, assistant principals being selected from the other district-run principal preparation programs, but as the coordinator of the induction program, it is imperative that I structure that program to align with the best practices for principal preparation programs identified in the literature and that participants perceive that their participation attributes to their readiness for principalship. When the induction program was initially introduced, there was an emphasis placed on the development of leadership skills, not specifically preparation for the principalship. The focus and intent currently is to develop the assistant principals as leaders in addition to preparing them for a position as principal.

Qualitative research is interpretative research (Creswell, 2014). I am involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants of the Assistant Principal Induction Program. My experiences as the program coordinator, former assistant principal and

principal in this school district shaped the interpretations I made during this study. As a new assistant principal in PTPS 14 years ago, I did not have a structured program that assisted in my development as an assistant principal. In fact, the lack of development opportunities led me to seek other leadership positions within the school district prior to me entertaining the idea of applying for the principalship. I am fully aware that changes need to be made. In fact, changes were made to the program based on feedback from participants in the program, the Leadership Development Team (district and school leaders assisting in the process), as well as a Quality Measures™ Evaluation. However; participants for this study did not benefit from those changes.

I chose Activity Theory because it provided a lens with which to better understand human activity. The key term in Activity Theory is activity, but its meaning is more than just being active; it means something significant and meaningful. The activity must be purposeful and is carried out by a set of actions through the use of tools (physical or psychological) (Gedera & Williams, 2016). My goal as coordinator for one of the district-run programs is for each task assigned and activity created to be meaningful and purposefully and have added-value for participants in their current role as well as principal.

Summary

Chapter 1 of this qualitative research study began by acknowledging the literature that supports that the role of the principal is crucial to a school's effectiveness. The chapter described why principal preparation for the Next in Line is imperative. Providing

aspiring principals with the right set of skills to be effective leaders impacts the school as well as the district as a whole. The chapter identified the research questions, provided an overview of the design and methodology, described the theoretical perspective, the significance of the study, outlined the delimitations and limitations and defined key terms for this study. Chapter 2 will review the literature related to the research problem statement and research questions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I will establish the context of Principal Preparation five categories: Role of Principal, Role of Assistant Principal, Principal Preparation Programs, Principal Success, and Principal Retention. The following keywords were entered in multiple combinations to locate literature pertaining to the topic of focus: *assistant principal preparation for the principalship, principal preparation, assistant principals, assistant principal induction program, and school leadership preparation, and grow your own principal preparation programs.*

The assistant principal position is often the gateway to the principalship. The literature overwhelmingly leaned toward the conclusion that the assistant principal position does not provide adequate preparation for assuming the role of principalship. During the literature review, I realized there was limited research on district-run principal preparation. Therefore, the literature mostly focused on university principal preparation programs.

Role of Principal

The 2013 Wallace Foundation Report, *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning* asserts there are five key responsibilities for principals: Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards; Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail; Cultivating leadership in

others so that teachers and other adults assume their parts in realizing the school vision; Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost; Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

Available evidence suggests that principals play a key role in school improvement and improving student achievement outcomes (Fullan, 2007). Effective school leaders know how to focus the work of the school on the essential. They have a clear mission or purpose for the school and identify goals that align with that mission. They communicate the purpose and goals in a meaningful way such that all stakeholders understand what they need to do (McIver, Kearns, Lyons, & Sussman, 2009).

Collins (2001) draws lessons from contemporary corporate life to suggest leadership that focuses with great clarity on what is essential, what needs to be done and how to get it done. Today, in a rapidly changing era of standards-based reform and accountability, a different conception has emerged. This shift brings it dramatic changes in what public education needs from principals. They can no longer function simply as building managers, tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations and avoiding mistakes. They have to be leaders of learning who can develop a team delivering effective instruction (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Role of Assistant Principal

The first step taken by many educators who are pursuing careers in educational administration, particularly those in secondary education, is often the assistant

principalship. The experience of campus-based leadership is priceless to aspiring administrators; however, many individuals are never able to break through the wall of this entry-level leadership role to move on toward principalship or other positions of increased responsibility (Daresh, 2001).

The position of assistant principal was originally introduced into schools in the United States in the 1930s designed primarily as a support person to reduce principal workload (Harvey, 1994). In a qualitative study of over 100 assistant principals in south Texas, Barnett et al. (2012) reported that the role of the assistant principal is characterized by “excessive workload demands” (p. 104). With increased accountability for student achievement, the primary role of assistant principal has evolved from that of disciplinarian and school operations manager to instructional leader. Yet assistant principals have not dropped the bus and lunch schedules, or stopped meeting with students and parents regularly; the role as instructional leader has been added to the job description (NAESP). To be effective instructional leaders, assistant principals first need support from their principals. John Nori, NASSP (National Association of Secondary School Principals) Director of the Office of Instructional Leadership Resources, recommends that principals:

Provide assistant principals with professional development on observing and giving feedback to teachers as well as opportunities to observe other assistant principals;

Make time to plan and observe with assistant principals, and review the feedback that assistant principals are giving teachers;

Help assistant principals lead the development of curricula within and between subject area teams by providing resources; and

Free assistant principals from operational-only duties by finding time and resources to do so.

Bolman and Deal (2010) suggest that there are leadership lessons during the initial period of starting a new job: The road ahead promises adventure, opportunity, and independence. Long-delayed dreams can finally be realized. Everything seems possible. Bumps? Obstacles? Who wants to think about problems when the world is brimming with possibilities? Yet there are always landmines lurking below the surface. Too often we discover them only when they blow up in our face.

Enthusiasm and optimism can quickly erode into a mire of disappointment and disillusion. (p. 26)

Butler (2008) noted that according to a 2006 survey by Public Agenda, a nonprofit research organization that reports public opinion and public policy issues, nearly two thirds of principals felt that typical graduate leadership programs are out of touch with today's realities. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson (2005) contends little evidence demonstrated what types of learning opportunities provided by principal preparation programs would enable principals to be more effective in their preparation. McCarthy (2005) found that there was a concern about finding educational

leaders capable of leading school reform as well as increasing the academic performance of students. Levine (2005) found that programs should include learning experiences with vision, purpose, and coherence that connect coursework to field experiences for practice in local schools. Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) proposed the need to provide authentic and relevant experiences pertaining to leadership. Lynch (2012) stated that the principal preparation programs are responsible for reforming their own programs and those changes to policies within the state boards of education need to occur with regard to principal preparation programs.

Research on the roles of assistant principals is initiating a call for better preparation of assistant principals before they assume the role of principal (Madden, 2008). Historically, assistant principals were given narrow, managerial duties that require them to operate the day-to-day management of the school (Dembowski, n.d.). They were seldom given responsibilities that required higher level decision-making or initiation, and instructional leadership opportunities. This has led to many assistant principals feeling defeated not only as assistant principals, but also with their job after they gain a principalship, as they realize that they are ill-prepared for the job (Mertz, 2000). Lovely (1999) suggests that assigning a challenging job as principal to someone who lacks the skills and training necessary for the job will in many cases lead to failure.

Lovely (1999) reported on a study on approaches to train assistant principals in the United States. The study focused on a program titled "Outreach," in which assistant principals were actively sought out in order to train to be effective principals. The

assistant principals were provided with all the experiences and responsibilities typically required of a principal. The assistant principals were able to hone their leadership skills through ongoing collaboration with qualified principals who clearly understood the diverse elements of the job and who agreed to supervise and monitor the progress of the candidates closely.

According to a study commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1998), there is a growing shortage of qualified applicants to fill vacancies in the principalship. In 2002, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) estimated that in the next decade 40 percent of the current principals would be retiring and would not be replaced by enough qualified candidates (NASSP, 2002).

Principal Preparation Programs

“Getting the right people to become school leaders is very important, but so is providing these people with the right set of skills to be effective leaders” (Christie et al., 2009). But DeVita (as cited in Davis et al., 2005) talked about “a litany of concerns about the quality and effectiveness of the leadership preparation”. She suggested that “what’s desperately needed, however, is not just another indictment, but a deeper analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these programs and what can be done to improve them”.

The 2005 report commissioned by the Wallace Foundation indicates a number of reports depict the principalship as being in a state of crisis precipitated by two factors:

1. School districts are struggling to attract and retain an adequate supply of highly qualified candidates for leadership roles (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003); and
2. Principal candidates and existing principals are often ill-prepared and inadequately supported to organize schools to improve learning while managing all of the other demands of the job (Levine, 2005).

The need to prepare the Next in Line is based on the shortage of highly qualified principal candidates that has been reported by school districts across the nation (Peterson, 2002). Too many aspiring administrators are too easily admitted into and passed through programs on the basis of their performance on academic coursework rather than on a comprehensive assessment of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully lead schools (NPBEA, 2001).

The focus on principal preparation and development has increased, leading to changes in leadership development programs and program structures (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Many large urban school districts provide in-service professional development, but only a few offer pre-service preparation programs or wrap-around programs that help teachers prepare for the principalship and then support their practice once they become school leaders (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005).

Key components of exemplary initial preparation programs as highlighted in the 2005 Wallace Foundation report include: Having a guided philosophy based on the concept of the principal as instructional leader; Actively recruit potential leaders who

have demonstrated their ability to teach and to lead their colleagues; Actively support candidates through well-designed coursework and supportive relationships like cohort groups and strong advising and mentoring; Program content is researched-based and tightly aligned with professional standards; Stress the importance of field-based internships and other learning situations that emphasize real-life situations and use these applied situations to integrate theory and practice. Orr (2006) contends that leadership education programs are not only striving to understand the role of leadership in school improvement but also to promote social justice, leadership for all students. In addition, Orr (2010) asserts that school districts should recognize that their position as consumers of principal preparation programs' graduates have power and that power should be used as influence to improve the quality of program candidates. Orr continues

Qualities of Effective Principal Preparation Programs. A widely publicized study by Arthur Levine, former President of Teachers College at Columbia University, found that “many of the university-based programs designed to prepare the next generation of educational leaders are engaged in a counterproductive ‘race to the bottom’, in which they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watered down course work, and offering faster less demanding degrees.” These findings make it extremely imperative for school districts to develop and implement their own leadership development opportunities for aspiring principals. Findings from the SREB study (2007), *Schools Can’t Wait: Accelerating the Redesign of University Principal Preparation Programs* (of redesign in principal preparation programs furnished dramatic

evidence of a major structural weakness in the architecture of school reform. One of the findings included school districts becoming more proactive in accepting co-ownership of principal preparation, identify what principals need to know and be able to do on the job and take the necessary steps to ensure universities provide programs that address their needs for improved schools and student achievement. The study revealed there was a lack of collaboration between universities and school districts.

The Wallace report “*School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals*” analyzed eight case studies and the comparison sample of principals to examine the impact of and effective approaches for leadership in key areas such as teacher, staff, and stakeholder management; organizational and process design; curriculum implementation; assessment; and adaptation to local contexts. The report posed the following questions: What skills do excellent leaders have? - What experiences can programs provide to support the development of these skills? - What program structures best support the delivery of these experiences? - What financing and policy practices are best to launch and support these programs?

Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2010) contend that the best leadership programs are “more likely than others to recruit excellent teachers who have strong instructional backgrounds and leadership potential and who better represent the populations of their communities” (p. 187). A 2005 report from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) described many preparation programs as ineffective. Lawrence (2010) analyzed principal preparations one state and found that while standards based

programs exist throughout the state, the programs varied with their alignment. Lawrence recommended that districts develop programs that cultivate “the ability to see patterns and relationships and form concepts, hypotheses and understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context” (p.143). Ketterman (2002) described a need for more practical pre-service preparation training for principals in his research. The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration reported that administrative preparation programs should be like those in professional school which emphasize theoretical and clinical knowledge, applied research, and supervised practice” (Green, 2001, p.1). LaPointe and Davis (2006) assert that effective principal preparation programs are “researched based, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area school” (p. 18).

Principal Succession

The role of the principal is an undisputed key factor in both student and school success (Leithwood, 2004). Effective succession management addresses the need for the recruitment, training, and ongoing support of all school administrators (Hargreaves, 2003). In a study on the retention on the retention of principals (Fuller, 2009), findings show that 90% of principals who leave a school actually leave the principalship. Up to 40 percent of principals are expected to retire within this decade (Wallace, 2007). School districts must prepare to fill openings for more than the next year, they have to think ahead for several years when building the bench. Principals are constantly being

replaced, and many times by a leader who is inexperienced and has not had the leadership opportunities to develop their skills to the needed level (Fuller, 2009). Most school districts tend to select new principals from within their own ranks (Johnson, 1995).

Principal Retention

New principals often express frustration over the fact they do not understand the nature of their leadership responsibilities prior to receiving the position (Daresh, 1994). Principals must be talent agents, seeking and developing their future successors (Walker, 1992). Succession plans must tie leadership recruitment, preparation, hiring, and training in a cohesive way. It must provide adequate time to prepare for administrative roles (Daresh, 2004).

There is a limited amount of research on succession planning, which indicates there is minimal preparation for future principal positions. Districts must look at different strengths and personalities when seeking to fill openings at the principal level. For example, the principal of a large secondary school requires a different skill set than the principal of small elementary school (Leithwood, 2004).

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) created a *Leadership Succession Planning Guide for Maryland Schools*. The Guide consists of three sections: Catalyst for Conversation, Outline for Planning, and Succession Plan for Example School System. Research supports that the strongest organizations have a set of beliefs and concomitant actions regarding succession. Some of the key process questions as it relate to principal preparation include:

- What attributes are we looking for as we identify potential principals?
- How do we develop system-wide leadership capacity without relying on discrete candidate pools?
- What role do principals have in the identification and development of aspiring and potential leaders?
- What role do curriculum instructional supervisors have in the identification and development of aspiring and potential leaders?
- How do we ensure that our most talented staff are getting continuing learning experiences.
- How do we ensure an appropriate budget for the development of aspiring and potential school leaders?
- What attributes are we looking for as we consider candidates for the principalship?

The six urban school districts received support from the Wallace Foundation to address the critical challenge of supplying schools with effective principals. The districts have participated in the Principal Pipeline Initiative, which set forth a comprehensive strategy for strengthening school leadership in four interrelated domains of district policy and practice: Leader standards to which sites align job descriptions, preparation, selection, evaluation, and support; Pre-service preparation that includes selective admissions to high-quality programs; Selective hiring, and placement based on a match between the candidate and the school; On-the-job evaluation and support addressing the

capacity to improve teaching and learning, with support focused on needs identified by evaluation.

A shortage of highly qualified principal candidates has been reported by school districts across the nation. In some parts of the country nearly sixty percent of principals will retire, resign, or otherwise leave their positions over the next five years (Peterson, 2002).

The importance of leadership to school and instructional improvement has been well documented (Hallinger and Heck, 1998). Specific leadership practices have been associated with active and effective support of instructional improvement. According to research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), the most critical practices involve: Working directly with teachers to improve effectiveness in the classroom; Providing resources and professional development to improve instruction; Regularly monitoring teaching and student progress; Participating in discussions on educational issues; and Promoting parental and community involvement in the school.

In a study of 11 innovatively redesigned principal preparation programs, Leithwood and colleagues (1996) surveyed teachers working in the graduate' schools and found that teacher perceptions of principals' leadership effectiveness were strongly influenced by innovative program features such as the programs' instructional strategies, cohort membership, and program content.

There is limited research on district-run principal preparation programs. District policies and priorities can greatly affect the nature and content of professional preparation

and development, and this may not be related to state policies (Darling-Hammond, et al 2007). Many states, districts, and other funders are developing policy and investing resources to improve strategic leadership development for both new and experienced school leaders (Sanders & Simpson, 2005). Some local districts, primarily in urban areas, are addressing the perceived shortage of principal candidates by creating new preparation programs through collaboration with local universities (Grogan & Robertson, 2002).

It is imperative that school districts begin to closely look at how administrators are developed, mentored, supported through professional development. Not only is teacher retention important, but administrator retention is just as important (Riggs

Much of the recent attention on increasing student achievement and decreasing the achievement gaps has focused on the critical relationship between effective teachers and student achievement. Sanders and Horn (1998) asserted that the “single largest factor affecting academic growth of populations of students is differences in effectiveness of individual classroom teachers”. One overlooked aspects of increasing teacher quality is the role of the principal. Historically, principals have been viewed as managers rather than leaders. Zigarelli (1996) contends that contemporary views of school leadership place the principal much closer to the heart of schooling process—teaching and learning.

According to researchers Philip Hallinger and Ronald Heck (1996), school principals “exercise a measurable, though indirect, effect on school effectiveness and student achievement. Research by Ken Leithwood, University of Toronto, concludes that

the principal's leadership accounts for about 20 percent of the school's impact on student achievement. Richard Elmore contends that the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective results. Fenwick and Pierce (2000) recognized the declining number of applicants for the position of principal. Kerrins (2001) noted "Principals are leaving their jobs at younger ages, principals report that high stress, time demands of the job, broadening requirements of the job far exceed salaries and new state accountability legislation make retirement appealing". Murphy (1998) provided a short chronology of the preparation for principalship. From 1820-1889, minimal formal preparation designed for teachers was sufficient for administrators.

Summary

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) believes that we cannot have first-rate schools without first-rate school leadership. The Wallace Foundation (2012) found that possible changes to ensure effective school leaders may include outlining requirements of the principal and assistant principal to explain what they need to know and do.

The most critical step in any systematic effort to cultivate effective school leadership may be to align principals' performance to recognized standards (Young &

Peterson, 2002). In 1996 the Council of Chief State School Officers' Interstate School Licensure Council (ISLLC) developed six standards to guide principal performance (Green, 2001). A new set of national standards for educational leaders were adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) in October 2015. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 (PSEL 2015) replaces the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. PSEL 2015 builds on the ISLLC Standards and presents a systemic view of leadership and are best understood as mutually enforcing and attending to all, not just one or a select few (PSEL 2015).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Merriam (2002) stated qualitative research provides an opportunity to understand the participants' views in the context studied. Debus and Novelli (2008) asserts "the primary conceptual reason for using qualitative research is that it provides depth of response and, therefore greater consequent understanding that can be acquired through quantitative techniques" (p.2). The overall purpose of this study was to identify participants' perceptions regarding principal preparation in district-run preparation programs. This study focused on specific program components and activities that participants identified through their own personal experiences in the program. The questions addressed in this study were

1. What aspects of the district-run principal preparation programs were most meaningful for newly appointed principals' in terms of their preparation for the principalship?"
2. In what ways did the learning experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs influence the current practice of newly appointed principals?
3. To what extent, if any, did the components of the district-run principal preparation programs impact newly appointed principals' readiness to assume the principalship?

The foci of the questions are significant in understanding the extent to which they feel they have been prepared for the principalship.

Theoretical Framework

I used Activity Theory (AT) as a lens to better understand the set of actions of the human activity experienced by new principals in a district-run principal preparation program. AT provides a holistic understanding of how people collaborate. It uses the whole work activity as the unit of analysis, where the activity is divided into the analytical components of subject, tool, and object. In this qualitative study, the subjects were the participants in the district-run principal preparation programs. The object was the intended activity. In this study, the assistant principals' preparation for the principalship represented the object. I adopted the district-run principal preparation programs as the mediating device by which the action was executed (tool). The district-run principal preparation programs represented the tool.

Engeström modified Vygotsky's original theory; providing two additional units of analysis; rules and division of labor. The rules are the set of conditions that help determine how and why individuals may act, and are a result of social conditioning. Division of labor provides for the distribution of actions and operations among a community of workers. The division of labor acknowledges that different members of the community contribute to the goal in distinct, but important ways; each has a direct and indirect impact on the actions within the activity system (Farrelly, 2012).

Activity Theory as a theoretical lens took the perspective of the new assistant principal. This concept allowed me to examine the different outcomes that have been influenced by the interaction within the district-run principal preparation programs.

Activity Theory (AT), as a framework for analyzing perception data, provided a means for observing the emergence of themes in human activity in terms of the perceptions of the new principals participating in this study. AT was used to identify and describe not only how new principals perceived their principal preparation provided by the school district but also how the learning experiences of the principal preparation program aligned with best practices from the literature. I used activity theory (AT) as the theoretical foundation for framing the perceptions of new principals' regarding their preparation for the principalship. AT is about cognition, it was used to identify important aspects of the experiences of participants in the district-run principal preparation programs and to assist in making inferences about the phenomena which helped bridge the gap from description to design.

From a research perspective, the concept of the object of activity is a promising analytical tool providing the possibility of understanding not only what people are “doing”, but also why they are doing it” (Kaptelinin, 2005, p.5). An activity system is always organized around an object of activity.

“In AT, the perspective of the individual is at the center of everything. AT focuses on the cognitive process of an individual situated in a social, cultural, historical, and artifactual world” (Haverson, p.16). AT defines activity as the central unit of analysis. It includes the original elements of the Vyotskian model of mediated action in addition to rules, community and the division of labor.

In Activity Theory, the relationship between subject and object forms the core of an activity. The outcomes of an activity can be the intended ones, but there can also be others that are unintended (Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014). Such as it was for this study; the relationship between the participants (subject) and principal preparation (object) forms the core of the activities provided in the district-run principal preparations program (tool). AT recognizes the internalization and externalization of cognitive processes involved in the use of tools, as well as the development that result from the interaction (Field, Lauche, Bichsel, Voorhorst, Krueger, & Rauterberg, 2002). This framework enables researchers to analyze activity from different viewpoints and examine the tensions in an activity system (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

Activity theory is a conceptual framework based on the idea that activity is primary, that doing things precedes thinking that goals, images, cognitive models, intentions, and abstract notions like definition and determinant grow out of people doing things (Morf & Weber, 2000). AT theorists are not simply concerned with “doing” as a subtle action, but referring to doing in order to transform something with a focus on the contextualized activity of the system as a whole (Barb et al., 2002; Kuutti, 1996). The activities that consist within principal preparation intended purpose is to transform assistant principals’ readiness for the principalship.

In research that studies the complexities of real work situations, such as modern workplaces, communities, groups or places of learning, Activity Theory provides a language and framework for making sense of that which is discovered about the situation

through observation, interviews and other methods (Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014). Using the Activity Theory lens for research takes activity as the unit of analysis, where activity is defined by the dialectic relationship between subject and object. Who is doing what for what purpose (Vygotsky, 1978).

An activity system is organized around an object of activity. The object is the component which distinguishes one activity from another. Theorists define the implementation of a new object as expansive learning (Edwards, 2009).

The Artifacts are means to mobilize participants for the purpose of improving collaborative activity. Desired outcomes are the generation of new practices, the formation of new communities and new artifacts. Activity systems can be situated in networks of other activity systems, so this framework is useful for analyzing how different contexts of activity can interact and influence each other. According to this model, knowledge is not centered in an individual's mind, but distributed through the activity system.

Rules provide direction so that a subject can participate effectively as a member of a community. Rules establish the procedures and acceptable interaction to engage in and with other community members (Engestrom, 2007). Rules are the guidelines that may limit activity in a given setting. In this study, the requirements and expectations are the rules.

Community refers to the social group that each subject belongs to while engaged in an activity. A community is an activity system of multiple points of view, traditions

and interests. In this study, new principals that participated in a school district-run principal preparation program as assistant principals are members of the community within each program.

The subjects continuously negotiate their division of labor, which means that the actions of each individual “only make sense in the context of the collective activity of the interdependent participants” (Hatcher, 2005, p. 256). Division of labor refers to the ways in which a community is organized with respect to the transformation of an object into outcomes (Engeström, 1987). The division of labor is the system for determining who is responsible for which action. In the case of this qualitative study, the school and district leaders assisting in the development of the assistant principals represent the division of labor.

Researcher Epistemology

Activity Theory places emphasis on the social context of learning. The type of and quality of tools used determines the rate and pattern of development. My interpretive lens for this study was social constructivism. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and the importance of the social context for cognitive development (Hodson & Hodson, 1998). The activity of the learner throughout the principal preparation programs was most beneficial and meaningful to participants when anchored in practical, authentic situations. The participants’ actions and interactions were the primary unit of analysis. The learning activities provided should allow for social interaction.

Two of the four principles identified as compatible with the Vgotsky's social constructivist approach and that are aligned to this study are: Learning and development is a social, collaborative activity; and Learning should occur in a meaningful context and not be separated from learning and knowledge developed in the real world. Instruction should focus on experiences and activities that promote the individual development, if learning is experiential growth (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What aspects of the district-run principal preparation programs were most meaningful for newly appointed principals' in terms of their preparation for the principalship?"
2. In what ways did the learning experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs influence the current practice of newly appointed principals?
3. To what extent, if any, did the components of the district-run principal preparation programs impact newly appointed principals' readiness to assume the principalship?

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the perceptions of newly appointed principals regarding the development and preparation as provided to

them by the school district while serving as assistant principals. Selection of research approach is an important decision made by the researcher. The objective of this decision is to select the approach that offers “best fit” for the study being conducted (Maxwell, 2008). Qualitative research is carried out when we wish to understand meanings, look at, describe and understand experience, ideas, beliefs and values (Creswell, 2014).

Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2003) contend that qualitative research provides depth of response and a greater understanding than can be acquired through quantitative research. To collect the data needed for this research study, I will utilize a qualitative approach to provide elaboration on the topic of perceptions. In the qualitative research the key is to learn about the issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information (Creswell, 2014). I learned what components of the district-run principal preparation program they found most and least beneficial for the role as a new principal. The qualitative research approach allowed me to reflect on how my role and my personal background and experiences held potential for shaping the participants’ interpretations from the data (Creswell, 2014). I developed a complex picture of the issue under study

In order to conduct this research, I used the phenomenological approach to investigate the perceptions of newly appointed principals regarding their learning experiences in district-run principal preparation programs. The purpose of the phenomenological approach was to understand the perception of others in a particular situation. In this study, I sought to understand new principals’ perception regarding their

experience in a school district's district-run principal preparation program and how it impacted their readiness for the principalship. It was the goal of this study to provide the necessary data to describe new principals' perceptions of their preparation when they were assistant principals. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from participants. The phenomenological approach allowed me to describe the participants' experience rather than explain. Using a phenomenological approach brought to the fore the experiences and perceptions of new principals from their own perspectives. I was able to ensure all voices were heard. Phenomenology emphasizes a focus on participants' subjective experiences and interpretations.

Research Design

The qualitative research method design utilizing a focus group, in-depth interviews, an open-ended questionnaire were used to describe new principals' perceptions of their experience in the school district's district-run principal preparation programs. In constructing the interview scripts, I utilized the text, *Focus Groups A Practical Guide for Applied Research (5th Edition)* by Richard A, Krueger and Mary Anne Casey as a reference for formulating the interview questions.

Research Participants

Approximately 62 principal vacancies were filled within the last three school years. Newly appointed principals who participated in one or more of the district-run principal preparation programs; Assistant Principal Induction Program, Aspiring Leaders

Program (APIP) for Student Success (ALPSS), or the Resident Principal Preparation Program (RPPP) were selected to participate in this study. Candidates of APIP are required to participate once they are appointed as an assistant principal in the school district. Candidates for ALPSS and RPPP must first be recommended by their supervisor and or the principal's supervisor. Candidates must then apply and interview in order to be considered a participant in these programs.

The total number of participants for this study was 13. A homogenous sampling strategy was used. In a homogeneous sampling the researcher purposefully sample individuals based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics (Creswell, 2012). All participants were in their first through third year as principal and participated in one or more of the district-run principal preparation programs. I collected the names and contact information of newly appointed principals meeting the criteria for this study from the school district's public website. Participants either participated in the one-to-one interview or the focus group. There were two newly appointed principals in the focus group and 11 principals were interviewed one-on-one. Focus groups are less threatening to many research participants, and the environment is helpful for participants to discuss perceptions, ideas, opinions, and thoughts (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Additionally, the environment of focus groups is socially oriented (Krueger & Casey, 2014) and the sense of belonging to a group can increase participants' sense of cohesiveness (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran 2009). The interactions among participants can create the possibility for more spontaneous responses (Butler, 1996).

Researcher's Role

My role in PTPS is that of a Leadership Development Coach. In this role, one of my duties and responsibilities is to coordinate the Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP). While this is not my primary role in the school district, it is a significant role. PTPS has an Office of Talent Development (OTD) which oversees the development of teachers as well as school leaders.. I work with School Leadership Programs within OTD. My primary role is coaching first and second year principals. The position of Leadership Development Coach was created for the 2014-2015 school year. Two positions were made available for the 2014-2015. Two additional Leadership Development Coach positions were added in the 2016-2017 school year. Each Leadership Development Coach is responsible for coordinating one of the School Leadership Programs. My responsibility is APIP.

The Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS) and the Resident Principal Preparation Program (RPPP) are all housed in the Office of Talent Development School Leadership Programs. I do not have direct or indirect responsibilities with those programs.

I fully acknowledged my bias in this study. In order to minimize research bias, I chose to solicit the assistance of a Howard University Doctoral graduate to facilitate the sessions with APIP participants. The use of another moderator was to increase participants' willingness to disclose their perceptions and feelings.

I joined OTD at the start of the 2014-2015 school year; after seven years as principal. It was at that time the Assistant Principal Induction Program was created. I used research of principal preparation programs and the knowledge and experience of PTPS central office and school-based leaders that had experience with similar programs in other school districts to design the program. I am extremely invested in the success of the program, but more importantly I am committed to its improvement.

Instrumentation

I was the key instrument obtaining the data from respondents. Through facilitative interaction. I created the context where respondents shared their data from their experiences. The flow of communication was facilitated. The survey instrument was semi-structured in-depth interviews, a focus group, and an open-ended questionnaire that I designed for this study.

Questions were framed neutrally in order to reduce question bias. Question order bias was minimized by asking general questions before specific questions, unaided questions before aided questions, positive questions before negative questions and behavior questions before attitude questions. The interview and focus group protocol can be found in Appendix A-E.

Data Collection

This qualitative research study used one focus group session, 11 semi-structured in-depth interview, and an open-ended questionnaire that was shared with all study participants, to ascertain information to describe new principals' perceptions of their

preparation for the principalship as provided by the school district. This study was based on obtaining and describing perceptions; the focus group and in-depth interview methods were utilized since these methods have “the intent to promote self-disclosure among participants (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The focus was on obtaining what participants with knowledge of the district’s principal preparation programs really think and feel. The use of an open-ended questionnaire, interviews, and a focus group strengthened my study. According to Straus (2010) the focus group runs on group dynamics and the group is front and center, not the individual.

Ten questions were asked. The interviews and focus group sessions were audio recorded with permission from participants. I highlighted important points shared during each interview. The data was transcribed in order to prepare an analysis of the data. The focus group and interview scripts are provided in appendix A-E. Creswell (2012) contends the most complete data collection procedure is to have all interview notes transcribed.

I provided participants with full disclosure of information regarding the purpose of the research and uses of participants’ contributions. Participants were informed that their fellow participants’ contribution that is shared in the group will need to be kept confidential.

The focus group was a small group of two participants and led through an open discussion for 75 minutes. I had ten carefully predetermined questions. Participants did not have access to the questions prior to them being asked. The questions were direct,

open-ended and non-threatening. I asked five types of questions: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending (Kreuger & Casey, 2014). The intent of the opening question was to get participants talking and to help them feel comfortable. The opening question was not analyzed. The introductory questions introduced the topic of principal preparation and allowed participants to connect with the topic. The transitions questions set the stage for the key questions. The key questions drove the study. I allocated more time for responses to key questions, allowing time for pauses and probing. The ending questions brought closure to the discussion.

I sent an email to each newly appointed principal who participated in one or more of the district-run principal preparation programs to solicit participation for my study. The interview email invitation script can be found in Appendix C. I conducted in-depth interviews with each participant from the district-run program who agreed and who was available to participate in the study to gain insight into the perceptions of newly appointed principals pertaining to their principal preparation as assistant principals through the school district's sponsored programs. I concluded data collection once data saturation was achieved. Data saturation is achieved when there is enough information to replicate the study, the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and no further coding is no longer feasible (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

The focus group session and interviews were audio recorded with participants' permission. During the interview sessions, I took notes and highlighted important points

shared during each session. I transcribed the data in order to prepare an analysis of the data.

In addition, in the Focus Group and Interview Session participants were informed that this research was being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education for the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Howard University. I also informed participants that the findings will be shared with district administrators to utilize this information to further enhance its district-run principal preparation programs. I introduce the moderator to the focus group participants.

Data Analysis

After the interviews and focus groups were conducted, I read the transcripts, made notes about my first impressions, and then reread the transcripts. I began to code prominent words, phrases, and sentences. I utilized Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process as highlighted by Creswell (2014). I read all the transcripts carefully, picked one document, and asked myself while reading it, "what is this about?" When I completed this task for several participants, I made a list of all the topics and clustered together similar topics. I took the list and went back to the data, abbreviated the topics as codes and wrote the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. I found the most descriptive wording for my topics and turned them into categories. I made a final decision for each category and alphabetize these codes. Finally, I assembled the data material belonging to each category in one place and performed a preliminary analysis.

I used Creswell's (2012) six interrelated steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data. I will prepare and organize the data for analysis and engage in initial exploration of the data through the process of coding. I used the codes to develop a more general picture of the data. I organize my data into computer files. "Organization of data is critical in qualitative research because of the large amount of information gathered during a study" (Creswell, 2012, p. 238). I developed a matrix of sources that can be used to help organize the material. I transcribed all my field notes and audio recordings from the interviews and focus groups. NVivo 10 software was used to facilitate and expedite qualitative research. After coding, I began to build descriptions and think about themes that emerged from my data.

Credibility of Research

Throughout this process, I ensured that the findings and interpretations were accurate by the use of member checking during the interview process and the conclusion of the study. Positivist researchers often question the trustworthiness of qualitative research because the concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way as quantitative research (Shenton, 2004). One of the key criteria addressed by positivist researchers is that of internal validity. Participants will be encouraged to be honest from the beginning of each session and I will provide the opportunity for participants to withdraw from the study at any time without the need to disclose an explanation, I aimed to describe their lived experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs.

Interviewing in qualitative research is increasingly being seen as a moral inquiry (Kvale, 2007). Interviews should begin from the premise that a power imbalance exists between the data collector and the participants (Creswell, 2014). I employed self-reflexivity in my research practice (Shaw, 2003). I acknowledged my position and bias, in conducting this research and how each may have influenced the research process. Reflexivity is an important concept because it is directed at the accuracy of qualitative research outcomes. An awareness of misperceptions through reflexivity may enable to design specific questions to help participants inform and clarify my understanding of my research outcomes (Finlay, 2002). Finlay identifies five ways to utilize reflexivity: introspection, inter-subjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique, and discursive deconstruction. I have chose to use reflexivity as introspection. Those researchers who begin their research with the data of their experiences seek to embrace their own humanness as the basis for psychological understanding (as cited in Finlay, 2002). Because I am the coordinator for one of the district-run principal preparation programs, my own reflecting, intuiting, thinking, and experiences were used as primary evidence (Moustakas, 1994). I also used crystallization as a reflective voice when coding the data. Crystallization enhances self-reflexivity.

Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical issues were considered in this study. It was important to ensure participants' of the anonymity of their responses and the process of the integrity of the interviewer. Ethical issues in research command increased attention today (Creswell,

2014). The relative power of researcher and researched may present moral or ethical questions. I work directly with the department responsible for implementing the principal preparation programs and more specifically, I coordinate one of the programs.

I had to avoid deception of the purpose of the study. Deception occurs when participants understand one purpose but the researcher has a different purpose in mind (Creswell, 2014). During the “Informed Consent” process I carefully explained the study’s intent and purpose, interview and focus group questions and process. I also gained permission to audio record the interview sessions. Participants were guaranteed the right to withdraw from participation in the study at any time and guaranteed the information collected will be used exclusively for the purpose of the study. Extreme care was taken to protect the identity of the participants by removing all participant identifiers to ensure confidentiality. All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked file, which only I will have access. The documents and recordings will be destroyed within the required timeline.

Glense (2006) recommends “clarification of researcher bias---reflecting upon one’s subjectivity and how he/she will use it and monitor it in research” as a means to gain trustworthiness or research validity. The trustworthiness of qualitative research is often questioned by positivist researchers because the concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way as quantitative research (Silverman, 2006). I aimed to describe their lived experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs accurately.

Interviewing in qualitative research is increasingly being seen as a moral inquiry (Kvale, 2007). Interviews should begin from the premise that a power imbalance exists between the data collector and the participants (Creswell, 2014). Finlay identifies five ways to utilize reflexivity-introspection, inter-subjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique, and discursive deconstruction. I chose to use reflexivity as introspection. Those researchers who begin their research with the data of their experiences seek to “embrace their own humanness as the basis for psychological understanding” (as cited in Finlay, 2002). Because I am the coordinator for one of the district-run principal preparation programs, my own reflecting, intuiting and thinking and experience are used as primary evidence (Moustakas, 1994).

Summary

In summary, a qualitative methodology was used to gain an understanding of the perceptions of newly appointed principals’ principal preparation while they were assistant principals in a large urban school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. I utilized the phenomenological approach, gathering deep information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods to include interviews and focus groups consisting of principals in their first through third year as principal and who served as assistant principals in the same school district and participated in one of the district-run Principal Preparation Programs. I followed protocols pertaining to participants’ consent to participate in the study and conducted interviews with each participant that did not participate in the Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP). I

am currently the APIP Coordinator and have been since the creation of the program at the start of the 2014-2015 school year.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of newly appointed principals regarding the development and preparation as provided to them by Perfect Time Public Schools (PTPS) while serving as assistant principals. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What aspects of the district-run principal preparation programs were most meaningful for newly appointed principals' in terms of their preparation for the principalship?"
2. In what ways did the learning experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs influence the current practice of newly appointed principals?
3. To what extent, if any, did the components of the district-run principal preparation programs impact newly appointed principals' readiness to assume the principalship?

Participants included principals in their first through third year as principal in Perfect Time Public Schools and participated in at least one of the school district's principal preparation programs: Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP), Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS), and the Resident Principal Preparation Program (RPPP). A total of 13 principals participated in the interview and focus group sessions. Two principals participated in APIP, 12 of the principals completed ALPSS and one of the principals completed RPPP. One of the APIP participants also was a

member of ALPSS and a different ALPSS participant also participated in RPPP. Nine principals were in the first year as principal, two were in their second year, and two principals were in their third year as principal.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants			
Program	Total #Participants	#Participants	Year as Principal
APIP	*2	2	Year 1
ALPSS	12	7	Year 1
		2	Year 2
		2	Year 3
RPPP	**1	1	Year 1

*1 principal participated in APIP and ALPSS **Principal participated in ALPSS and RPPP

As researcher, I chose to give pseudonyms to participants in this study that are research-based characteristics, traits, and qualities of effective leaders (Blase & Blase, 2000; Jaquiss, 1999; Leithwood, et al, 2004; The names were randomly assigned to participants and in no way indicate the actual characteristics, traits, and qualities demonstrated by participants during the interviews. Additionally, Perfect Time Public Schools (PTPS) is also a pseudonym.

Through the process of coding the transcripts, I identified valuable information to address the research questions. Merriam (2009) contends an “important characteristics of qualitative research is that the process is inductive; that is researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypothesis as in positivist research” (p. 15). As I read the transcripts, I confirmed the accuracy of the

transcripts by repeatedly reviewing the audio recording. I was able to get a deeper sense of natural meaning units of participants. Lee (1999) defines natural meaning units as text that relate to an identifiable theme. I read through the transcripts highlighting relevant information and labeled each with a category symbol.

The data analysis summarizes responses of 11 one-on-one interviews, one open-ended survey and one focus group all with newly appointed principals who participated in APIP, ALPSS, and /or RPPP. The questioning techniques used for this study consisted of an in-depth semi-structured interview script that assisted with collecting the data for the 11 interviews and the one focus group session. There were a total of 11 questions asked of each participant, but only ten questions were analyzed. The first question gathered participants' identifiable information (name and school). There were a total of 13 newly appointed principals who participated in the one-on-one interview and focus group sessions. Four principals participated in the anonymous questionnaire. Each of the newly appointed principals are located in the same school district, all are in their first through third year as principal and participated in APIP, ALPSS, and/or RPPP. Two of the thirteen newly appointed principals participated in two of the three programs.

The interview questions; which can be found in Appendix B, were designed to provide insight to the research questions. To answer the research questions, the findings for each theme that emerged during the coding process is provided. During the process of coding the participants' responses, I grouped similar responses into themes. Similar responses from the interview questions and questionnaire that addressed the research

questions were combined to make overarching themes. The findings of this research study are organized by the themes that emerged from the research questions.

Presentations of Themes

The findings are presented according to the six themes that emerged from the participants' responses to address the research questions. The themes that emerged were Mentoring and Coaching, Relationships/Networking/Collaboration, Application of District Initiatives, Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity, Better Understanding of District Initiatives, Budget and School Finance.

Theme 1: Mentoring and Coaching

Participants spoke about having mentors and a leadership coach as the program coordinator assisted in their leadership development. Mentors were supportive in helping participants set goals. Mentors provided quality feedback and demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the school district's leadership standards, and established a trusting relationship. Participants also spoke about the open and reflective conversations held with mentors and coaches. Participants felt the school visits to mentor sites were beneficial in providing a clear understanding of the principal's day-to-day role in various school structures. Principal Influence shared " Being able to mentor and go out and be mentored by these different principals with their different styles...you had an opportunity to see what it was like for middle school ,what is was like for a high school." Each mentor assigned to assistant principals in the program was an experienced

principal as well as a certified National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Principal Mentor. Perfect Time Public Schools requires principal mentors to be trained and certified through NAESP. “Investing in high-quality mentoring is an effective way for districts to secure a ready supply of capable school leaders who know from the start how to implement school reform strategies” (Gray, Fry, Bottoms and O’Neill, 2007 p. 16).

Participants also spoke on the benefit of the on-going mentoring and coaching that is afforded to them as first-year principals. Specifically, Principal Influence, second-year principal expressed a desire to have the monthly meetings with her mentor as she did her first year. She said “ ...those of us that were together as first year principals being able to come together and talk...it would be very nice if they continue that as a second year principal, even into a third-year principal...”

Theme 2: Relationships/Networking/Collaboration

Participants expressed an appreciation for the different relationships established as a result of their participation in the principal preparation programs. Participants formed relationships with members of their cohort, graduates of the programs, program coordinators, as well as district administrators. Principal Motivational said, “...the thing I value the most are the relationships from the people we met...we are very close, we stay in contact, we call each other.”

Participants cited the networking opportunities allowed them to feel confident in knowing which offices and departments to contact when necessary once they were

appointed as principals. Principal Influence said, “...that networking piece and feeling like you have support, like you can call on someone if you needed assistance.”

Participants' reflections on networking are supported by the literature. For example, the School Leaders Network (2014) states, "networking enables administrators of different schools to collectively enhance professional performance (p.14)."

Theme 3: Application of District Initiatives

The PTPS school district has introduced several systemic initiatives shortly after the appointment of the current superintendent. A Transition Team conducted an internal assessment of the district with a focus on four areas. The Transition Team Report served as a source for systemic development and prioritization. Initiatives such as implementation of the district's strategic plan, Coherence Framework, which the district posit that increased student achievement occurs in the classroom among the student, the teacher, and the content. The framework serves as a common visual and language for all stakeholders.

Additional initiatives mentioned by participants were StrengthsFinders, Leadership and Self-Deception, DataWise and the focus on Literacy. StrengthsFinder is an online assessment that measures and identifies individual's talents that are referred to as themes (Rath, 2007). All administrators; school based and central office take the assessment in an effort to build individual's talents and creating strengths from those talents. Leadership and Self Deception (Arbinger, 2000) is a training that is offered through the school district that explores how we view others when we are trying to

accomplish our goals. The training addresses organizational components such as team building, accountability, conflict resolution, personal development, and motivation.

DataWise (Boudett and Murnane, 2013), a process for organizing the core work of schools developed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Boston Public Schools. PTPS has adopted this process as its School Improvement Process. Through the process, a wide range of evidence is studied to improve instruction. The PTPS school district has modified the process to improve performance in all its central offices and departments as well as schools.

PTPS has placed an emphasis on Literacy across all areas of the school district's Strategic Plan to ensure the one goal of the district " Outstanding Student Achievement for All Students". The commitment to develop literacy in the district begins with the district's early learners.

In participants' responses they felt that having these initiatives presented to them throughout their time in the principal preparation program allowed them the opportunity to apply these initiatives and engage their staff from the beginning of their principal appointment. With regard to the coherence framework, Principal Authentic, second-year principal said "...with the coherence framework, I was able to use that as a model as far as organizing..". Principal Risk-Taker, first-year principal added, "...Everybody in here as far as our coherence framework in the county, everybody altogether are working for one thing and that is scholar achievement..."

Participants felt they were able to align their school's focus with the focus of the district. Principal Integrity stated, "...the focus on district initiatives, umm because now, you know I am able to align my school with district initiatives...that is something we constantly focused on in the programs and then I had an opportunity to go back to the school and implement some of the things we kind of focused on in the programs."

Theme 4: Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity

Participants' responses regarding instructional leadership and leadership capacity were focused on the program components and activities assisting them in knowing what to do to increase student achievement. Participants spoke about observing and working with teachers to improve the delivery of instruction. Participants with responses fitting the theme Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity said that the learning experiences in the program showed them how to become an instructional leader.

Principal Responsibility, first year principal stated "...we worked a lot with getting to know your staff, team building, learning how to become an instructional leader and coaching your staff." Participants also shared their belief of the importance of continuous learning as principal. Principal Influence, first-year principal said "...you are still the master teacher...so you're always learning as well as always teaching..."

The responses shared also were about not only building their leadership capacity, but the capacity of their teachers. Principal Visionary noted the importance of building teacher capacity. Principal Humility, third year principal, concurred and offered data-driven approaches as a means to build capacity. Principal Humility noted that

"developmental activities allowed us to , well, it allowed me to be data driven...it allowed us to practice using data to inform our decisions and to inform instruction in our building."

Instructional leadership is a focus on improving teaching and learning (Green, 2010). It involves setting goals, observing and evaluating teachers. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) defines instructional leadership as leading learning communities, in which staff members meet regularly to discuss their work, reflect on their practice and collaborate.

Cotton (2003) asserts effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in the curriculum and instruction that directly affect student achievement. Joyner (2005) writes that The U. S. Department of Education identifies key elements of instructional leadership to include: prioritization, focus on alignment of curriculum and instruction, assessment, and standards, data analysis, and culture of continuous learning.

Theme 5: Better Understanding of District Initiatives

Participants felt that the presentations from the district offices and departments allowed them to gain a better understanding of the district initiatives as assistant principals, which allowed an immediate focus on the goals of the school district once appointed principal. Principal Integrity, first-year principal, stated "...the programs helped me focus on systemic initiatives...we got an extensive training on DataWise and which I felt was helpful." Principal Motivational, first-year principal, agreed with the focus on district initiatives being one of the most beneficial components of the principal

preparation program. She stated, “The session on Leadership and Self-Deception, that was definitely an eye-opener and helped me as a person”.

Principal Excellence, first-year principal, felt that the school district did a good job identifying the responsibilities of principals in the district as it relates to the focus of the district. She said, “...I think that Perfect Time Public School does a really good job given a very clear understanding as far as what we are charged to doing, especially with our district-wide initiatives”.

Theme 6: Budget and School Finance

The PTPS school district uses the Student Based Budgeting (SBB) process to allocate funds to each school. SBB distributes funding to schools based on students’ needs and characteristics. SBB gives principals greater input in how allocated resources are used. Funds are allocated based on the number of students enrolled and the specific needs of those students. Principals referred to the budget and other financial topics most often as a need in the district programs.

It is my belief that the subject of the budget was most prevalent in their responses because the research study occurred during budget season, which is November through January. Principals had recently had to make budget decisions for their schools; many for the first time as principal. Principal Motivational said “I would have liked more experiences with budget.” Principal Visionary said “ We did have some work around the budget, but no in-depth as I think I would have liked prior to assuming this role.” Every participant that spoke of the budget as an area of need also made it clear that they were

aware that the budget was covered in the programs. They only desired to have a more practical and authentic experience with working with a school's budget prior to the appointment as principal. Principal Responsibility stated, "...looking at the SBB budget, I really wished we had a little bit more time on that because the majority of assistant principals that I know that are now principals, we really, we talked about the budget, but you really didn't get to touch the budget...".

Theme Frequency and Potential Implications

Two of the themes (Mentoring/Coaching and Budget/School Finances) were more frequently coded than others (39 and 40 respectively). This is an indication that the needs of the newly appointed principals were similar. The Budget/School Finance theme was the only theme that emerged as a reference to a need for the programs. Four participants did not respond with budget as an additional need in the program, two of the four cited more shadowing experience needed, while one commented that more off-site meetings were needed and the fourth indicated instructional learning walks with effective principals were needed.

Theme Relationship/Networking/Collaboration was coded by all participants except one. This theme was coded 25 times by 12 participants. The same principal only had comments coded in two themes; Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity and Better Understanding of the District Initiatives.

Eleven principals provided responses in the theme Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity. It was coded 29 times. Participants that spoke within

the theme of Instructional Leadership/Leadership spoke about creating effective teams and being able to apply the learning from the programs in their school as the principal. Principal Self-less stated “ ...it’s just, you know, continuing the process and continuing the cycle of learning...sharing it with others.” Principal Humility also spoke about how the program assisted him with balancing managerial and instructional tasks. He said “ ...the skill that really assisted me is manager versus instructional, operational versus instructional...ensure that instruction is always first...”

Ten participants responding with comments in the Better Understanding District Initiatives theme. This theme was coded 21 times. Participants discussed the fact that they gained clarity around the district initiatives presented in the program monthly meetings. Eight comments aligned to the Application of District Initiatives theme. When I reviewed the participants’ comments for both Better Understanding District Initiatives and Applying District Initiatives, there were two principals that did not comment for either theme. The two principals that did not reference comments within the District Initiative themes were both in an earlier cohort of ALPSS, which would have been prior to the school districts focus on the current initiatives. Seven principals’ comments aligned to both themes and three principals responded to one or the other theme. All participants responding within this theme agreed that the focus on the initiatives allowed for them to perform the duties more effectively as assistant principals as well as they were able to lead their staff in moving the district’s focus forward as newly appointed principals. Principal Excellence felt that having the district initiatives presented in the principal

preparation program gave her a strong understanding of instructional goals. She stated “...it prepared me because I am able to speak to our district-wide initiatives and so I have a very strong understanding of our instructional goals, so I can speak very coherently to that...” Principal Confidence also commented on the benefit of focusing on district initiatives during his time in the principal preparation program. He said “...now that we have more of these initiatives to get them to connect together so we can see how everything fits with what we’re doing...how it all connects to the big picture of moving the county forward.”

Findings Related to Research Questions

The findings related to this research study indicated that participants’ perceptions of their learning experiences in the PTPS principal preparation programs were beneficial and allowed them to feel a sense of readiness to assume the role of principal.

Research Question 1

What aspects of the district-run principal preparation programs were most meaningful for newly appointed principals’ in terms of their preparation for the principalship?

Respondents thought that mentoring and coaching brought great support in their learning of district initiatives and the daily work of the principal. It provided a great perspective in their evolution in preparing for the principalship.

Mentoring and coaching was coded for participants that addressed the support they received from sitting principals that served as mentors, district administrators, and

Leadership Development Coaches in the Office of Talent Development who served as coach and the program coordinators. Principal Motivational noted how the mentors, the leadership coach and the representatives from the School Leadership Office were helpful. She stated, "...the mentors again, (school leadership representatives) and (Leadership Coach), you know all three of them are still very helpful. If I call them, if I text them whatever they are there..."

Participants also spoke directly about the benefits of shadowing sitting principals and having previous principals serve as program coordinators. Principal Humility and Principal Selfless stated they would have liked to shadow more principals. "Principal Humility said, "...I only had a chance to shadow u two principals, so I would have liked to do that more." Principal Selfless mentioned that she actually shadowed principals on her own with her principal's approval. She would have like more opportunities as well as earlier opportunities to shadow principals while participating in the program. She stated, "I would have liked to participate in more shadowing, shadowing early in the program and maybe two experiences two different experiences." Their comments suggest the shadowing experience would be most beneficial if conducted throughout the program, multiple times, within different school structures, and in schools with varied programs. Principal Authentic concurred and also discussed how he did some shadowing of his own. He shared, "...my principal at the time allowed me to shadow a principal of a middle school, so I shadowed three principals with that experience you know you get to learn the ins and outs of the school, the culture, but most importantly the behind the

scenes, things you don't see and things a principal has to deal with on a daily basis." He also mentioned having practical experience was better for him versus the scenarios that participants were given and had to respond to in the program. He noted, "I'm the type of person, I'm visual so to hear it from ALPSS and go through the scenarios but when you actually shadow a principal for a day or two you really get to see the ins and outs and you see the workings of what it takes to be a principal on a daily basis."

Participants noted that the mentoring and coaching strategies utilized during the participation in the program allowed them to turnkey the strategies to be able to mentor and coach their staff once appointed as principal. Principal Visionary said, "...definitely developing teacher's capacity and learning how to coach them. So as we were being coached through our ALPSS process from our mentors being able to now utilize those strategies, techniques as we're working with teachers..." The mentoring component was extremely important to the participants. They felt they were supported and had someone personally they could call on for guidance or assistance. In addition to the assigned mentors, participants spoke about their cohort members as well as previous members of the program being helpful to them. Principal Authentic shared "...but the wonderful thing about ALPSS is the mentorship, your colleagues, the cohort you're with they are very supportive even the prior cohorts before mine they are very supportive and everyone looks out for each other and give each other advice and help helps make our experience more rewarding so that's the experience I have."

Participants also mentioned the feedback received from mentors and coaches was invaluable to their leadership development. Principal Integrity shared, "...the feedback that I got...was helpful because sometimes you don't know...I was given immediate feedback and that helped me." Principal Excellence agreed and also noted that having someone who was experienced and was a former sitting principal that had experienced success was beneficial to her development. She said, "I think overall, you know just hearing from other successful, you know previous principals who now, of course run these principal preparation programs helped. Being able to talk, you know, one on one and having a mentor and a coach assigned to you to support you." Principal Excellence added that meeting and talking with successful principals allowed her to have a better perspective of the work of the principal. She said, "I just think for me, having the opportunity to meet and dialogue and strategize and hash things out with so many successful principals gave me a better perspective of the work itself."

Relationships, networking, and collaboration were very important aspects of the program to respondents. They responded favorably to connecting with colleagues and sharing experiences or having the ability to ask questions. Respondents expressed a desire to continue relationships with cohorts and officials for additional support to help them along the way. Principal Authentic specifically mentioned the difficulty in building relationships for an incoming principal and wanted to see a model where new principals could bring in individuals in which they had previously established relationships. He said, "...documented research, most leaders that start in a new organization, they usually bring

in people they know and trust to get the ball rolling, so I think as a new principal within our county, I wish there was a way we could do that as a new principal...”

Another respondent wanted to have an opportunity to network socially or have a space created for current and graduate of ALPSS to specifically have networking opportunities. Principal Authentic said: “The one thing I liked about ALPSS was you get a chance to network with people who are aspiring to be principals and you get the ... you have the opportunity of hearing and being mentored by veteran principals.” Principal Excellence felt that the relationships she developed in the program are still strong currently. She said “...the relationships I developed with the some of my ALPSS cohort members that I am still you know really close with today.”

Principal Influence agreed that the relationships were extremely important, even for the cohort members that have not yet been appointed to the principalship, but still are in leadership role. She said “You forged relationships so that even if you don’t become a principal but you’re still in that leadership you still have someone that you can call on. It allows for great networking within the system and you learn a little bit more about of what happens within the system itself.”

The participants spoke about how the relationships established were important now that they are principals because it allows them individuals to contact when questions arise or they just need to hear other’s perspective on a situation. Principal Integrity said “Just building relationships that was the most important thing to me.” Participants spoke

about how they are in constant contact with each other about school related issues and often times they are in contact on a personal level. Principal Motivational said ... “the thing that I value the most are the relationships from the people that I met.” ... “...we stay in contact, we call each other”. “...I just think that the relationships that I developed through the ALPSS program for me has been the most helpful in this process.” Principal Excellence agreed and emphasized that way in which participants utilized their relationships to share information and resources with one another, noting, “we share things through email whenever we come across something great we email it to each other.”

Principal Influence noted that the support provided through their relationships extended beyond professional responsibilities, as She stated, “...some of them are you know still very close and in touch with each other. So, it is very good as far as I stated before with that with that networking piece and feeling like you have support, like you can call on someone if you needed assistance.” Each participant responding within this theme spoke highly about the connections made. Principal Integrity said: “...just building relationships that was the most important thing to me.”

Research Question 2

In what ways did the learning experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs influence the current practice of newly appointed principals?

Surveyed and interviewed respondents applied the district initiatives learned within their current roles and depicted what areas were most important to them. The program helped them to focus on district initiatives and applying them within their relevant context of importance. The participants shared how the presentation of district initiatives in the principal preparation programs such as the Coherence Framework, the DataWise School Improvement Process, the school district's strategic plan, and Leadership and Self-Deception training assisted them in being able to effectively engage and focus their staff once appointed as principals.

Participants' responses indicated that the newly appointed principals felt they were provided with the tools needed to effectively apply the district initiatives in their schools. Most respondents indicated that they had plans in place to carry out the district initiatives once appointed as principal. It was expressed that in the ALPSS program, participants had to create a generic 90- day Entry Plan. Participants were able to modify and adjust the 90- day entry plan to align to the school they were appointed. Principal Responsibility stated “..it really helped me plan to at least come into the principalship with a plan of action, we had a 90-day plan...it allowed me to create a mission and vision”.

The participants also noted how learning about the various reports that the district uses to house the observation platform was extremely helpful. The PTPS school district uses Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching as its teacher observation tool. The

Framework for Teaching is a set of components of instruction divided into 22 components and clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility (Danielson, 2013). The platform used with the Danielson's Framework was able to provide administrators with the domain and component averages. This report displayed the average of the domain and component scores for teachers. Assistant principals in the programs were able to review the data vertically and analyze school-wide, grade level, or content area needs. This was a training that they were able to share with their leadership teams in their respective schools. Principal Responsibility stated, "I also was able to use data in a way that I normally wouldn't use data as an assistant principal...we also used data using our lessons plans and infusing the Framework for Teaching and that data point so you're able to really coach those teachers in an instructional way."

Principal Self-less noted that she was actually able to apply the learning from the program once she was appointed principal. She mentioned she was able to work with a sample budget, which allowed her to have a better understanding of her school's budget once she was principal. She stated, "ALPSS gave me an opportunity to apply the learning that I thought I knew as an assistant principal, as a principal..." "...and so for example, I was able to work with a sample budget which now we are in budget season, so I understand what to do because I was given that direct and explicit teaching in ALPSS as well as had that opportunity to work with it as an assistant principal in my building."

Respondents favorably purported that the program prepared them for instructional leadership and assisted in increasing their leadership capacity. Building leadership capacity was one of the major themes in respondent's feedback regarding the program. All but two participants made reference to instructional leadership and building leadership capacity. Participants shared how their experience in the programs increased their effectiveness as an instructional leader, helped drive school improvement, and effectively manage the curriculum, observe and evaluate teachers. Principal Authentic said when he thought of principal preparation, he thinks of instructional leader and how he can improve his leadership skills and developing an instructional focus. He said "first thing that come to mind is instructional leader when you think about principal preparation how I can improve my skillset on being an instructional leader making sure I can move the school in a positive direction."..."I think the principal prep program that's the first thing I think about being an instructional leader and making developing an instructional focus for the school....I think with that it kind of helps with you becoming an instructional leader..."

For Principal Empowerment, he thinks of preparing for leadership or building leadership capacity when he thinks of principal preparation. He felt that developing his staff and building their capacity was most important. He said, "preparing for leadership or building leadership capacity.... the most important is building the growth in other people." Principal Empowerment added, " Because as a principal, I can't do everything on my own so I understand that I need a team, leadership team, that I have to develop that

team to understand the vision that we have so that it will trickle down throughout the school”... “So the development of staff is probably the best, the most important rather, most important aspect of this role is the development of the people within the school.”

Principal Excellence felt that in her ALPSS Cohort all participants had a “strong background instructionally”. She emphasized that the message of principals being instructional leaders has been made clear. She said: “...all the people in my ALPSS Cohort have very strong background instructionally...(CEO/Superintendent) has made it abundantly clear that our charge is to be instructional leaders and I think these programs better prepare people for that...being charged with being an instructional leader as principal it is the expectation that we take these initiatives forward in order to better to give a better perspective to our school, school leaders, our teacher leaders, and our administrative team.”

Principal Influence thought that her growth and development in the program was wonderful. She felt that she has been able to be both manager and leader. She considers her role as principal as that of the master teacher. She stated, “ Just being able to have the opportunity to learn and to grow and to develop is a wonderful thing.” “...the role of principal has changed over time. It is no longer just a managerial position, but you have that leadership piece that you must intertwined in there as well, you are still an educator, and you are still the master teacher so to speak, so you’re always learning as well as always teaching...”

Principal Responsibility noted participation in the program has allowed her to know how to become an effective leader. She said, “It gave me expectations. I believe that it enhanced my performance by giving me expectations of where I need to come, where I need to grow and how I get to be a leader a performing leader, a leader who is effective....” Principal Selfless felt that learning how to build an effective team has led her to go further in her development. She stated, “...we have to build an effective team, and so building an effective team is something that has pushed my leadership forward and I do have to give credit to the ALPSS activities for that.”

Principal Visionary specifically mentioned how the mentoring and coaching strategies used for her development while in the ALPSS program assisted her in strengthening her mentoring and coaching skills, allowing her to mentor, coach, and develop her staff. She said “definitely developing teacher’s capacity and learning how to coach them. So as we were being coached through our ALPSS process from our mentors being able to now utilize those same strategies, techniques as we’re working with teachers to ensure that they are increasing their knowledge so that they can do the best for our scholars so I liked the coaching that we received.”

Research Question 3

To what extent, if any, did the components of the district-run principal preparation programs impact newly appointed principals’ readiness to assume the principalship?

Respondents overwhelmingly felt that they were least prepared for the financial aspects of the role of principal. Participants acknowledged that the budget and some additional topics of the financial process was presented in their programs, but nine respondents stated they would have liked a deeper dive into the budget with a hands-on approach and not just a presentation.

My interpretation of why the four principals that did not identify the budget and school finances as the area in which they would have liked additional learning experiences is as follow: One of the principals was in RPPP, in which participants of that program assume the role of principal for at least a semester. The principal would have had hands-on actual experience with the budget process. In addition, two principals were a part of an earlier cohort of ALPSS and spent an additional three to four years as an assistant principal after completing the principal preparation program. The years of experience as an assistant principal may have afforded them an opportunity to have experience with the budget prior to being appointed principal. The last principal that did not respond as desiring additional support with the budget process mentioned she had opportunities to work with the budget at her school as an assistant principal. This really speaks to another layer of support for the assistant principal who aspires to the position of principal. The supervising principal should provide day-to-day practical experience to assistant principals in their building. I would conclude that the needs of assistant principals can partly be attributed to the roles, responsibilities, and tasks they are

assigned and allowed to part of in their buildings, in addition to structured principal preparation programs.

Principal Authentic commented on how the budget was “touched on”, but he would have desired more discussion around making budget decisions based on school demographics and specific needs of a school. He also mentioned he had to have coaching around the budget from his supervisor when he was appointed principal. He said, “I think for me it was how to do a school budget and using and how you use your school budget to finance your vision and promote student achievement. We touched on the topic in ALPSS, but I would have loved to have a great a greater in-depth discussion about you know, how you address the demographics growing demographics in your building, how do you finance this, how do you pay for this you know what decisions or how you get input from the stakeholders far as how you should spend the money for your budget...

Principal Excellence wanted to have different building scenarios and be able to determine staffing needs based on those scenarios. This was quite similar to what Principal Authentic offered. He stated, “...I know we spent some time with staffing but really looking at certain building scenarios and you know really look at staffing needs and how you can determine like even especially right now we are you know in the budgeting season and so really knowing what’s the best moves to make based upon the needs of your school community is something I wish we would have spent able to spend

a lot more time on and so it wasn't something that was kind of generic where we had you know (the budget analyst) come in and just talk about SBB but really really talk about staffing needs and how you can create the type of staff and the type of school culture that best fit your school community".

Principal Empowerment agreed and felt the budget was the only aspect he would have desired more experience. He said: "... the only one really aspect of the role that I would think that ALPSS could have had little more assistance in when I took it was the SBB process and the budgeting...However there were there are things that Perfect Time does specifically that would have assisted us such as SBB that would have made the process a little bit easier you are not going to understand SBB doing it one time but it would have better prepared us for when we faced it our first year as a principal....I would think that ALPSS could have had little more assistant in when I took it was the SBB process and the budgeting".

Principal Integrity also thought the budget was the one aspect she would have liked more experience prior to becoming a principal. She specifically mentioned not knowing about the two accounts you have to work with in a school and the specific procedures you had to follow with your checking account documents. She was also concerned about the knowledge of the secretary or bookkeeper and how when you are appointed principal you hope the person in the position is knowledgeable and trustworthy. She felt as a new principal, you basically have to be at their mercy until you

learn about every aspect of the financial procedures. She said, "So one of things that I think I would have liked to participate in is just more work with budget. I think we kind of touched upon that , we mentioned that just-knowing how as a principal you, what you need, I know we know we were told you know you have to request a I forgot what it is called but when you come in you have them look at your your records and your and your budget and just make sure, (an audit) I forgot thank you, I couldn't think of it , I knew we have to request an audit..." "...just you know you are supposed to sit down if you don't have that secretary who is trained properly then it's like you are kind of out there at their mercy and so just being able just knowing you have to look at get a print -out of your budget every month check it check it against your bank statement. You are the only one who opens the bank statements. So these are some things I learned along the way. I would have loved to have known this beforehand and so it's things like that just little things and you know that you know you wouldn't know just being an assistant principal but then you learn on the job and I don't know if it's just via the principal preparation program." "...So I would like to so budgeting is definitely important, but that's highly important but you know just how you manage like how do you oversee finances."

Principal Visionary, first-year principal, wanted to work with an actual school's budget in real-time versus a sample budget. I gathered from her comments that she would have like to have experienced how the actual principal of the actual school made decisions regarding the funds allocated for that school. This was the first time in the review of responses I felt that it was the actual decision-making around the budget that

was most important. She said, “I know that we did some work with budget, but I think having more experience with working with an actual school-wide budget or working with a job-alike principal mentor at that point, to say this is what your budget is going to look like, this is how we establish priorities. We did have some work around the budget, but not as in-depth as I think I would have liked prior to assuming this role.”

Principal Motivation, first-year principal, was another principal that was unaware that she had her school’s budget and also had the school’s checking account. She said: “I think I would have liked more experiences with budget...we were definitely exposed to what the SBB looks like... but we never got into the fact that your school has your Oracle budget and you have a checkbook.” “... so you essentially have two different sources of funding happening in your building... as a new principal you definitely get the Oracle training and so you have to have the Oracle training before you get access to Oracle, but sometimes there’s still a grey area for me in how to properly spend the money. You know, I don’t want to do anything obviously that I’m not supposed to do. So I would have liked more experience with things that you can do with your funds so that you obviously benefit the goals of the school. You know, how do you make sure you are making the right financial decision? ... I would have really liked a little bit more in-depth information on budget.”

Principal Responsibility, first-year principal, mentioned the Title I budget and using Student Based Budget (SBB). The Title I Budget process is separate from SBB.

Those schools that are identified as Title I schools will either be designated as School-wide Title I or Targeted Assistance. Her emphasis regarding the budget was placed around instructional decisions. She noted, “..so that’s one thing and then budget..., really looking at Title I and looking at... if you’re a Title I School and looking at the SBB budget I really wished we had a little bit more time on that because the majority of assistant principals that I know that are now principals we really, we talked about the budget, but you really didn’t get to touch the budget and there are so many different nuances instead of just FTEs and moving people that you really have to think about and so I think that’s one thing being a first year principal that I felt myself kind of like, oh goodness, I have to do the budget and really thinking through it’s not just creating a schedule, it’s not just saying this teacher is teaching this grade level, it’s not just saying this, but I really have to be very purposeful about the budget and where I’m moving money to ensure that if I’m doing this collaborative planning this is what, how this is what it’s going to take or if my schedule looks this way if I don’t have enough money and substitutes here so that’s one thing that we really didn’t dig into was the budget and maybe just umm given us a mock budget of a school and then us thinking through the parameters of what we really need to do to make sure that our school moves forward with the monies that we were given.”

Respondents stated they had a better understanding of the district initiatives and practices as assistant principals and as a newly appointed principal because of their experiences through the activities in the programs. As they implement these new

strategies, respondents find that they are more knowledgeable and confident regarding the roles as instructional leaders.

Principal Integrity referenced how she felt they were so much farther than other assistant principals that were not a part of a program. "...In speaking with some of my assistant principal friends who weren't in the program...I found that I was like ahead of the game and more prepared and more knowledgeable...about what was going on in the county..."

Perfect Time Public Schools has one goal; "Outstanding Academic Achievement for All Students". The school district has implemented trainings and programs to ensure successful decision-making and outcomes and to ensure consistency across the district. Those trainings include Arbinger's Leadership and Self-Deception.

Principal Excellence felt the trainings helped prepare her to understand the district initiatives and she was better able to speak to focus of the district. She said: "Well, it prepared me because I am able to speak to our district-wide initiatives and so I have a very strong understanding of our instructional goals and so I can speak very coherently to that...I know that is something that has allowed me to gain a lot of respect from the staff and so and I think the monthly meetings where we constantly revisited those expectations, the activities that we did where we had to apply our knowledge I think is very helpful to us all."

District administrators from offices and departments such as the Office of Continuous Systemic Improvement (OCSI) and the Office Employee Performance and Evaluation (OEPE) provided presentations on the topics specific to the department each month as part of the program components. The OCSI supports the schools and departments using collaborative data inquiry, which drives the systemic improvement of the district. The OEPE ensures that all employees have a clear understanding of the evaluation processes that support the instructional core (student, teacher, content) of the district's Coherent Framework.

Principal Reflective, first-year principal, felt that everything she knows about the district's coherent framework came from the learning in the ALPSS program. She emphasized how the learning and understanding did not come from the actual work in her building, but connecting the learning in the presentations she had to deliver in her program. She said: "I did APIP and I did ALPSS...I learned everything I know about the coherence framework, came through, it didn't come through natural work for me...when we did our presentations, we were expected to connect...We were expected to show our understanding of the Coherence Framework and how it relates to your building and the work that you're doing"... "I learned everything I know about the coherence framework..."when we did our presentation, we were expected to connect."

Principal Motivational, first-year principal, specifically mentioned the Leadership and Self-Deception training and the coherence framework presentations that helped her

focus on the goal of the district and in turn the goals of her school. She said: “I would say the leadership and self-deception because that again, is the foundation....If I can add a second one, it would be that coherence framework layer. Where, that helps you also stay focused on what is the goal, the district level goal that should also filter into the school goals.”

The PTPS Coherence Framework was adopted from the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Framework at Harvard University. The framework connects the instructional core with systemic strategies for improvement. The instructional core as identified by PTPS consists of teachers, students, and content. The framework also includes a Theory of Change, which is the district’s belief that “If we focus on culture, data, and performance with a lens on literacy, we will have outstanding academic achievement for all students”. The PTPS Coherence Framework is the “district’s fundamental premise that sustainable change in student performance occurs in the classroom among the students, the teacher, and the content.” (*PTPS Strategic Plan, 2015*)

Principal Confidence considered APIP as a “bridge” that helped in understanding the connections between the work and the district initiatives. The statement made was, “So having APIP as that, I guess bridge, it really helped me to understand the connection between the work that I’m doing and the county initiatives. “ ...it was just that learning kind of, the initiatives, the coherence framework.... I think I did a lot of learning around

that.” “I think the presentations and communication from multiple departments throughout PTPS was the most beneficial.”

Principal Reflective, first-year principal, felt that she would have rather had more actual experience instead of the presentations. She felt that she has a better understanding when she is experiencing the work. She said “...I mean presentations....I can sit, I can write notes, I can listen to you talk...until I actually get a chance to experience it in practice, I’m not gonna feel it, I’m not gonna make it my own, I’m not going to you know really immerse myself in it.”

APIP participants were required to present a Problem of Practice to their Leadership Development Team (LDT) during the time research participants were in the program. The LDT consisted of their principal, the principal’s supervisor, a central office administrator, and a leadership coach. Participants had to connect their understanding and learning of the district initiatives in their presentation. Participants were also required to identify the PTPS Leader Standards that aligned to their practice. One principal noted that presentations allowed the connections to be clearer. The other principal voiced it would have been better to have more emphasis on practice rather than the presentations. I feel this is important because initially APIP was not designed as a principal preparation program specifically. Participants from the early APIP cohort were being assigned as Acting Principals while participating in APIP. The program was revamped the following year.

Principals particularly discussed the district initiatives and how they were able to immediately impact the learning of their staff of the district initiatives as assistant principals as well as newly appointed principals.

Principal Integrity stated, “So, I think had I not been in ALPSS or School Leaders Network there were some things I think as you know an assistant principal in the county not going through those programs I probably wouldn’t have known or wouldn’t have, you know conscientiously focused on..” “...and so since the programs, the programs helped me focus on systemic initiatives and leadership qualities...” “...and then I had an opportunity to go back to the school and implement some of things we kind of focused on in the programs....” Principal Integrity continued, “So, It basically gave me a focus for my vision and so just aligning my... because I knew the focus and just making sure that I was aligning my school with district focus was important ...you know I am able to align my school with district initiatives as well.”

Principal Excellence mentioned the coherence framework, the DataWise process, and the focus on literacy as the initiatives she gained a better understanding because of her program. She commented, “I definitely feel, like I said, we had the opportunity to get a firm understanding of our district-wide initiatives...what it basically did was really kind of honed... on our district-wide initiatives.and it really helped us have a better understanding, a better framework of our coherence framework, the Data Wise process, those big rocks that our district has as well as the literacy plan...”

Summary

Data captured and analyzed from the 13 participants revealed six themes in each of the areas covered by the three research questions.

In order to provide data to respond to the research questions ten interview and focus group questions and a five question questionnaire were utilized to gather data for this research study. I provided a description of how the participants responded categorized by the themes that emerged during the coding process. A total of six themes emerged. Mentoring and Coaching, Relationships/Networking/Collaboration, Application of District Initiatives and Leadership Capacity/Instructional Leadership, Better Understanding of District Initiatives and Budget/School Finances emerged.

Participants who referenced mentor and coaching appreciated the sitting and former principals who guided them and provided feedback to them in the district-run principal preparation programs. Participants also made reference to being able to use the mentoring and coaching strategies with their staff once they were appointed principal.

All but one respondent referenced established relationships, the opportunity for networking, and the collaboration amongst their cohort as an important component to their principal preparation program.

This theme was referenced as it relates to respondents' current practice in the role of principal. The eight respondents noted that they were able to apply the learning around the district initiatives once they were appointed principal. Newly appointed principals was able to engage and focus their staff around the systemic initiatives

One participant spoke about having a safe practice around the district's leader standards and aligning the work to those standards. Another principal stated that "the role of the principal is that we have moved away from being managers to more so instructional leaders." Participants that responded within this theme referenced how having the various departments and offices present each month in the program meeting assisted in their deeper and clearer understanding of the district initiatives. The district initiatives specifically referenced were the Coherence Framework, the DataWise School Improvement Process, Leadership and Self-Deception, and the district's strategic plan.

Nine of the participants cited the budget/school finances as an area they would have liked to have had more activities and hands-on learning experience during their time in the principal preparation program. Two principals stated they would have liked more shadowing experiences.

For Research Question 1, What aspects of the district-run principal preparation programs were most meaningful for newly appointed principals' in terms of their preparation for the principalship? The responses indicated that the participants valued the mentoring and coaching provided in programs in addition to working as a cohort. The most common responses for Research Question 1 were categorized in the theme Relationship Building. Those responses indicated that the relationships established with their cohort members, their mentors, program coordinators, and district administrators

were most beneficial in their role as a newly appointed principal. Participants spoke specifically on knowing and having someone to contact when they had questions.

For Research Question 2, In what ways did the learning experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs influence the current practice of newly appointed principals?, the responses indicated that principals were able to plan and put structures in place when they were appointed principal. Participants felt they were given the necessary tools to assist them in performing the tasks of a principal.

For Research Question 3, In what ways, if any, did the components of the district-run principal preparation programs impact newly appointed principals' readiness to assume the principalship? Participants spoke specifically about leadership scenarios that included prioritization activities, mock interviews, and the completing of a 90-Day Entry Plan that especially assisted in their readiness level to assume the role of principal. Participants also noted the fact that they were encouraged to view situations through the lens of a principal and not as an assistant principal while in the program.

The data collected in this study indicated that participants valued the relationships and connections made during the program. The connections allowed newly appointed principals to engage knowledgeably with the district's various departments, offices, and central office administrators. The data captured from the open-ended survey coincided with the data collected in the one-one-interviews and the focus group session.

Ten respondents indicated that they had a better understanding of the district initiatives while participating in the activities provided in the programs. Specifically

stated were the Leadership Development Team (LDT) presentations, where participants had an opportunity to connect the district initiatives (Coherence Framework, Strategic Plan, Leadership and Self-Deception and the Data Wise School Improvement Process).

It can be concluded that this study design was suitable in identifying the perceptions of the newly appointed principals regarding their experience through the activities provided in the school district's district-run principal preparation programs; APIP, ALPSS, and Resident Principals.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the summary of the findings as they relate to the research questions, literature, past research and the theoretical framework of this study. Additionally, the implications for policy, practice and future research are provided. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of newly appointed principals regarding the development and preparation as provided to them by Perfect Time Public Schools (PTPS) while serving as assistant principals. The following research questions were answered:

1. What aspects of the district-run principal preparation programs were most meaningful for newly appointed principals' in terms of their preparation for the principalship?"
2. In what ways did the learning experiences in the district-run principal preparation programs influence the current practice of newly appointed principals?
3. In what ways, if any, did the components of the district-run principal preparation programs impact newly appointed principals' readiness to assume the principalship?

The contributions of this study may provide information that may assist the school district in making necessary adjustments to its district-run principal preparation programs for the development and preparation of assistant principals for the role of principal.

There were 11 one-on-one interviews and one focus group, and an anonymous electronic questionnaire conducted to gather the data for this research study. Participants were all in year 1 through year 3 as principal within Perfect Time Public Schools. All interview sessions (one-on-one and focus group) were audio-recorded with participants permission. These interviews included two participants from the Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP) nine participants from the Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS) and one participant from the Resident Principal Preparation Program (RPPP). Two participants participated in two of the three programs (APIP and ALPSS, ALPSS and RPPP). Participation in either APIP or ALPSS is a prerequisite for RPPP.

Vygotsky's Activity Theory was used to analyze the research data. Activity Theory accounts for environment, history of the person, and role of the artifact, motivations, and real life action. A range of factors worked together to impact the participant's level of readiness for the principalship. Factors such as the specific components of each of the program, the activities required in the programs, and even when they participated in the program. Activity Theory emphasizes that human activity is mediated by tools. The activities throughout the program allowed for a transmission of knowledge for participants.

Themes and patterns emerged through the process of coding the transcripts. The themes and patterns of the participants' responses are in the discussion section of this chapter. The data collected in this study indicated that the newly appointed principals

valued the relationships established throughout the district-run principal preparation programs. It also indicated that the information presented from district administrators in each of the programs assisted in them having a better understanding as they served as assistant principals and allowed them to apply the district initiatives once appointed principal. The newly appointed principals in this study stated they used the knowledge gained from the components and the activities presented in the PTPS district-run principal preparation programs as they assumed their role of principal.

The discussion section addresses each of the three research questions. The literature overwhelmingly leaned toward the conclusion that the assistant principal position does not provide adequate preparation for assuming the role of principalship.

Discussion

Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) identify three sets of core leadership practice: Developing people, Setting directions for the organization, and Redesigning the organization. All three sets of core leadership practice aligned to the emerging themes of this study. Under the *Developing People* core leadership practice, I place four of this study's emerging themes: Mentoring and Coaching, Relationships/Networking/Collaboration, Instructional Leadership/Leadership, and Capacity/Budget School Finance. Each of these themes was about an increase of knowledge, support, and skills for the participants. The core leadership practice Setting

Directions for the Organization, I place the themes aligned to the District Initiatives, both better understanding, and application. The district initiatives identified by participants in this study were put in place to give the school district a new common focus throughout the organization. The core leadership practice *Redesigning the Organization*, I list two of the emerging themes: Application of District Initiatives and Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity. With the appropriate application of the initiatives put in place in PTPS, according to the district's Strategic Plan, the school district will reach its one goal of "Outstanding Academic Achievement for All Students". This is an effort to redesign the organization.

As the PTPS Theory of Change states "If we focus on culture, data, and performance—with a lens on literacy, then we will have outstanding academic achievement for all students"(PTPS Strategic Plan, 2015). This is a focus on instructional leadership and specifically building leadership capacity in literacy. The first area of focus in the district's strategic plan is an "Emphasis on the Instructional Core", which consists of teachers, students, and content.

Table 2

Core Leadership Practices

Developing People	Setting Directions for the Organization	Redesigning the Organization
Theme Mentoring and Coaching	Application of District Initiatives	Application of District Initiatives
Relationships/Networking/Collaboration	Better Understanding of Initiatives	Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity
Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity		
Budget/School Finance		

Newly appointed principals that participated in the district-run principal preparation programs perceived their readiness level to assume the role of principal with their participation in the programs. Participants also shared their views on what they felt would have contributed to an increased level of preparedness for the role of principal.

This study began acknowledging that the role of the principal is crucial to a school's effectiveness. I provided a review of the literature on the Role of the Principal and the Role of the Assistant Principal because research has identified that "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Washlstrom, 2004, p. 5). Then I provided a review of the literature on Principal Preparation Programs, Principal Retention and Principal Succession.

The unit of analysis consisted of goal-directed actions. It was important to produce the learning experiences and opportunities for participants. In this study, subjects were provided tools in order to meet a goal. Participants discussed their learning experiences such as having a better understanding of district initiatives, building effective teams, building positive school climate and culture, developing a school vision, establishing effective management practices, increasing leadership capacity, and engaging with parents and the community. Participants reported they were able to use the tools which were considered the knowledge and procedures as they assumed the role of principal. Participants were able to gain a better understanding of the district initiatives and were able to apply those initiatives as newly appointed principals. Assistant principals in the programs were provided with strategies and resources to become instructional leaders of their building in addition to building their own capacity as a leader as well as their teachers and leadership team members. They were taught to provide opportunities for professional development for their staff

The relationships that were formed and the connections made throughout the program allowed participants to feel supported in the role as an aspiring principal. The benefits of the established relationships continued on as they were appointed principal. Participants were able to establish a shared vision in their school and build upon the strengths of the staff. There was focus on culture, team-building, and instruction. Although noted as an additional need, participants were provided with the process and procedures of operating a school's budget.

The object was for the newly appointed principals as assistant principals to feel prepared to assume the role of principal. All participants expressed a positive perception toward their readiness level. However; it was indicated that there was a desire to have more learning experiences with budget and school finances. Participants also stated more shadowing experience would have been beneficial.

The literature regarding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that principal preparation programs should include are

- A collaborative approach to learning, with the use of a cohort structure
- Inclusion of activities that contribute to communication skills
- Learning experiences that reflect actual work of a principal
- Internship experience
- A focus on state and national standards
- Highly trained, qualified, and knowledgeable faculty
- The development among participants of an authentic sense of self-efficacy
- The curriculum is presented in a coherent manner and includes the knowledge and skills of what principals need to know
- Involves a heavy reliance on written reflection

Petzko (2008) reports “only a limited amount of research has specifically asked new principals to reflect on what preparation was or would have been critical to their initial success” (p.229). In Petzko’s study, human relations was the highest rated item as new principals ranked the importance of selected functions to their principal preparation.

According to the Rainwater Leadership Alliance (RLA) and authors Cheney, Davis, Garrett, and Holleran (2010), “the processes and standards by which many principal preparation programs screen, select, and graduate candidates often lack rigor and do not adequately equip principal for the multi-faceted role of effective instructional leader”(p. 10). RLA documents six design elements the RLA programs share:

The programs...

- Starts with a Competency Framework
- Rely on strategic, proactive, and targeted recruiting strategies
- Are highly selective and establish clear criteria
- Provides training and development that is experiential
- Provides ongoing support for graduates
- Are committed to continuous improvement and using data to assess the effectiveness of their principals and their programs

Each newly appointed principal in this research study participated in APIP, ALPSS, and/or RPPP at different times. Four participants that completed ALPSS, which is the oldest of the three programs completed the program during the transition from the National Institute for School Leaders(NISL). NISL is an Executive Development Program that has a goal of strengthening the instructional leadership of aspiring, novice, and current school leaders (NISL, 2013). It should be noted that the program has made changes since the first cohort participated. Similarly, the participants from APIP were in

the beginning cohorts of APIP, which is in its third year of existence. Changes for improvement has been made since the initial cohort.

The themes representing participant responses for the research questions were: Mentoring and Coaching, Relationships/Networking/Collaboration, Application of District Initiatives, Instructional Leadership/Leadership Capacity, Better understanding of District Initiatives, and Budget and School Finance. There was only one participant who was a part of the Resident Principal Preparation Program and the responses for this participant fell in each of six themes. This is significant because this is the only PTPS district-run principal preparation program that affords participants to serve in the capacity of a principal for any length of time as part of the program's component. The participants of RPPP spend at least a semester leading a school, without the direct supervision of the sitting principal. However; the comments of the participant that was a part of RPPP regarding the budget did not identify budget and school finances as an area of need. The identified need for this respondent was conducting learning walks with principals that are doing well in their craft. This response was in reference to the participation in ALPSS.

When participants were asked what they thought of when they heard the phrase principal preparation, some responses were a "focus around structures", "how I can improve my skillset", "preparing for leadership or building leadership capacity", and "tools you need to be a successful principal "a very rich experience". One participant indicated they worked a lot with learning how to become an instructional leader and

coaching their staff. It was stated, "...several experiences that we had that were preparing us for the role of principalship". All respondents expressed that they had a positive experience in the program they participated. In Activity Theory focuses on practice. Participants responded favorably to the learning experiences that allowed them to link theory to practice, such as the principal shadowing, the principal interview sessions, and the prioritization activities

Findings and Interpretations

Participants referenced several of the emerging themes, such as having a better understanding of the district's focus (Better Understanding of the District Initiatives) through the presentations, the relationships and connections made (Relationship/Networking/Collaboration, and a focus on Instructional Leadership. Two of the participant's (Principal Integrity and Principal Selfless) spoke specifically about a prioritization activity that each ALPSS participant is given to see how they prioritize various scenarios that represents real life events that occurs during a school day.

Participants described what they deemed was the most beneficial learning experience in the principal preparation program for them as a sitting principal. Responses included shadowing other principals, the presentation of district initiatives, and the relationships formed and a focus on instructional leadership. One participant could not name just one learning experience and stated that "all of them" were beneficial.

Participants felt that the learning experiences that were most important in their role as principal were the mentoring and coaching, understanding district initiatives, off site meetings, building relationships, school finances, leadership development, developing a strong culture, being politically savvy, hands-on experience and planning.

Participants responses indicated that they were better able to understand and apply the district initiatives once they were appointed principals because of the district presentations throughout their program.

Participants stated the Student Base Budget (SBB) and other aspects that relate to school finances such as the platform in which houses the budget, the various checking accounts schools have, and the procedures for handling the bank statements was a learning experience they felt more was needed . The participants who did not respond with the need to have additional learning experiences with the budget responses included more shadowing opportunities, and more off site meetings.

Davis and Jazzar (2005) examined 14 principal preparation programs and found seven consistent instructional and learning actions that establishes a framework for providing future educational leaders with opportunities to connect their knowledge to practice through carefully designed experiences. The seven learning actions are: Provide relevant, standards based and job embedded curricular and instructional experiences, relevant and timely learning opportunities by participating in clinical internships, work with exemplar principals, who act as coaches, mentors, or resource leaders

Multiple perspectives were provided. The prime unit of analysis as indicated in the activity system was the activities and learning experiences. The activity was represented by the learning experiences presented by various offices and departments within PTPS identified by participants. Activities such as creating a 90 day entry-plan, conducting mock interviews, participating in prioritization exercises, shadowing principals, having opportunities to connect with district administrators, working collaboratively with their cohort, and participating in activities that connect district initiatives.

Blase and Blase (2000) identify specific behaviors of instructional leadership as making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling effective instruction, soliciting opinions, supporting collaboration, providing professional development opportunities, and giving praise for effective teaching. Dufour (2002) asserts an instructional leader needs to have up-to-date knowledge on three areas of education: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Green (2010) defines instructional leader as a leader who focuses on strengthening teaching and learning. NAESP (2001) contends that leadership is a balance of management and vision. Participants spoke about establishing their leadership voice and having presence in the school, and how as a principal, you must use levels of distributed leadership. One participant referenced going and doing learning walks with principals in the district was a great experience.

LaPointe and Davis (2006) assert that effective principal preparation programs use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity

between the program and area school. In the 2003 NAESP Report *Making the Case for Principal Mentoring* the authors cite Robert Malone, a research analyst with the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) saying “principals typically identify other school leaders as their primary source of help in becoming a school leader themselves” (p.13). Eight out of the thirteen newly appointed principals referenced other school leaders as their primary source of help in their role as principal.

Conclusion

This phenomenological research study focused on the perceptions and learning experiences of principals in their first through third year as principal and who as an assistant principal participated in the Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP), Aspiring Leaders for Student Success (ALPSS), Resident Principal Preparation Program (RPPP).

The data from this study leads me to conclude that newly appointed principals who participated in one of the district’s district-run principal preparation programs did feel a level of readiness when they were appointed principal. One participant was appointed acting principal while in one of the programs. That participant expressed a desire to have had more actual experience that a principal would have. The participant also stated if an assistant principal can be appointed principal or acting principal at any time, the programs should be provided as much experience as possible. The suggestion was a mini-residency, as an opportunity to work with a principal to see everything that takes place.

The participants of ALPSS felt that the mentorship was a valuable component to the program as was the mock interviews and prioritization exercise. Nine out of the thirteen participants desired additional work with the budget. Specifically, they wanted to have the opportunity to work with an actual budget. Additionally, participants referenced more shadowing as a need. Two of the three programs have components of shadowing or school visits, they are the second-year participants of APIP and the Resident Principals. The component for APIP is simply a school visit while participants of RPPP are participating in a full internship for at least a school year.

Six themes emerged from the responses of 17 total participants from 11 one-on-one interviews two from the focus group session and four from the online questionnaire: Mentoring and Coaching, Relationships, Networking, and Collaboration, Application of District Initiatives, Leadership Capacity and Instructional Leadership, Better Understanding of District Initiatives, and Budget and School Finances.

The study's theoretical framework used Vgotsky's Activity Theory which incorporates human activity and the interactions within practical activity. This perspective takes in account that all human action is mediated through the use of cultural artifacts and tools.

The subjects (newly appointed principals as assistant principals) used the tools (knowledge and procedures) provided by the school district to meet the object or goal of increasing assistant principals' readiness for the principalship.

Limitations

Findings of this study should be considered with consideration of the following limitations:

1. The sample size limits transferability.
2. Gender, race, and school levels of all participants could not be identified due to the limited number of respondents and principals that are males, of a specific race, and in specific leveled-schools that participated in this study.
3. Four of the participants were a part of the ALPSS first-third cohort when the program was transitioning from a national leadership program to a district-run principal preparation program. The program has been overhauled within the last three years. The responses of the four were often times not aligned with the other members of their program, simply because the changes that occurred to the program in the last three years.
4. The two APIP participants were a part of the beginning of APIP. APIP was initially not designed as a principal preparation program, but a program that inducts newly appointed assistant principals into administration. Its original design was that of a leadership development program.
5. At least three participants had experience with other principal preparation programs either before or during their experience with the district run principal program. That additional experience could have influenced their level of readiness for the principalship.
6. Although no commonalities among newly appointed principals that did not participate in this study was found, their perception of their program may have been less enthusiastic than those who did participate.

7. The use of the focus group may also be considered a limitation. Participants in some instances just agreed with another participant's response versus stating their own perception.
8. My role and experience as a Leadership Development Coach, coordinator of APIP, and member of the office that sponsors these programs may be viewed as influencing the interpretation of the participants' experience. To minimize the bias, I used reflective practice, solicited the assistance of moderator to conduct interviews with participants of APIP, allowed the interviewed participants to verify the accurateness of the interpretations, conducted one-on-one interview sessions, a focus-group session, and an online anonymous questionnaire. In addition, I disclosed my personal experience in Chapter III.

Implications for Leadership Practice

There have been studies conducted on the quality and characteristics of effective principal preparation programs, but a clear majority of the studies is about university principal preparation programs. I found only a few qualitative studies where researchers examined newly appointed principals' perspectives of their experiences in their school district's district-run principal program. This study provides insights into the experience of district-run principal preparation programs. This study contributes to the literature and knowledge base about how newly appointed principals perceive their preparation while serving as assistant principals. The findings from this study have several implications for school districts that run their own principal preparation programs.

Studying how assistant principals are being prepared for the principalship would certainly enable organizations to design and or refine existing induction and principal preparation programs across school districts. This study can be used to strengthen the school district's principal preparation programs in an effort to bridge the gap between preparation and practice for aspiring principals.

In order to improve district-run principal programs, it is important to not only include opportunities for participants to understand theory, but it must also include the experience of practical aspects of leading a school. Theory should link to actual experience.

The findings may be used to connect participants' feedback to school district's Leadership Standards in order to suggest improvements and enhance the alignment of the preparation provided with the expected tasks of principals in the school district. The findings from this study can also be used to add to the literature on district-run or grow your own principal and leadership preparation programs. Numerous studies have been conducted on university principal preparation programs. Studies such as the 2013 research *A Response to the Call for Effective Leadership in Today's Schools: Three Essentials -Preparation, Competency, and Dispositions*; conducted in the College of Education, Department of Leadership, at the University of Memphis in partnership with area school districts, Arthur Levine's 2005 Report, *Educating School Leaders*, and *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World* (Darling-Hammond et al, 2007). However, there is limited research on principal preparation programs that are designed

and conducted by school districts. Characteristics of effective principal preparation programs identified in these studies include having cohort models, internships or field experiences, a rigorous selection process

Research studies have been conducted on principal preparation programs. The Stanford Educational Leadership Institute conducted a study of programs that were rated as exemplary (Darling-Hammond, et al, 2007). Jackson and Kelly (2002) identified six programs they identified as innovative. Arthur Levin (2005) assessed the quality of educational administration programs and found that the typical course of studies required was largely disconnected from the realities of school management.

National efforts to improve the quality of training and preparation for principals include university principal preparation programs as well as school districts' focus on strengthening their bench of aspiring leaders. National organizations such as AASA: The School Superintendents Association, American Institutes for Research, the Education Development Center and the University Council for Educational Administration are assisting seven universities in redesigning their programs in collaboration with their states and local school district as part of the Wallace Foundation's University Principal Preparation Initiative. The seven states in which the universities are located will receive funding to review policies that align to university-based principal training. Across the nation, school districts as well as universities are aiming to increase the quality of school leaders.

Policy Implications

“The quality of a school comes down to the quality of the principal who oversees it” (Hamilton, Solmon, & Katzir, 2003 para. 3). There has been an increased awareness of the importance of the principalship in recent years. School districts have created or revamped their leader standards. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) approved new standards for educational leaders in October 2015. The PSEL 2015 replaced the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and were designed to ensure school leaders are able to improve student achievement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The PSEL standards provide a set of foundational principles of what school leaders should know and be able to do and a guide for states and school districts to use as a framework for local leadership policy and practice (PSEL, 2015).

School leaders are often absent from the policymaking process or are included as an afterthought (Prothero, 2015). Principals’ ongoing development is crucial for student and teacher learning and policy implementation. Principals become more effective as they gain experience, particularly within the first 3 years. (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011). Policymakers should revisit the ways in which aspiring principals are supported and developed. Funds should be designated to support the initial and ongoing development of assistant principals.

The role of the principal has evolved. Policymakers should ensure that university preparation programs provide rigor and alignment to the needs of today's school leaders. This is where the initial training for aspiring leaders occurs. Elmore (2000) contends that university-based preparation can lack rigor and relevance. University programs should also form partnerships with local school districts in order to develop curriculum that addresses the district's' needs. States and local district policymakers must ensure principal preparation is of high quality, embrace effective practices, and align to rigorous leader standards. Each year, PTPS is faced with hundreds of certified applicants for the position of assistant principal. Certification does not mean qualification.

There must be a commitment to deliberate internship, a focus on selection criteria, and an alignment to the school district's needs. Quality school leadership is imperative for increased student achievement. There must also be continuous, on-going development for participant of principal preparation program as well as valid assessments to evaluate participants . Local school districts should also partner with their respective states to ensure the high quality of its school leaders. In the Executive Summary of the 2010 Southern Regional Education Board Report, *The Three Essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal Leadership*, the author asserts that "While districts must create the right vision and support system for school improvement, they cannot be expected to act alone in this effort" (p. ii) There

must be a focus on policy to assist aspiring principals with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions as they prepare to assume the principalship.

NCATE released a document entitled, NCATE 2000. This document contends that in order to meet requirements for accreditation, educational leadership preparation programs would have to be more accountable for graduates' performance in practice versus the knowledge gained in the program(NPBEA, 2002). School districts that run their own principal preparation programs should take the same approach when preparing assistant principals and guiding them through their experiences in an effort to prepare them for principalship. Policies should be established at the state level for school districts to mentor, coach, and develop assistant principals in an effort to strengthen the principal pipeline. Kowalski (2004) has advocated for "substantial reforms in administrator preparation, program, accreditation, and state licensing standards" (p. 93).

Each state establishes certification and licensing requirements for school leaders. Most states have preferred or approved university programs that can be considered. State policymakers play an important role in the efforts of improved principal preparation. Hale & Moorman (2003) contend that nationally, there is a disconnect between pre-and in-service training for principals.

Implications for Future Research

The following recommendations have come from the findings in this study as well as from the review of literature. It is recommended that a similar qualitative research be conducted that looks at the difference between all newly appointed principals in this school district based on three variables: internally appointed to the position of principal with participation in a district-run principal preparation program, internally appointed to the position of principal without participation in a district-run principal preparation program, and externally appointed to the position of principal.

It is also recommended that this same study could be used in the school district to identify the school district's standards that are addressed from the respondents.

The findings from this study can be used to design a larger quantitative study that examines the perceptions of newly appointed principals across school districts that participated in their district's principal preparation program

Summary

In summary, a qualitative methodology was used to gain an understanding of the perceptions of newly appointed principals' principal preparation while they were assistant principals in a large urban school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. I utilized the phenomenological approach, gathering deep information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods that included one-on-one interviews and a focus group consisting principals in their first through third years as principals and

that served as assistant principals in the same school district and participated in one of the district-run Principal Preparation Programs: APIP, ALPSS, RPPP. I followed protocols pertaining to participants' consent to participate in this study.

The design of this study may allow principal preparation programs to collect data around their activities and learning experiences provided to assistant principals and aspiring principals

References

- Andrews, R. L., & Soder, R. (1987). Principal leadership and student achievement. *Educational Leadership*, 44(6), 9-11.
- Arbinger Institute (2000). *Leadership and self-Deception: Getting out of the box*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Ashby, D. (1996). *School reform movement: Directions in principal preparation*. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 5(2), 186-192.
- Barnett, B. G., Shoho, A. R., Oleszewski, A. M., & Ashley, M. (2012). The job realities of beginning and experienced assistant principals. *Leaders and Policy in Schools*, 11(1), 92-128. <http://dx.doi.org/10.108/15700763.2011.611924>
- Bartoletti, J., & Connelly, G. (2013). *Leadership matters: What the research says about the importance of principal leadership*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals.
- Béteille, T., Kalogrides, D., & Loeb, S. (2012). Stepping stones: Principal career paths and school outcomes. *Social Science Research*, 41(4), 904-919.
- edney, G. and Meister, D. (1997). *The Russian theory of activity: Current applications*
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130-141.
- to design.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (EDs.) (2010). *Reframing the path to school leadership: A guide for teachers and principals*. Corwin Press.

- Bonk, C. J., & Cunningham, D. J. (1998). Searching for learner-centered, constructivist, and sociocultural components of collaborative educational learning tools. *Electronic collaborators: Learner-centered technologies for literacy, apprenticeship, and discourse*, 25, 25-50.
- Boudett, K. P., & Murnane, R. J. (2013). *Data wise: A step by step guide to using assessment results to improve teaching and learning*. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138.
- Bush, T., & Oduro, G. K. (2006). New principals in Africa: Preparation, induction and practice. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44(4), 359-375.
- Butler, K. (2008). Principal preparation programs. *District Administration*, 44(10), 66-68.
- Cheney, G. R., Davis, J., Garrett, K., & Holleran, J. (2010). A new approach to principal preparation: Innovative programs share their practices and lessons learned. Rainwater Leadership Alliance. Retrieved from
- Christie, K., Thompson, B., & Whiteley, G. (2009). *Strong leaders, strong achievement: Model policy for producing the leaders to drive student success*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
- Clark, D., Martorell, P. and Rockoff, J. (2009). *School Principals and School Performance*. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research. Retrieved on February 1, 2017 from http://www.caldercenter.org/upload/Working-Paper-38_FINAL.pdf
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

- Cooper, B. S., Ehrensals, P. A., & Bromme, M. (2005). School-level politics and professional development: Traps in evaluating the quality of practicing leaders. *Educational Policy, 19*(1), 112-125.
- Cotton, K. (2003). *Principals and student achievement: What the research says*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Danielson, C (2013). Framework for teaching. *Evaluation Instrument. The Danielson Group*.
- Daresh, J.C. (2001). *Leaders helping leaders: A practical guide to administrative mentoring* (2d ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, D. LaPointe, M., & Orr, M. T. (2010). Preparing principals for a changing world.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Meyerson, D., LaPointe, M., & Orr, M. T. (2009). *Preparing principals for a changing world: Lessons from effective school leadership programs*. John Wiley & /sons.

- Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Davis, J., & Jazzar, M. (2005). The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs. *Principal*, 84(5), 18-21.
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M. & Meyerson, D. (2005). *Developing successful principals*. Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, Ed.). Retrieved from <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/school-leadership-study-developing-successful-principals.pdf>
- Dembowski, F. (n.d.) *The changing roles of leadership and management in educational administration*. National Council of Professors of Educational Administration. Reston, VA.
- DuFour, R. (2002). The learning-centered principal. *Educational leadership*, 59(8), 12-15.
- Elmore, R. F. (2000). Building a new structure for school leadership. Albert Shanker Institute.
- Elsberry, C., & Bishop, H. (1996). A new deal for new principals. *Principal*, 75(3), 32-35.

- Engeström, Y. (2016). Foreword. In S. Gederea & P.J. Williams (Eds.), *Activity theory in education* (p.vii). Boston, MA: Sense Publishers
- Farrelly, R. E. (2012). Emerging from the echo chamber: An activity theory perspective on L2 teachers of adult emergent readers (Doctoral dissertation).
- Field, M., Lauche, K., Bichsel, M., Voorhorst, F., Krueger, H., & Rauterberg, M. (2002). Physical and virtual tools: Activity theory and the practice of design. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work, (CSCW). The Journal of Collaborative Computing and Work Practices*11(1) 153-180.
- Foundations, W. (2012). The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning. *The Wallace Foundation*. New York.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. New York, NY: The Falmer Press.
- Fullan, M. (2002) The change. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-21.
- Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M., & Wasley, P. A. (2000). *The role of the principal in school reform*. Bank Street College of Education. New York, NY.
- Fuller, E. J., & Young, M.D., (2009) *Tenure and retention of newly hired principals in Texas* . Austin, TX: University Council for Educational Administration, Department of Educational Administration, University of Texas at Austin.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

- Gray, C., Fry, B., Bottoms, G., & O'Neill, K. (2007). Good principals aren't born- They're mentored: Are we investing enough to get the school leaders we need. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board, 8.
- Green, R. L. (2010). The four dimensions of principal leadership: A framework for leading 21st-century schools. Allyn & Bacon.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods* 18(1).
- Hale, E. L., & Moorman, H. N. (2003). *Preparing school principals: A national perspective on policy and program innovations*. Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, DC and Illinois Education Research Council, Edwardsville, IL.
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change. Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of education*, 33(3), 329-352.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980-1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32(1), 5-44.
- Halverson, C. A. Activity theory and distributed cognition. IBM Research. San Jose, CA.
- Harvey, M. J. (1994). The deputy principalship. Retrospect and prospect. *The International Journal of Educational Management*, 8(15), 15-25.
- <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0895904804270776>

- Hasan, H., & Kazlauskas, A. (2014). *Activity theory: Who is doing what, why, and how*. Wollongong, Australia.
- Hodson, D., & Hodson, J. (1998). From constructivism to social constructivism: A Vygotskian perspective on teaching and learning science. *School Science Review*, 79(289), 33-41.
- Israel, M. & Hay, I. (2006). *Research ethics for social scientists: Between ethical conduct and regulatory compliance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Jaquiss, N. (1999). A Matter of Principals. *Willamette Week*, 10(6).
- Jean-Marie, G., Normore, A. H., & Brooks, J. S. (2009). Leadership for social justice: Preparing 21st century school leaders for a new social order. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 4(1). 1-34.
- Johnson-Taylor, C., & Martin, M. B. (2007). Next in line: Preparing assistant principals for the principalship. *Principal Leadership*, 7(8), 22-25.
- Joseph, S. (2009). *A comprehensive evaluation of a school system's principal preparation program* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertation Abstracts International. (9UMI No. 3344118)
- Kowalski, T. J. (2004). The ongoing war for the soul of school administration. *Better leaders for America's schools: Perspectives on the Manifesto*.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews: Book 2 of the SAGE Qualitative Research Kit*. Los Angeles. SAGE Publications.

- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2014). *Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research*. SAGE Publications.
- LaPointe, M., & Davis, S. H. (2006). Effective schools require effective principals. *Leadership, 36*(1), 16-19.
- Leithwood, K. (1982). The role of the elementary school principal in program improvement. *Review of Educational Research, 52*(3) 309-339.
- Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School leadership and management, 28*(1), 27-42
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration, 38*(2), 112-129.
- Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, E. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.
- Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C., (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*. National College for School Leadership.
- Levine, Arthur. *Educating school leaders*. (2005). Washington, D.C: The Education Schools Project.
- Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2013). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Louise, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., Anderson, S.E., Michlin, M., & Mascall, B. (2010). Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning. *Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement/University of Minnesota and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto*, 42, 50.
- Lovely, S. (1999). Developing leaders from within. *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, (20)1, 12-13
- Madden, A. C. (2008). *Preparation of the assistant principal for the role of principal: An examination of real tasks as compared to the perceived ideal tasks* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/eps_diss/20
- Marshall, C. & Olivia, M. (2006). *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions on education*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Brickman & D. Rog (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods* (214-253). SAGE Publications
- McCarthy, M. (2005). How are school leaders prepared? Trends and future directions. *Educational Horizons*, 77(2), 74-81.
- Mendels, P. (2016). Perspective: Building principal pipelines: A job that urban districts can do. The Wallace Foundation.

- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*: Revised and expanded from qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer, L., & Feistritzer, E. (2003). *Better leaders for America's schools: A manifesto*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute.
- Meyer, M. J., & Macmillan, R. B. (2011). Principal succession and the micropolitics of educators in schools: Some incidental results from a larger study. *Canadian journal of educational administration and policy*.
- Milanowski, T., & Kimball, S. (2010). *The principal as human capital manager: Lessons from the private sector*. Teaching talent: A visionary framework for human capital in education 69-90.
- Mitgang, L. & Gill, J. (2012). The making of the principal: Five lessons in leadership training. Perspective. *Wallace Foundation*.
- Mitgang, L. D., & Maeroff, G. (2008). *Becoming a leader: Preparing school principals for today's schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Becoming-a-Leader-Preparing-Principals-for-Todays-Schools.pdf>

- Murphy, J. (1995). The knowledge base for educational administration: Historical footings and emerging trends. *The knowledge base in educational administration: Multiple perspectives*, 61-73.
- Nardi, B. (1995). *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2001). *Leading learning communities: Standards for what principals should know and be able to do*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals.
- For Aspiring and Current Leaders. (2013, June 18) Retrieved from <http://www.nisl.org/executive-development-program/for-aspiring-and-current-leaders/>.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, P.L. 107-110, 20 (2002).
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Dickinson, W. B., Leech, N. L., & Zoran, A. G. (2009). A qualitative framework for collecting and analyzing data in focus group research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8 (3), 1-21.
- Orr, M. (2006). Mapping innovation in leadership preparation in our nation's schools of education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(7), 492-499.
- Orr, T. (2006). An update on the TEA-SIG's work and highlights of its taskforce research. *Teaching in educational administration. Division A: American Education Research Association*, 14(1), 492-500.

- Owen-Fitzgerald, V. (2010). *Effective components of professional development for assistant principals* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/747068283.html?FMT=AI>
- Petzko, V. (2008). The perceptions of new principals regarding the knowledge and skills important to their initial success. *NASSP bulletin*, 92(3), 224-250.
- Peterson, K. (2002). The professional development of principals: Innovations and opportunities. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 213-232.
- Prothero, A. (2015, January 21). For principals, continuous learning critical to career success. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/02/21/for-principals-continuous-learning-critical-to-career.html?qs=principal+professional+development>
- Rath, T. (2007). *StrengthsFinder 2.0*. Simon and Schuster. New York, NY. GALLUP PRESS.
- Riggins-Newby, C. G., & Zarlengo, P. (2003). *Making the case for principal mentoring*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals. Retrieved from <https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/sites/brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/files/publications/prncpalmntrg.pdf>
- Ritchie, J. Lewis, J. Nicholls, C.M. & Ormston R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Sage.

- Sanders, W. L. & Horn, S. P. (1998). Research findings from the Tennessee value-added assessment system (TVAAS) database: Implications for educational evaluation and research. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation, 12*(3), 247-256.
- Sanders, N. M., & Simpson, J. (2005). *State policy framework to develop highly qualified administrators*. Washington, DC: CCSSO.
- Schmoker, M. J. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- School Leaders Network. (2014). *Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover*. Retrieved from http://connectleadsucceed.org/sites/default/files/principal_turnover_cost.pdf
- Senge, P. (1990). The leader's new work: Building learning organizations. *Sloan Management Review, 32*(1), pp. 7-21.
- Shaw, I. (2003). Ethics in qualitative research in evaluation. *Journal of Social Work, 3*(1), 9-29.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information, 22*(2), 63-75.
- Shibles, M. R. (1988). *School leadership preparation: A preface for action*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.
- Stronge, J. H., Richard, H. B., & Catan, N. (2008). *Qualities of effective principals*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

- Sun, C. (2011). *School leadership: Improving state systems for leader development*. National Association of State Boards of Education. Arlington, VA.
- Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2015). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Thomas, D., & Bainbridge, W. (2001). *Global perspective on school leadership*. Educational Research.
- Turnbull, B. J., Riley, D. L., Acaira, E. R., Anderson, L. M., & MacFarlane, J. R., (2013). Six districts begin the principal pipeline initiative. Policy Studies Associates, Inc.
- Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- The Wallace Foundation .(2011). *The Wallace Foundation Launches Major “Principal Pipeline” Initiative to Help School Districts Build a Corps of Effective School Principals*. [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/News-and-Media/press-releases/Pages/The-Wallace-Foundation-Launches-Major-Principal-Pipeline-Initiative-to-Help-School-Districts-Build-Corps.aspx>
- The Wallace Foundation (2012). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*. The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-School-Principal-as-Leader-Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning-2nd-Ed.pdf>

- The Wallace Foundation (2013). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning. The expanded edition.* The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/overview-the-school-principal-as-leader.aspx>
- Weller, L. D., & Weller, S. J. (2002). *The assistant principal: Essentials for effective school leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Wenger, Etienne C., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. C. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Wilmore, E. L. (2004). *Principal induction: A standards-based model for administrator development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Young, M., & Fuller, E. (2009, April). *Tenure and retention of newly hired principals in Texas.* Austin, TX: University Council for Educational Administration, Department of Educational Administration, University of Texas at Austin, 2009.
- Yirci, R., & Kocabas, I. (2010). The importance of mentoring for school principals: A conceptual analysis. *Education Leadership Review, 11*(1), 1-7.
- Zigarelli, M. (1996). An empirical test of conclusions from effective schools. *Journal of Educational Research, 90*(2), 103-110.

Appendix A: One-on-One Interview Script

Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to this interview session. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your experience about the principal preparation as provided by PTPS. My name is Sharon H. Porter, a Doctoral Candidate at Howard University in the School of Education: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. This research is to fulfill the partial requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education. I will also offer my findings to the district in an effort to make improvements to the existing program.

I will be asking you 10 questions regarding your experience and perceptions of the PTPS district-run principal preparation program for my dissertation research. I will utilize member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative finding ensuring participants feel the specific descriptions or themes are accurate. As a member of the Office of Talent Development, I acknowledge researcher bias may exist. To minimize the potential impact that bias has on qualitative research, I will pose questions thoughtfully and in an appropriate sequence.

My dissertation topic is Principal Preparation. The results will be used to identify your perceptions of the experience in the PTPS district-run principal preparation programs. Results will be shared with district leadership to support efforts to continuously improve program effectiveness. You were selected because you are a one-three year principal in PTPS and also participated in one of the district-run principal preparation programs.

continuously improve program effectiveness. You were selected because you have one-to-three years' experience as a principal in PTPS and participated in one of the district-run principal preparation programs.

I will audio record this interview session with your permission. Recording the session is necessary so all information can be captured. We will be on a first name basis for this session, but no names will be used in this report. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Please turn off any electronic device. If you cannot, please put on silence. If you must respond to call, just let me know and I will pause the recording.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Tell me your name, your school and what you like most about being a principal.

(Opening Question---Not analyzed)

1. What is the first thing to come to mind when you hear the phrase principal preparation (Introductory Question)
2. Describe your experience in relationship to the required activities provided in the district-run principal preparation program. (Introductory Question)
3. Which learning experiences do you feel your district-run principal preparation program prepared you to assume the role of principal? (Transition Question)
4. What learning experiences from your district-run principal preparation program afforded you opportunities to develop you as a leader? (Key Question)
5. How did the principal preparation activities enhance your leadership performance as a principal?
6. What was the most beneficial learning experience in the district-run principal preparation program for you as a new principal? (Key Question)
7. What learning experiences would you have liked to participate in the district-run principal preparation program? (Key Question)
8. Of the learning experiences you mentioned in the previous question, which one do you feel is most important in your role as principal? (Ending Question)

9. Is there any additional information you would like to share that was not covered? (Ending Question)
10. In what ways did the district-specific information presented in the district-run principal preparation program prepare you to assume the role of principals

Appendix C: Interview Email Invitation

Dear _____

I would like to invite you to take part in a one-on-one interview on (date, time and location) about Principal Preparation in PTPS. The interview should last no longer than one hour. The interview will provide an opportunity for you to share your experience in one or more of the PTPS principal preparation programs.

More background information will be sent once you confirm your attendance. Your views will be used to help me conduct a study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Howard University. I will also share my findings with PTPS district administrators in an effort to make improvements to its district-run principal preparation programs.

If you would like to take part in the one-on-one interview between March 6, 2017 and Thursday, March 9, 2016 please let me know by contacting me at by email at sharon.porter@bison.howard.edu no later than Friday, March 3, 2017.

Appendix D: Focus Group Script

Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to this session. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me about your experience in principal preparation as provided by PTPS. My name is Sharon H. Porter, a Doctoral Candidate at Howard University in the School of Education: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. This research is to fulfill the partial requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education. I will also offer my findings to the district in an effort to make improvements to the existing program.

You will be asked eleven questions regarding your experience and perceptions of the PTPS district-run principal preparation program for my dissertation research. Member checking will be utilized to determine the accuracy of the qualitative finding ensuring participants feel the specific descriptions or themes are accurate. As coordinator of APIP, I acknowledge researcher bias may exist. To minimize the potential impact that bias has on qualitative research, I have solicited the assistance of a recent Doctoral graduate of Howard University, Dr. Tara Lobin, to serve as focus group moderator.

My dissertation topic is Principal Preparation. The results will be used to identify your perceptions of the experience in the PTPS district-run principal preparation programs. Results will be shared with district leadership to support efforts to continuously improve program effectiveness. You were selected because you are a one-

three year principal in PTPS and also participated in one of the district-run principal preparation programs.

There are no right or wrong responses, only differing points of view.

The focus group session will be audio recorded with your permission, so please one person at a time will speak. Recording the session is necessary so no information is missed. You will be on a first name basis for this session, but no names will be used in this report. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

I will now leave you to begin your session.

Focus Group Moderator:

Let us begin. Let's find out more about each other by going around the table telling us your name and the school where you are principal.

You do not need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views. Please keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments and experiences as positive comments and experiences.

Please turn off any electronic device. If you cannot, please place the device on silent. If you must respond to a call, please do quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can.

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

Tell me your name, your school and what you like most about being a principal.

(Opening Question---Not analyzed)

1. What is the first thing to come to mind when you hear the phrase principal preparation (Introductory Question)
2. Describe your experience in relationship to the required activities provided in the district-run principal preparation program. (Introductory Question)
3. Which activities do you feel your district-run principal preparation program prepared you to assume the role of principal? (Transition Question)
4. What learning experiences from your district-run principal preparation program afforded you opportunities to develop you as a leader? (Key Question)
5. How did the principal preparation activities enhance your leadership performance as a principal?
6. What was the most beneficial learning experience in the district-run principal preparation program for you as a new principal? (Key Question)
7. What learning experience would you have liked to participate in the district-run principal preparation program? (Key Question)
8. In what ways did the district-specific information presented in the district-run

principal preparation program prepare your to assume the role of principals (Key Question)

9. Of all the learning experiences mentioned in the previous question, which one do you feel is most important in your role as principal? (Ending Question)
10. Is there any additional information you would like to share that was not covered? (Ending Question)

Appendix F: Focus Group Email Invitation

Dear _____

I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group (small discussion group) on Friday, March 10 at 3:00 PM at Perfect Time Elementary School about Principal Preparation in PTPS. The focus group should last no longer than one and a half hours. The focus group will provide an opportunity for you to share your experience in one or more of the PTPS principal preparation programs.

More background information will be sent to those confirming attendance before the focus group. Your views will be used to help me conduct a study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Howard University. I will also share my findings with PTPS district administrators in an effort to make improvements to its district-run principal preparation programs

If you would like to take part in the focus group on Friday, March 10, 2017 please let me know by contacting me at by email at sharon.porter@bison.howard.edu no later than Tuesday, March 7, 2017.

Appendix G: Open-Ended Survey Email Script

Greetings!

My name is Sharon H. Porter, and I am a doctoral candidate at Howard University. For my dissertation, I am currently conducting research on the perceptions of newly appointed (1st through 3rd year) principals' learning experiences, who participated in one or more of PTPS district-run principal preparation programs (Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP), Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS), Resident Principal Preparation Program (RPPP)).

In emailing you, I hope you, as a newly appointed principal that participated in one or more of the PTPS district-run principal preparation program will consider assisting me in this research by completing a brief confidential and anonymous web-based survey. All participants meeting the research participation criteria was selected to participate in this survey. The survey should not last longer than 15 minutes.

All responses for the survey will remain confidential. Howard University's Institutional Review Board and the PTPS Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation approve this research and adhere to the University and school district's guidelines for research on human subjects.

Thank you for considering this request and I appreciate you considering completing the brief survey. Please be on the lookout for an email with the survey link attached on March 10, 2017.

Sincerely,

Sharon H. Porter
Doctoral Candidate
Howard University
sharon.porter@bison.howard.edu

Appendix H: Open-Ended Survey Questions

1. What was the most meaningful component of the district-run principal preparation program(s) you participated?
2. What was the least meaningful component of the district-run principal preparation program (s) you participated?
3. What were the areas of strength of the district-run principal preparation program you participated?
4. What were the areas of improvement of the district-run principal preparation program you participated?
5. What program elements offered to participants in other district-run principal preparation programs do you believe would have benefitted you?
6. What additional information would you like to add about the district-run principal preparation program you participated?