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# Principals' Perceptions of the Most Important Components in an Effective Principal Preparation Program

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Frank Zavala

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Walden University  
2014

Abstract

Principals' Perceptions of the Most Important Components in an Effective Principal  
Preparation Program

by

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MA, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2004

BA, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2015

## Abstract

Researchers in educational leadership have identified a need to improve principal preparation programs to meet today's educational demands. According to school administrators in the local area, not all leadership preparation programs used the same pedagogies to prepare future leaders, and principals were critical of existing leadership practices. School districts, students, parents, and community stakeholders would benefit from well-prepared administrators who can apply the most effective habits of principalship. The conceptual framework of the study was derived from J. Davis and Jazsar's 7 habits of an effective principal preparation program. For this qualitative case study, 16 principals were interviewed to find out which components of a principal preparation program they thought were the most important or had best prepared them for their positions. Analysis involved open coding, and resulting themes revealed that principals perceived the most important components to be a multisituational internship and extensive experience with school budget/finance. A professional development session was created to share interview responses with policymakers. Principal preparation programs that involve an in-depth internship and practice with school budget and finance could be used to assist policy makers in developing leadership training programs for future principals to improve student and school performance for school districts. This project study could foster social change with greater school success for students, resulting from improvement in leadership preparation programs.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is the result of many hours of research, reflection, writing, and editing. I am thankful for all that I was able to learn and experience during this time. This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and father, without whose support and encouragement I would not have completed the program.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

This doctoral project study was an attempt to identify the most important components of a principal preparation program as perceived by principals working in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (K-12) schools in Texas. In the study, subjects participated in a 12-question interview to find out from principals what they felt were the most important components. The components and principal responses will be shared with policymakers from the Texas Education Agency so that they may review current principal preparation programs around the state of Texas. Section 1 includes the problem, rationale for choosing the problem, special terms associated with the problem, the significance of the problem, the guiding research question, a review of literature, and a brief description of the project.

### **Local Problem**

This study derived from several conversations I had with peer principals at conferences and workshops from around a large city in the southern Texas region. There were 16 different school districts in this city with student populations ranging from 9,000 to 80,000. This area contained urban school districts whose principals felt that their principal preparation programs did not adequately prepare them for the task of being a principal. One district where this research took place was on a side of the city that had a population with a lower socioeconomic status. The district had a population of roughly 10,000, with 97% of the students being of Hispanic ethnicity, and 89% being economically disadvantaged. According to district records administrators criticized the

administrative preparation they had received because it lacked a broader range of topics or situations. Some first-year administrators had serious issues when it came to the inability to motivate teachers and students. These problems could be seen in adequate yearly progress (AYP) reports from schools in this district in a large city in southern Texas, where many students were not meeting state requirements for progress.

In the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years, this particular district missed AYP in math and reading because of various campus scores. According to some principals and district benchmark scores for the 2013-2014 school year, the fall and spring scores showed that the district would once again miss AYP in math and reading, putting them in Stage 3 of not meeting AYP. The stages of AYP vary from Stages 1 through 5, with sanctions that may occur at varying levels. When a district or campus reaches Stage 1, an improvement plan must be developed and the schools must offer students an option to transfer to a campus that meets the AYP requirements. If Stage 2 is reached, tutoring must be offered to the students who come from outside the district, but it must be funded by the district; the tutoring is referred to as *supplemental educational services* by the Texas Education Agency. The tutoring is only offered to the students who attend a school that is in Stage 2. On a campus at Stage 3, a teacher or administrator responsible for not meeting AYP may be terminated, and at the district level after 3 years in Stage 3 the district may be restructured or have someone else administer the affairs of the district. Stage 4 involves giving school choice to students, with the district of the campus that did not meet AYP paying for the students' transportation to and from their school of choice. Stage 5 involves new governance of the school district.

The principals with whom I spoke said that they were ill prepared in leading a school because they lacked onsite training such as an internship, budgetary courses, strategies on how to research posed questions as opposed to answering right away, and extended exposure to curriculum and instruction models and techniques. Consequently, according to Boyland (2011), further research was needed in order to investigate principals' current levels of job-related stress and examine factors that may promote the health and retention of quality individuals in these principal roles. Lashway (2003) indicated that if experienced principals find their jobs to be exhausting and stressful, and most surveys have indicated they do, then it is likely to be even worse for newcomers.

Hollowell (2012) found that problems in educational administration stem from lack of leadership. When looking at AYP, there is data to support a lack of leadership in the schools in southern Texas. A former superintendent in the southern Texas area where this study took place emphasized that the creation of openness in communication also creates the emotional closeness necessary to promote collegiality and collaboration among a staff (personal communication, July 30, 2012). This administrator led a school district with principals of different preparation backgrounds and found some were better prepared than others to take on the role. This administrator also found that working with students and staff to find common ground was a practice that would improve the school climate and lead to a safer school for all (personal communication, July 30, 2012).

### **Larger Educational Setting**

Shared responsibility is a work in progress (Kirsch, 2012); however, the idea is sound because students need to be part of the solution and not just punished as a result of

a procedure. A prevalent problem among today's educational building administrators is the lack of quality preparedness of principals. Some leaders choose not to adequately prepare themselves. Giles (2003) suggested that educational leaders simply choose not to accept the challenge of leading a complex organization with all of its competing demands. There is also not a commitment from the system to provide the resources necessary for them to be successful. Leadership training programs should consider differences in leaders' learning styles and experience when developing content. Vroom (2011) stressed that effective leaders are sensitive to the nuances of their organizations, cultural environments, and short- and long-term objectives . Vroom also emphasized the fact that different kinds of organizations, different kinds of challenges, and different kinds of decisions require different leadership styles. This may result in administrators not understanding the dynamics of a school and not knowing how to monitor and evaluate teachers' instructional approaches.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) created the model for selecting and developing the 21st century principal to reflect the changes in principalship. In this model, Lunenburg and Ornstein used the successes of other models and eliminated those things that had not been effective. By utilizing what works, this model effectively provides an accurate diagnosis for the development of aspiring principals as well as data for making decisions that help to ensure best-fit placement and selection.

As new school administrators begin their positions, they may start to ask themselves if they were prepared to manage the school's everyday operation. They should ask, "Was I prepared enough to make decisions that would enhance the education



of students? Or, was my decision going to cause a dilemma?” As I spoke to other administrators about the same topic, the problem that prompted my study was apparent in conversations with 12 fellow administrators in three school districts; they expressed their concerns that they were not efficiently trained to handle all tasks that need to be accomplished by first-year administrators. I concluded by those concerns that the principals were not satisfied with their preparedness. There are many challenges administrators must face. Accountability, as described by Butler (2008), has put pressure on principals to improve student performance, resulting in school leaders transitioning from a more administrative role to becoming more heavily involved in assessment, instruction, curriculum, and data analysis. Administrative leadership training seems to be lacking a more modern approach to today’s issues and situations that arise in the educational field.

In this ever-changing educational environment, it is difficult to train a leader to be successful. Arlestig (2012) found that what educators know is that it requires more than reading books or attending lectures and seminars about various research findings and how theory can be used. It is not enough to have conversations in which practitioners exchange ideas and experience. The challenge in principal training is to prepare principals who can aptly apply their new knowledge in their everyday work. Problems arise when there is a lack of training. There are skills that a leader should have in this position. R. Harris (2010) indicated that leaders will have to work with teachers to communicate with the districts, school board, and community members about school

improvement, and work with teachers, parents, and community members to build support for their ideas.

An educational leader should attempt to learn skills not covered or taught in preparation programs or the workplace. Research from the Wallace Foundation (2009) found that there were few opportunities for state and district leaders and their teams to come together to consider the intricacies of leadership, take stock of their own leadership abilities, and think more collectively about how state, district, and school policies and actions can be better coordinated to focus on the success of students. Preparation programs will need to meet the needs of today's educators. Unfortunately, some have criticized the quality of these preparation programs. Stewart (2012) indicated that admissions standards are low, clinical training and mentorship are inadequate, and little attention is paid to data or to ways of turning around low performing schools. Stewart (2012) also found that states approve teacher and principal preparation programs without much question and licensing, and certification exams do not measure what is really important. Evidence of the local problem came by word-of-mouth from school principals in the local area. These areas were not made public because of the school district fear of looking bad. Personal communication with those principals showed that they knew what was wrong, but they feared expressing their inadequacies.

### **Rationale**

The Texas Education Agency (2013) changed the standards for passing the state assessment, and the results were released in 2013 with the new ratings. According to the Texas Education Agency (2013) the old ratings included *exemplary*, *recognized*, and

*below expectations*, whereas the new ratings are either *met standard* or *improvement needed*. Six of the 12 principals I had spoken to told me that they had been rated by the state as *improvement needed* because of their test scores, which count toward AYP. The other six principals received a rating of *met standard*, but they said they were also close to not meeting AYP with a rating of *improvement required*.

The principals all spoke of a concern for meeting AYP and avoiding undesirable stages of sanctions that may require state restructuring of the school. This was one of the main reasons they felt that they were not adequately prepared to take on the principal role; they wanted more exposure to AYP through aspects of their principal preparation programs. One principal stated that

if I would have learned more about AYP and techniques to keep my campus meeting standards through an internship or courses taught by experienced principals that would have helped my campus achieve a rating of met standard instead of improvement needed. (personal communication, October 25, 2013)

Another principal stated that “AYP plays a big role in the retention of school leadership so we need more focus on this area. I don’t want to lose my job over something I wasn’t adequately prepared for” (personal communication, October 25, 2013).

Schools can fail to meet AYP in five categories, which are passing rate on the mathematics state exam, passing rate on the reading/language arts state exam, number of students participating in the test, graduation rate, or attendance rate. The percentages that must be met to meet AYP are a passing rate of 87% in reading/language arts on the state assessment, 83% passing rate on the mathematics state assessment, 95% of students

participating in the exam (grade level appropriate), 75% graduation rate, or 90% attendance rate. In 2012, according to the Texas Education Agency, only 28% or 339 school districts in Texas met AYP. If a school does not meet one of the areas, they will fall into Stage 1 of AYP. If the next year they meet AYP, they stay at the same stage of AYP, but if they fail to meet AYP in one of the above mentioned areas, they will fall into the next stage of AYP. Of the 15 school districts in the city in which the study took place (presented in Table 1),

- one district had stayed in Stage 2 for 2 years in a row;
- three districts had moved from Stage 2 to Stage 3 in the areas of math and reading;
- one district had stayed in Stage 3 for 3 years for reading;
- two districts had stayed in Stage 1 for reading and math for 2 years;
- four districts met AYP for 3 years in a row; and
- one district went from Stage 3 to Stage 2 in reading and math.

Table 1

*Focus School Districts and Their AYP Stages from 2010 to 2013*

School District	2010-2011 AYP Stage	2011-2012 AYP Stage	2012-2013 AYP Stage
AD	Met AYP	Met AYP	Met AYP
ECD	Met AYP	Stage 2 Math & Read	Stage 2 Math & Read
ED	Stage 2 Grad & Stage 2 Read	Stage 2 Math & Read	Stage 2 Math & Read
FD	Met AYP	Met AYP	Met AYP
HD	Stage 2 Math & Read	Stage 3 Math & Read	Stage 3 Math & Read
JD	Met AYP	Stage 1 Math & Read	Stage 1 Math & Read
LD	Met AYP	Met AYP	Met AYP
LVD	Met AYP	Met AYP	Met AYP
ND	Met AYP	Stage 1 Math & Read	Stage 1 Math & Read
NID	Met AYP	Stage 1 Math & Read	Stage 1 Math & Read
RD	Met AYP	Met AYP	Met AYP

*(table continues)*

School	2010-2011 AYP Stage	2011-2012 AYP	2012-2013 AYP
District		Stage	Stage
SAD	Stage 2 Math, Read & Grad	Stage 3 Math & Read	Stage 3 Math & Read
SOD	Stage 1 Grad	Stage 1 Math & Read	Stage 1 Math & Read
SSD	Stage 3 Read	Stage 3 Math & Read	Stage 3 Math & Read
SID	Stage 2 Math, Read & Grad	Stage 3 Math & Read	Stage 3 Math & Read
SWD	Stage 3 Math & Grad	Stage 2 Math & Read	Stage 2 Math & Read

### Definitions

The following terms used in this study are defined to assist in identifying and understanding the topic.

*Accountability:* Kauchak and Eggen (2012) defined accountability as a process of making learning objectives explicit and holding both teachers and students responsible for attaining these.

*Alternative school:* Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2014) defined alternative school as an initiative offered in a public school

setting for students who are not being successful and whose needs are not being met in the traditional school setting.

*Autocratic:* Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) defined autocratic as solving the problem or making the decision for oneself by using the information available to you at the present time.

*Consolidation:* Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) defined consolidation as sharing the problem with the relevant subordinate's individually, getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as a group.

*Delegation:* Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) defined delegation as a low-task, low relationship style and is effective when subordinates are very high in ability and motivation. To delegate means to turn over decisions and responsibility for implementing them to staff members.

*Group method:* Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) defined group method as sharing the problem with your subordinates as a group.

*Leadership:* Reiser and Dempsy (2012) defined leadership as being based on three factors: (a) the amount of guidance and direction a leader gives; (b) the amount of socioemotional support a leader provides; and (c) the readiness level followers exhibit in performing a specific task, function or objective.

*School climate:* Hawley (2007) defined school climate as a handful of conditions within the classroom and across the school that have the potential to significantly improve teachers' capacities and with them student learning.

### **Significance of the Problem**

After having personal communication with several school principals, I found that all of them felt that they had not been adequately prepared to take over their respective campuses. There were 16 different school districts in the city where this study took place, ranging in student populations from 9,000 to 80,000. Several thousand teachers, along with the above mentioned students, are affected by hundreds of principals who feel unprepared and are managing hundreds of schools. Those with whom I had personal communication felt that their unpreparedness affected the entire campus. Traditionally, rookie principals have received little support. Because those new principals have completed a university program, school district officials presume they are prepared, and they get little direction beyond bland encouragement or an occasional practical tip. It is important for a principal to develop good leadership traits.

Principal positions are opening as principals retire or move up in rank, which leads to vice principals assuming the principal role and the welcoming of a new vice principal. There have been numerous instances where some of these first-year administrators in this city have made the wrong decisions because they were not prepared for the first day of school in their first administrative position. A study to investigate important components in principal preparation programs was developed to address the need to improve principal preparation.

### **Guiding/Research Question**

Quality preparation of principals' effectiveness is in jeopardy, but it also threatens the success of the school. Past research indicated that principal preparation



programs seemed to be introducing materials and methods that were antiquated and therefore did not meet preparation needs. Butler (2008) indicated that according to a 2006 survey by Public Agenda, a non-profit 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. The question remains, without the proper introduction of leadership skills, how effective can a principal be when encountering different situations in an educational setting? Without the proper preparation, a principal will fall short in guiding a staff to perform to their fullest, and the final and most important outcome will be unsuccessful students leading to an unsuccessful school. Current research must encompass best practices for good leadership skills so that schools will operate appropriately and produce successful students as a final outcome.

The guiding purpose for the study was to find out what components principals thought were important when preparing future principals. According to S. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005), little evidence demonstrated what types of learning opportunities provided by principal preparation programs would enable principals to be more effective in their preparation. Considering the complexity of preparing principals, the guiding research question for this research study was as follows: What do principals feel are the most important components of a principal preparation program?

## Review of the Literature

### Conceptual Foundation

The conceptual framework of this qualitative case study was inspired by J. Davis and Jazzar's (2005) *The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs*. J. Davis and Jazzar concluded that there are seven habits of an effective principal preparation program: (a) curriculum and instructional experiences, (b) clinical learning internships, (c) providing mentors, (d) collaborative experiences, (e) authentic assessment, (f) research-based decision making, and (g) turnkey transitions. Through examination of several preparation programs, the above were seven consistent habits that the authors found made a positive impact on organizational change and workplace productivity. J. Davis and Jazzar claimed that by assimilating the habits into their leadership and management routines, they were more likely to experience a rewarding and productive administrative career.

To explain further, the seven habits presented by J. Davis and Jazzar (2005) include curriculum and instruction to provide relevant, standards-based, and job-embedded curricular and instructional experiences. This habit allows the aspiring principals to learn and share activities related to curriculum and instruction to lead school improvements. Once they learned and shared the activities, the aspiring principals could reflect on how to apply them for their specific school improvements.

Additionally, J. Davis and Jazzar (2005) explained, clinical learning internships allowed aspiring principals to experience relevant and timely learning opportunities by participating in them. These internships were designed to embrace bold, new strategies

and provide realistic experiences beyond descriptive studies. Some programs required candidates to take part in these intensive learning experiences at various sites.

J. Davis and Jazzar (2005) also suggested that mentors who act as coaches, guides, or resource leaders for aspiring principals is integral to all successful preparation programs. They found the key to successful mentors was to have principals who were experienced and could encourage the candidates. The aspiring principals should be encouraged to be candid, critical, and reflective. Additionally, collaborative experiences resulted in internal networking, teamwork, and cooperative initiatives, and J. Davis and Jazzar considered them vital experiences of good principal preparation programs. The authors supported collaboration in learning communities, especially communities with other aspiring principals. The learning communities should also include experienced exemplary principals and university faculty.

Authentic assessment of participants in effective principal preparation programs is no longer based on paper pencil testing. Instead, aspiring principals are asked to write a student discipline letter to a parent, justify budget cuts, develop and defend a portfolio, and provide practical solutions to problems. J. Davis and Jazzar (2005) concluded that sample assessments may include a community relations manual or a new teacher orientation.

Research-based decision making instilled the importance of making decisions based on research rather than impulse or nearsightedness. J. Davis and Jazzar (2005) suggested the aspiring principals be given opportunities to utilize a systematic approach where they gather and analyze data. This data would then be used for school

improvement and student achievement. There should be focus on strong leadership skills, grounded with in-depth knowledge of leadership theory and best practices. These programs produce graduates primed for success in their first principalship. The authors stated the principals should be able to get ready, set, go, and succeed. These four terms should be the intent of an effective principal preparation program.

### **Historical Literature**

**School culture.** Some sources cited here were published more than 5 years prior to this research to emphasize the fact that these issues have existed for quite a number of years. It also demonstrated how these issues have been perceived in past and present principal preparation. Some change in preparation of principals has occurred since the 1990s as seen through the following areas. Bates (1997) indicated that educational organizations and educational administration achieve their ends through the trafficking of culture and knowledge through three main message systems: curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. The role of the administrator should be to supervise, assess, and direct teachers to develop a successful instructional setting for students.

Grogan and Andrews (2002) contended that there was a shift in the way educational leadership was viewed ever since the early 1980s when the education reform movement started. Older models for certifying educational leaders were no longer adequate, and under a new model new educational preparation programs would now be based on more challenging standards (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). The new standards would bring about a new model for educational leadership preparation programs that make the standards rigorous and that prepare future school leaders.

Quality principal preparation includes exposure to contemporary educational culture. This allows the principal to place importance on the need for educational excellence. Retting (2004) stressed that successful principals are those who put learning at the center, set high expectations for students and adults in the school community, implement content and instruction that achieve agreed-upon standards, create a culture of continuous learning, use a variety of diagnostic tools to evaluate instructional improvement, and actively engage the community to support students' success. Hess (2003) stated that "today, however, the administrator is accountable for improving the academic achievement of diverse students, becoming an expert on state standards and benchmarks, and developing new systems for decision making" (p. 25). O'Neill, Fry, and Hill (2003) also noted that, "Redesigning leadership preparation programs does not mean simply rearranging old courses—as staff at some universities and leadership academies are inclined to do" (p. 8). During the redesign, the authors noted that the universities should look at new curriculum, courses, and field-based work in a variety of environments. Redesign would be considered an adaptive change, and to make this change the people involved must change the way they work, their values, and their habits (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). According to McEwan (2003), the redesign would be a reform where those involved would have to find out how to blend theory and practice together. Principals must be able to adapt to the needs of the school's culture and must be able to keep student learning in the forefront.

**Administrative internship/experience.** If the administrator does not have a multichoice experienced background and training, then success will be even more

difficult. In other words, if an administrator is provided the opportunity to make decisions and choices in internship or similar situations, the experience resulting from these should assist in better decision making. Scott and Williams (2003) concluded that educational leadership preparation programs should include practical experiences and an internship at the end, mentors who are adequately trained, and that the internships take place at a variety of settings. Additionally, developing leaders who can promote powerful teaching and learning for students is important to school reform (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2002).

A. Levine (2005) found that the internship usually occurred while the student is still performing tasks for his or her full-time job, and past graduates of the education leadership preparation programs felt that they needed more hands-on experience. Fry, Bottoms, and O'Neill (2005) gave support to A. Levine's findings, saying that the educational leadership preparation programs did not have enough authentic experiences for those who wanted to be school leaders. S. Davis et al. (2005) found that the most important aspect of an educational leadership preparation program should be an internship based on authentic experiences where a student applies all skills, knowledge, and strategies for problem solving that they have learned. Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2010) found that efforts to provide field-based practicum experiences did not consistently provide candidates with a sustained, hands-on internship in which they grappled with the real demands of school leadership under the supervision of a well-qualified mentor.

**Lack of training.** Administrative preparation continues to be an unanswered question in public education. According to a local administrator (personal

communication, July 30, 2012), a lack of high-quality multifaceted administrative training in educational leadership may contribute to mediocre instruction that may lead to inadequate student performance. Appropriate administrative leadership training will lead to a significant and encouraging difference in both teaching and learning.

Standards need to be created so that prospective principals will have a well-rounded exposure to educational administration. DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, and Haycock (2007) noted that experience to date has suggested that in order to get leaders educators want and need in every school, it is not enough just to improve their training. The training is important, but the states and school districts must create standards that spell out clear expectations about what leaders need to know and do to improve instruction and learning. These standards would then form a basis to hold the principals accountable for results.

**Principal preparation programs.** A local administrator stated that, for the most part, there has never been a clear and defining method for including candidates for administrative training (personal communication, October 12, 2013). According to Browne-Ferrigno and Shoho (2004), educators seeking self-selection for educational administrative programs had been the most-used practice. The candidates for education leadership preparation programs chose to go into the programs themselves rather than being chosen by a committee or the programs.

Traditionally, according to Cherey, Davis, Garrett, and Holleran (2010), the processes and standards by which many principal preparation programs screen, select, and graduate candidates often lacks rigor. These programs also do not adequately equip

principals for the multitasking role of being an effective instructional leader.

Administrative preparation is necessary if success in a school's educational setting is to take place. Cherey et al. suggested that a leader will make sure that his or her preparation includes opportunities of success for students and staff. Cherey et al. also found that school leaders are expected to act as committed advocates for educational change that makes a meaningful and positive change in the education and lives of traditionally marginalized and oppressed students. Jeane-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) found that school leaders are potentially the architects and builders of a new social order wherein traditionally disadvantaged peoples have the same educational opportunities, and by extension social opportunities, as traditionally advantaged people.

**Transitioning to the principalship.** School principals need to be able to take what they have learned as teachers and use those skills to become successful administrators. Keaster and Schlinker (2009) suggested that a transformation occurs when individuals enter as teachers, thinking as teachers do, and they graduate as future administrators, thinking as administrators do. The authors proposed that there are three categories of people in leadership programs: the naturals, possibles, and improbables. The first category, the natural group, has learned leadership capacities and has a long desire to have a good impact in schools. The second group, referred to as the possible group, is comprised of less motivated individuals. The interest for the second group may be curiosity rather than active engagement. The last category is the improbable group of individuals. They had no aspiration of being an administrator. This group does the minimum amount of assignments and do not intend to contribute to the school or district.



Some new principals may need extra guidance to improve on their prior experiences to become at least possible.

**Adapting to varying educational settings.** Universities must adapt their administrator training to the ever-changing educational system. Jean-Marie et al. (2009) focused on leadership preparation programs that help schools and their leaders grapple with social justice issues. There is a growing concern that the preparation for school leaders may be problematic and these leaders are not ready to face the pressures and create schools that educate all students. Leadership techniques must be developed so that a positive outcome can occur. As states, districts, and communities placed a tremendous emphasis on student test scores, subgroup performances, and school rankings, administrators must accept challenges from the community that do not necessarily pertain directly to the district or school environment. Principals must be able to arrive at correct decision making when problematic issues are to be engaged. McGarity and Maulding (2007) indicated that administrators must be ready to positively respond to these challenges.

Jean-Marie et al. (2009) explained that expectations are escalating, and leadership preparation programs face fundamental questions in regard to their purposes, visions of excellence, and measures of programmatic quality. Therefore, going into an administrative position and not knowing what to expect may not only cause anxiety, but may cause drastic mistakes. If administrators do not have answers to simple questions, if they are not prepared, if they are quiet and scared, then infractions will most definitely

occur. Leadership styles will affect instructional delivery either positively or negatively, and that will certainly affect student learning.

Principal preparation programs need to change their approach and content to meet today's educational needs. 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. Many educational leaders are taking on the challenge of improving preparation programs for future educational leaders (Black & Bathon, 2007). Black and Bathon (2007) also found that there is a sense of urgency to improve educational leadership preparation programs by looking at how to prepare leaders, shortages of qualified candidates, and the need for the leaders to improve schools. There is a lack of a conscious attempt to bring together knowledge on leadership programs that completely describes the leadership preparation in individual states. Orr (2006) stated that leadership preparation programs at the university level are being reformed to promote high student academic achievement.

Principal preparation programs need to include today's educational requirements. The content of courses offered for educational preparation programs do not keep up with the current needs of the local school districts and students. The educational leadership programs do not provide principals the field-based experience, and they do not have the experience to work with the data, research, and technology that is being used in schools today (Hess & Kelly, 2005; A. Levine, 2005). A. 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. Orr (2006) found that many

educational preparation programs across the country have changed their programs to include input from the local school districts. Minimal improvements have been created and, as Zavadsky (2013) indicated, these effects have only provided sporadic improvements in student achievements. School-level and single-focus reforms ultimately fail because they do not acknowledge the larger school system's role in supporting and creating capacity for the system's lowest performing schools to improve.

Urban school principals are presented with problematic issues that require developing urban principal skills. Winn et al (2009) found that leadership skills of urban principals from schools with the state's highest student academic ratings differed from principals of lower rated urban schools. Special populations produce special needs and the administrator needs to be familiar with successful and positive ideas. Leadership in the area of special education is an ever constant change. The leadership role of principals is crucial for improved education of students with disabilities, yet in recent years, states have moved away from mandating preparation programs to include course work on special education policy, procedures, laws, and practice (Cooner et al., 2005). Crockett, Becker, and Quinn (2009) indicated that the landscape of leadership for special education has changed over the past 40 years in response to legislative and social priorities regarding the inclusion of and outcomes for people with disabilities.

Leadership preparation needs to expand and expose administrators into areas that may benefit from them. Jean-Marie et al. (2009) proposed the need to provide authentic and relevant experiences pertaining to leadership and social justice. It is time to join the conversation on effective leadership preparation and to take seriously the call to work in

support of leadership success and to combat leadership failure for all educational leaders and other leaders in leadership preparation programs across the continents.

Orr (2006) found that the University of Texas at San Antonio had formed a custom district leadership preparation program for schools that were predominately Hispanic and African American. Educational leadership preparation programs should include learning experiences that involve purpose, vision, and that are understandable which connect their school course work to their experience in the field (A. Levine, 2005).

McCarthy and Forsyth (2009) promoted the preparation and practice of educational leaders for the benefit of all children and schools. The preparation and practice would be done by promoting, sponsoring, disseminating research on the essential problems of practice, improving the preparation and professional development of school leaders, and influencing policy and practice through establishing and fostering collaborative networks. Morford (2007) stated, "A new leader may be well prepared, but may not be support and professional development in order to be effective." (p. 78). The four major school districts in San Antonio, Texas, offer administration preparation programs. Having attended the preparation programs in two of these districts I found that they were very similar. The programs brought in people from the district that work mainly with and presented in areas such as testing, discipline, attendance, parental involvement, budget, etc.

There are more areas to consider when looking at an administration preparation program that can prepare the future administrators for all events they will deal with. White and Kochhar-Bryant (2005) found that administrators need to find different ways

to connect with the at-risk students that are in their schools. Authors writing about educational preparation programs focused their attention on the importance of the changing context and complexity in which current and future educational leaders must practice (Fulmer et al., 2007). To know how to be effective, leaders need to pay close attention to both. According to Fry, Bottom, and O'Neill (2005), the internship that educational preparation programs students are required to do can be considered a test on how a possible future school leader may perform.

**Demands for collaboration.** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008) many agencies and state organizations have found that there have been shortages in the amount of qualified, innovative leaders who can lead schools of the future. S. Davis et al. (2005) found that school leadership preparation programs should be research based and provide links between curriculum and field experiences. They also found that cohort models are crucial because they emphasize the development of learning community processes and structures. Additionally they found that most current literature suggests collaboration as a key component in all facets of the leadership program to include university faculty and administrators, state departments of education, school systems as partners, cohort members, and others associated with the program in question

Leadership programs have measured the outcome of the success of their program by surveying graduates which only leads to viewing student satisfaction and employment outcomes for those who completed the programs (Kochan & Locke, 2009). Orr & Barber (2009) found that information from the surveys given to program graduates very often information was not distributed amongst members of the faculty of the programs. A study

by Reames (2010) at Auburn University studied various avenues to look at when redesigning the curriculum of principal preparation programs. Reames (2010) found that using a cohort model allows the students of the program to begin and progress through four semesters. Taking the courses at the same time in the same order allows the students to share experiences as well as support and encourage one another along the way. It is also beneficial that the students are able to share the experiences from the different school districts that they work in. Reames (2010) found that team teaching is also widely used in educational leadership programs. Team teaching allows for the leadership program faculty, mentors or supervisors, and guest lecturers to teach. The semester that the students are in and the content of the course would be used to decide which faculty or lecturers to utilize.

**Use of clinical supervisors.** Reames (2010) found that Auburn utilized clinical supervisors in the leadership preparation program. A clinical supervisor would arrange and oversee the student's internship, teach courses when needed, and coordinate a summer leadership institute. The clinical supervisor would also serve as a mentor for the students throughout their program. This practice allows for immediate guidance and assistance to the students during the program. Hanson and Moir (2008) found that the mentoring began with clinical supervision, but the different types of program delivery allowed for multiple opportunities for the students to be mentored. Another avenue found by Reames (2010) was field based coaches. These field based coaches are experts in the field of education and work in various positions in education. The coaches act as models for the students of the program because they are respected members of the educational

community as well as having been successful in improving schools. Hall (2008) concluded that field-based coaches are experts to support and guide the leadership program students as they participate in realistic experiences meant to improve school performance and student achievement.

**Demands of preparation programs.** Butler (2008) found that principal preparation programs focus on everything from “emotional intelligence issues and classroom walkthroughs to data analysis and team building” (p. 1). Butler (2008) also found that there are numerous principal training programs that focus on the instructional leadership role principals assume during the pressure of accountability to increase student achievement. Principal preparation programs failed to prepare the candidates to be instructional leaders and it especially did not prepare them to be instructional leaders for students with disabilities (McHaton, Boyer, Shaunessy, & Terry, 2010). Acker-Hocevar and Cruz-Janzen (2008) explained that school districts face pressure in raising students’ academic performance, but the principals of the schools have their pressure increasing with challenges in instructional leadership particularly with students who have disabilities.

Angelle and Bilton (2009) found that for a principal to perform effectively as an instructional leader then principal preparation programs must ensure that the students in the programs are equipped with special education knowledge. The authors supported that principal preparation programs need to move from a theoretical approach to a functional approach so that the students can serve as effective instructional leaders and also pointed out numerous studies that reported the need to alter principal preparation programs so

that they may address the principals need to be an instructional leader. Zaretsky, Moreau, and Faircloth (2008) concluded that principal preparation programs help bridge the research to practice gap by reforming the emphasis of the principal preparation programs and suggested that the principal preparation programs include examples and case studies into their courses. The United States Department of Education (2010) reiterated that principals are accountable for the performance of their schools and consequences for low performing schools would be more severe to include replacing the principal or even closing the school for poor performance.

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration focused on two major goals in an effort to evolve educational leaders (Green, 2005). Those two goals are 1) the development and implementation of common and higher standards for the licensure of school principals and 2) the development and implementation of common guidelines for national accreditation of administrator preparation programs. The standards set by this board represent different thoughts brought together by educators with reference to the skills and knowledge needed for success.

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. 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.



*Research Alert* (2013) reported that individual states approve their own principal preparation programs, make up the standards for receiving a principal certificate, and can track how well principals perform in their roles. Metlife (2013) found 28 states reported that neither the state nor the principal preparation programs are required to collect data on the program graduates in any area such as hiring of graduates, impact on student achievement or the evaluations of the graduates as principals. University preparation programs are under pressure to ensure that their programs are aligned with the realities of the job of a principal and school district superintendents are finding themselves in the situation of having a lack of skilled candidates who are effective leaders (Williams and Szal, 2011).

Briggs, Cheney, Davis and Moll (2013) reported recommendations for states to make on preparation programs and they are:

- use more rigorous program approval standards, track outcome data, and hold programs accountable for their graduates' performance;
- shut down ineffective programs and reward programs that show exemplary performance;
- use performance-based assessments, as opposed to such inputs as years of teaching and academic degrees, when granting initial licenses to principals;
- base principal license renewal decisions on job performance; and
- further invest in statewide longitudinal data systems that will enable states to track principals as they move from preparation to licensure to school leadership positions.

Hassenpflug (2011) reported that for many preparation programs faculty members have created principal assessments, but they also have neglected other important components even though there is not data to show whether these assessments will help the candidates be better leaders. Roewe (2013) found over half of the states in the country utilized elements of research such as recruiting teachers, helping teachers develop, ensuring instruction is data driven, and ensuring a positive school climate. Roewe (2013) reported that the Alliance to Reform Educational Leadership network will implement nine of the best practices into the preparation programs which include a thorough selection process for candidates, coursework, leadership opportunities, support from principals for recent program graduates, and a self-evaluation for those who have completed the program.

Aarons (2010a) found that principal preparation programs are outdated in relation to what modern leaders need to be successful in their schools and that aspiring principals need opportunities to learn from their mistakes when leading others. The preparation programs must also provide continuous supports to the candidates as they assume their new roles and become established in their role. Expertise in leadership and roles in assisting to improve student achievement would allow them to in fact improve student achievement (Goldring et al., 2009). The principals expertise would be based on their prior experience, training, professional development. Delaware has a state leadership project which is 14 months long which prepares principals using a problem based curriculum and a residency under the supervision of an experienced principal, suggesting

that that traditional preparation programs are not researched based and do not require the candidates to do the job well in their residency (Samuels, 2011).

Buskey and Pitts (2009) found that many leadership programs train future principals to do their jobs with the thinking that they are the most important person in the school and that changes should come only from the top. The authors also found that principals go into their schools to find a campus culture which is solely focused on test scores. The principal must be the instructional leader as well as the campus leader.

Keaster and Schlinker (2009) found that if the administration/leadership program and commensurate professional experiences work together effectively, the graduate students will progressively mature in their perception of the principal's position. This style of administrative training is most constructive. It may also prevent first year administrators from imitating tenured administrators. First year administrators may now be aware that students, staff, and community may be totally diverse and what works with the tenured administrator may not work with them. Situations both good and problematic will unfold for first year administrators and they should be well rounded in practices that will address those situations.

**First year principals.** Educational leadership requires an administrator to continually monitor and evaluate all data. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) indicated one method that has been used to identify and develop leaders is an assessment center, a technique that used a number of traits and skills to assess a person's suitability for being hired and promoted. Goldring and Schuermann (2009) found that accountability had increased the visibility and responsibility of educational leaders; no longer is it possible

for leaders to maintain or merely manage educational systems or focus on non-educational outcomes, such as facilities and transportation.

Williams and Szal (2011) reported their findings which included that rookie principals tend to feel overwhelmed when they are required to multitask and they have found the job is not always neat and orderly. The rookie principals came to the conclusion that leadership requires much problem solving as well as decision making. Authentic learning has to be created in preparation programs to prepare the candidates for their future roles as principals. Assessment is also a way to revise the practice of the preparation programs as well as to authenticate the learning experience. They also found that evaluating the students' knowledge and skills would be essential to a preparation program. For example, Williams and Szal (2011) found that in Washington all students in a preparation program must complete an internship where they demonstrate that they have been successful in the ISLLC standards.

Sergiovanni (2005) stated the Stevenson High School experience, as explained in the following sentences, suggests that to get smarter schools and smarter students, leaders everywhere in a school system need to pay attention to the following four principles for organizing: the principle of cooperation, the principle of empowerment, the principle of responsibility, and the principle of accountability. Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois allowed prospective teachers to visit the school and observe teachers and their classrooms. The director did a second interview giving the prospective teachers material to read in preparation. The interview was done with a panel of the school's teachers. The director also observed the prospective teachers actually teach a

lesson. This type of format would allow for incoming administrators to be familiar with needs, and politics involved in that particular school, district, and community. By addressing these issues a new administrator might be able to have a good understanding of the school's culture.

It is common knowledge that first year administrators experience a variety of feelings. Green (2009) stated that as a principal, you know you have to deal with students, faculty, guidance counseling, school aides, secretaries, and building support teams such as custodial and cafeteria workers and the school nurse; however, the job does not end inside the school walls. The principal is also an integral part of the community dealing with parents, civic organizations, local businesses, and cultural institutions. These feelings can be anything from ecstasy to anxiety. Education and its leadership seem to want positive change.

Some administrators find their first year a difficult one because of their lack of training. For example, Keaster and Schlinker (2009) indicated that if properly designed and implemented; administration/leadership programs help graduate students learn about the importance of meeting the needs of school employees and the students in their charge. According to Keaster and Schlinker (2009) educators who enter administrative/leadership preparation programs undergo an interesting transformation. Prior to their entry into the program, many of these teachers think that the principal's main job is just to manage the building so that teaching and learning can take place.

First year administrators must be able to think fast and make split second decisions once they have done proper investigations and checked district protocol based

on factual information, therefore, proper preparation for the world of administration is important in a university and the local school setting. If this does not occur then instruction and learning may suffer and an unsuccessful school may present itself. Instruction must be monitored constantly so that success can take place. Lack of good preparation may result in a new administrator's lack of knowledge in teacher observation and remediation. The result could lead to unproductive learning by students. An ill-prepared administrator may have a lack of support by the staff and community and that may lead to deficiency in learning.

**Leadership.** Toxic leadership can destroy an organization with deception and hidden agendas. Lacida (2012) found that toxic leadership is brought about by the lack of self awareness, lack of self control and confidence, all of which are seeded by self interest. As a result, a toxic leader's subordinates do not like them. Toxic leaders care all about themselves, and they only think of their own feelings and disregard those of others. There are also good leaders who exhibit good leadership traits. Farrell (2011) indicated that great leaders are aware of their own style and make the effort to learn how their style actually comes across to their team. They learn to flex their leadership style to individual team member so that they communicate and behave in ways that motivate and inspire.

Quin (2005) noted that today's successful leaders are those who support and expect a positive learning environment whereas in the past educational leaders focused on having safe and organized schools. Effective leaders must also be good managers. Fayol (2008) identified the importance through the following principles of management:

- division of work: work should be divided among individuals and groups to ensure that effort and attention are focused on special portions of the task;
- authority: the concepts of authority and responsibility are closely related;
- discipline: a successful organization requires the common effort of workers;
- unity of command: workers should receive orders from only one manager;
- unity of direction: the entire organization should be moving towards a common objective in a common direction;
- subordination of Individual Interests to the General Interests: the interests of one person should not take priority over the interests of the organization;
- remuneration: many variables, such as cost of living, supply of qualified personnel, general business conditions, and success of the business should be considered in determining pay;
- centralization: lowering the importance of the subordinate role;
- scalar chain: part of a chain like authority scale;
- order: for the sake of efficiency and coordination all materials and people related to a specific kind of work should be treated as equally as possible;
- equity: all employees should be treated as equally as possible;
- stability of tenure of personnel: retaining productive employees should always be a high priority of management;
- initiative: management should take steps to encourage worker initiative; and
- esprit De Corps: management should encourage harmony and general good feelings among employees.

Schools deemed highly effective can provide important leadership information. Principals of highly effective schools identified instructional leadership, organizational development and the change process, as well as oral and written communication as essential characteristics of effective leadership programs (Petzko, 2005). Least important were theory, research methods, and school board relations. Greenlee (2007) said that the needs for reform in education have increased the expectations for school leaders to deal with issues in the schools. Leadership preparation programs must educate future leaders at how to deal with these issues. Administrative leadership shortages have been projected and are a concern although quality continues to be a very important concern in preparing school leaders. Both quality and quantity must be addressed at the same time. There are concerns about the effectiveness of administrative preparation programs that lead to student achievement as accountability continues to increase.

Principals have different styles when making decisions and that in itself may engage or disengage the teaching staff. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) believed that a leader's personal traits and characteristics probably influence his/her leadership behavior or style. For example, an individual who feels adequate and feels comfortable with people will ordinarily adopt a people oriented behavior style. On the contrary, a person who feels inadequate and feels threatened by people will probably adopt a production-oriented behavior style. Good leadership is a prime ingredient in developing a school's culture.

Leadership as Sergiovanni (2005) indicated be it bubbling up or trickling down is always based on some source of authority. Sometimes this authority comes from one's



role and the obligations and the responsibilities it entails. Sometimes this authority comes from one's ability to help others achieve their purposes. School leaders must take the initiative and work towards improving instruction and learning by being better prepared in those areas. Leaders of today should be flexible and willing to accept new and innovative ideas. Goldring and Schuermann (2009) explored the changing context of school leadership in our nation, a context that requires educational leaders who are skilled and knowledgeable with a new set of dispositions to lead complex, diverse, and innovative institutions. Administrators usually come from the teaching field with a wealth of instructional knowledge, but lack in administrative experience. Graduate students will enter an administrator preparation program possessing certain perspectives on schooling shaped by their experience as a teacher (Keaster & Schlinker, 2009). As the course work progresses there is a gradual, yet persistent, transformation that takes place in not only the perspective of the student, but also in the subsequent attitudes and verbal expressions offered by the student both inside and outside the classroom. By the end of the program, the conversion is nearly complete the student now thinks more like an administrator, uses more school-wide oriented vocabulary, and contributes to the improvement in the school in a way that was not evident before.

Leaders may begin to formulate thoughts and ideas by reading journals containing recent studies. Leaders must also be careful and sort carefully through this information. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) have examined a number of key issues and challenges for any author, editor, reviewer, and/or political and contested arena each participant occupies. Increasingly, the academic journal is subject to decisions regarding

its quality or impact and we have suggested that this has the potential to confine knowledge production in the field to what counts.

Leaders must be able to formulate their own policies. They must be able to set goals and formulate school needs. Seashore (2009) was convinced that until educational researchers and policy makers find the levers for change that already exist within schools and district as organizations, school improvement will continue to be a haphazard affair. Administrators usually distinguish themselves as leaders or non-leaders. Good leadership begins with the administrator while there are techniques and skills to learn. A good leader will take the initiative and succeed. Even in earlier years leaders have not changed much; for example, B.M. Harris (1963) characterized leaders as more accepting of responsibility, less defensive, more tactful, more able to handle hostility, and more democratic. Today's leaders, according to Elias (2011) must have a sense of purpose, justice, temperance, respect, empowerment, courage and deep commitment.

Kidd (2013) stated that an administrator's role is the interpreter, facilitator, and indicator of educational change. The educational leaders must understand and interpret changes to assure the safety and operations of schools. As a facilitator the administrator must effectively implement programs mandated by the school board and support positive changes by the students, staff, or parents. As an indicator of change the administrator must lead the process of continuous school improvement. Morrison (2005) stated that there are many school districts which have support programs for new administrators, but these support programs are not always a "safe place" to get the support new administrators need. These programs may not be safe places because Superintendents or

Leadership Executive directors may be present therefore not allowing new administrators to fully talk about the real problems or concerns they may have at their campus. Morrison (2005) also found that school districts should match new administrators with mentors or other leaders they can create a bond with and have a support system available.

Educational leaders also need to be able to examine the culture in schools. Current time demands leadership that cannot only manage, but provide a culture conducive to learning. Teachers must feel as part of a unit that belongs and is appreciated. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) identified an organization's culture as containing the following characteristics:

- observed behavioral regularities - when organizational members interact, they use common language, terminology, and rituals and ceremonies related to deference and demeanor;
- norms- standards of behavior evolve in work groups, such as “a fair days work for a fair days pay”;
- dominant values- an organization espouses and expects its members to share major values;
- philosophy- policies guide an organizations beliefs about how employees and clients are treated;
- rules- guidelines exist for getting along in the organization or the “ropes” that a new comer must learn in order to become an accepted member; and

- feelings- this is an overall atmosphere that is conveyed in an organization by the physical layout and the way in which members interact with clients or other outsiders (p. 69 ).

S.H. Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) stated that principals are being held accountable for the growth in student achievement, closing of achievement gaps, lowering dropout rates, and increasing college readiness. Not all states have clearly aligned professional standards with principal preparation programs. S.H. Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) found that recent research about principals and their impact on teaching and learning has contributed to the conversation about program effectiveness. The research done by S.H. Davis and Darling-Hammond brought to light the specific leadership behaviors and actions that are important for learning to thrive. Orr and Orphanos (2011) found that design components of effective principal preparation programs are well known, but less is known on the impact of innovative programs on principal behavior and how those behaviors influence teachers and student learning. Educational researchers are now ready to move past investigating the relationship between leader behavior and organizational processes towards the alignment of program features, leadership behaviors, and organizational outcomes (Meyer & Dokumaci, 2011).

School leadership should be one and the same with student learning with new examples of school leadership focusing on student success as the most important goal. Green (2010) stated that school leaders can no longer only be managers they have to be academically strong while creating environments of trust as well as investigational cultures. Our school leaders should be models for what they want the teachers and

students to do and their leadership preparation should do the same (Reames, 2010). Green (2010) found that the efforts to educate future leaders with school improvement and student achievement as the focus of their work is having positive effects in classrooms and schools. The South Regional Board of Education (2007) concluded that the most important objective of redesigning the principal preparation program was to guarantee that principals ensured every student would learn, be successful in school, and be prepared to live a productive life beyond high school. A university graduate school is the key avenue for preparing future principals for school leadership positions around the nation (Young & Brewer, 2008).

According to Luneburg and Ornstein (2008) an assessment of the following eight factors followed by their variables identified potential managers:

- general effectiveness- Overall staff prediction, decision making, organization and planning, creativity, need for advancement, resistance to stress, and human relation skills:
- administrative skills- Organization and planning and decision making:
- interpersonal skills- Human relations skills. Behavior flexibility and personal impact:
- control of feelings- Tolerance of uncertainty and resistance to stress:
- intellectual ability- Scholastic aptitude and range of interests:
- work-oriented motivation- Primacy of work and inner work standards:
- passivity- Ability to delay gratification, need for security, need for advancement: and

- dependency- Need for superior's approval, need for peer approval, and goal flexibility (p. 122 ).

Keaster and Schlinker (2009) found that if the administration/leadership program and commensurate professional experiences work together efficiently, the graduate students will progressively mature in their perception of the principal's position.

According to Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), it takes leadership inside communities to keep questioning the status quo, see what is possible in a domain, connect the people who care about it, and help develop an effective practice together. Finally, it takes organizational leadership to provide an environment that is both supportive and challenging. Blankstein (2004) indicated that the most effective school leaders are able to collaboratively create and sustain challenges that continually enhance student achievement. They display the following three characteristics:

- They start by building in themselves and others the Courageous Leadership Imperative, focused on sustaining success for all students, creating a culture in which failure is not an option.
- They work collectively with all staff to assume the resources and support necessary to bring about this mission of achievement for all students.
- They do this with a long term view of sustainability so that internal capacity will thrive and enhance student outcomes, even in the face of external threats and their own departure. The above definition of leadership allows for the development of leaders at every level of the organization.

**Changing principal role.** A principal's role has changed from earlier years and the preparation must include being open-minded to new ideas. Lashway (2003) found that first, the principal's role is increasingly being defined in terms of instructional leadership, a concept that first surfaced in the 1980s, but that has a very different meaning today. The instructional leader of the 1980s was presented as an efficient; task oriented, top-down manager, albeit one who was focused on curriculum and instruction rather than buildings and budgets. Today's ideal instructional leader is portrayed as a democratic, community-minded leader who builds consensus around a vision rooted in agreed-upon standards for student learning, with a commitment to be accountable for results. First year administrators come into a position with one of these two feelings, ready to go or with apprehension.

**Collaboration.** Halawah (2005) found that creating a collaborative environment and open communication is a critical factor for successful school improvement. Expectations for principals are many. Therefore, principals must prepare with a flexible leadership style allowing for unexpected needs. Seashore Louis et al (2010) concluded that the principal's impact on student achievement is motivated by his or her ability to create collaboration among the school's resources including financial, material, human and educational processes.

Administrators must work hard to find the right formula to improve the overall school climate. Rhodes, Camic, Milburn, and Lowe (2009) found that a collaborative school based intervention aimed at modifying relationships among administrators and teachers was implemented and that teachers were active in identifying problems and

implementing interventions. This led to an improvement in the school climate. Rural principals differ in that they encounter different obstacles and resources with which to maintain student instructional performance. Geographically isolated and burdened with greater responsibilities, rural administrators may require different knowledge and skills than their urban and suburban counterparts (Winn, Erwin, Gentry, & Cauble, 2009). Principals actively work at improving themselves, but due to the breadth of their duties are not able to attend national conferences or many state conferences. They perceive that they are instructional leaders, but also admit that general managerial tasks consume a great portion of their time. They ideally would like to take other approaches, but often appear to get bogged down in daily tasks of teaching, managing, attending events, and disciplining. They, perhaps more than the urban principal are often overwhelmed by a multitude of tasks.

The climate and culture of a school is important and must be understood by a new administrator. Cohen et al. (2009) found that school climate is more than individual experience: It is a group phenomenon that is larger than any one person's experience. Administrators need to communicate and make sure that communication was understood. Collaboration can solidify relationships between administrators and teachers. Rhodes et al (2009) suggested that teacher perceptions of school climate improved after a collaborative intervention program was implemented. They also suggested that these improvements mediated the impact of treatment on teacher reports of affliction and academic focus through a collaborative program.



**Accountability.** Educational policy makers must provide the positive leadership needed in today's principal preparation programs. Trends in politics and policy influence school administrators and the programs that prepare them (Adams & Copeland, 2005). This comes as a response to policymakers and educational stakeholders having an increased concern over the quality of education at both the district and campus level. It would include administrator education, license, and on-going professional development. Improving standards and staying current would be a plus for education. Roach (2006) found that if administrators stay current with professional development there will be differentiation in staffing among campus as well as district administrators. The ongoing professional development will then lead these administrators to evolve standards for incoming administrators.

Green (2010) found that school improvement has become the focus of school leadership preparation and practice. Accountability measures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as NCLB, are helping redefine school leadership as instructional leadership. Green (2010) stated that leadership for school improvement includes being able to create a vision for learning that is accepted by all stakeholders, creating communities of learners, ensuring that student and adult learning is the center focus, having high expectations for students and staff, being an advocate for students, and involving community stakeholders in the educational process of the school. Green (2010) additionally found that today's school leaders must be up to date in pedagogy practices and curriculum design, know how to analyze data, and know how to create and uphold professional learning cultures. Leaders find models to guide their school towards what needs to be done to make it more

effective (Kowalski, Lasley, & Mahoney, 2008). Making the school more effective usually involves elements such as: results-driven goals, data driven decision making, instruction connected to learning, professional development, learning in the organization, and developing collaborative teams.

The National Governors Association (2011) concluded that the effectiveness of a principal has an impact on both teachers and students. Principals who are effective improve student performance as well as retain their teachers. The schools that are in dire need for a well-trained, well-prepared, and thoroughly evaluated principal are schools who are regularly low performing schools. Leithwood (2004) found that student learning is affected by two factors, one is teacher effectiveness, and the other is principal effectiveness. The National Governors Association (2011) stated that the standards set by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) define what an effective principal should know and be able to do. The ISLLC standards are the most widely used and accepted set of standards for determining whether or not a principal is effective.

Effective school principals are vital to improving student learning in low-performing schools: all positive school turnarounds included an effective leader (Hirsch & Church, 2009). Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2009) stated that having experience is important to leading a school, but most low performing schools are led by principals who are inexperienced and have very little effectiveness: principals who are effective have worked to institute school cultures that contribute to improving instruction by creating positive working conditions for teachers.

A principal is no longer just a building manager, but must be an instructional leader who can assist teachers to grow and monitor their progress (Briggs, Davis, & Cheney, 2012). A teacher's impact is with one class where a principal's impact lies within the entire school. Briggs et al. (2012) concluded that student achievement is impacted by the quality of the principal and that most preparation programs do not properly recruit and screen candidates, much of the course work is outdated, candidates are not afforded the real life hands on approach, and there is no way to ensure program graduates are successful in their careers. Briggs et al. (2012) also found that about 50 percent of principals leave the job within the first five years and greater percentage of that coming during their first three years.

Educational settings no longer have a need for a military approach, but need a broader mindset. School administration for years has followed strict guidelines that have been changing slowly. Rettig (2004) thought that at the beginning of the Industrial Age, businesses organized their burgeoning systems using military counterparts for examples, and public schools soon followed suit. That model called "classical organizational thought" or "scientific management" remains the predominant feature of our school system today. The educational needs in today's schools have changed and administration needs to change with it.

### **Implications**

Based on this qualitative case study it is anticipated that the principal interview responses may assist policy makers in developing leadership training programs that will benefit future principals to be successful school leaders. The study could also influence

ongoing training for present principals. With these professional development changes administrators may be better prepared to lead staff, students, and community to a successful outcome.

### **Summary**

The rationale for this case study comes from the principals' concerns of not being prepared as well as not being able to meet AYP because they were not properly prepared to do so in their new role. The literature for this case study involved the areas of school culture, administrative experience, lack of training, principal preparation programs, first year principals, leadership, collaboration, and accountability. The literature gives substance to the problem of principals not being adequately prepared for their role. The next section will include the methodology, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

The literature discussion indicated that mentorships seem to be an important part of the leadership experience. Research-based decisions and strong leadership skills may produce successful leaders. The role of the administrator has changed and the older educational preparation models should become more challenging and based on specific standards. An administrator's style of leadership affects the schools climate thus the leader must be able to read the school's setting. Successful administrators set high expectations and place instruction in the forefront. Redesigning principal preparation programs means changing the approach. Most importantly leadership affects student learning.

Lack of multifaceted training may lead to average instruction. Leadership candidates seem to select the preparation programs without being selected. It is

recommended that higher standards be set for preparation programs. Accountability seems to promote successful administrators. It is recommended that universities change their preparation programs with the changing educational needs. A collaborative environment and communication seems to be critical for success. Professional development must change to meet the various academic needs of students and the instructional success of schools.

It is important to note that successful administrators see instructional leadership, organizational development, change process, and communication as important characteristics in principal preparation programs. Programs should include vision, purpose, and coherence. Rural and urban school district administrators find themselves dealing with different problematic issues including special population needs. Administrator's personal traits also influence instructional outcome from teachers and students. One who feels adequate will probably do better than one who feels inadequate. Leaders must also be flexible, accept new ideas, and preparation needs to expand into other areas of benefit. Preparation programs at the university level are being reformed to meet today's educational needs. Research indicates that a more hands-on experience is needed based on authenticity.

Effective leaders view the school's culture as conducive to learning in a positive culture. Staff members can be made to feel as part of the unit. School leadership is being able to create a vision for learning which is accepted by all stakeholders. A leader must be able to utilize data and connect the data to staff development needs. A cohort approach to leadership training was found to be positive as a team approach with individual

support. It was also found that principal preparation programs did not provide an approach for students with disabilities. Changes in policy need to occur in principal preparation programs. No longer just a building manager a principal must be an instructional leader. Principal preparation programs have out dated course work and cannot guarantee administrator success. Effective school leaders are able to collaboratively enhance student achievement. Based on this study's interview responses principal preparation programs may benefit greatly if necessary changes occur and a more well-rounded exposure to principal needs takes place.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

This study was a qualitative case study. According to Merriam (2002), a researcher uses qualitative research to understand unique situations and factors affected in those situations, such as participants and how they view the world at a particular point in time. Merriam (2002) stated characteristics of qualitative research include researchers trying to understand the meaning of the world that participants have constructed; as far as data are concerned; the researcher collects and analyzes all data, and the data gathered help researchers to develop a hypothesis. Creswell (2007) noted that “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). This qualitative case study allowed me to inquire about principals’ preparation experiences and their thoughts about what preparation should include because they, participants, have had the time to construct understanding and meaning from their experiences. The understanding and meanings from the participants then allowed me to answer the guiding question; the feedback was invaluable from the participants in providing suggestions to present to policymakers for an improved principal preparation program.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and analyze data inductively to establish patterns or themes. Qualitative researchers set up the inquiry strategically. Marshall and Ross (1995) suggested that

qualitative research is designed to (a) understand processes; (b) describe poorly understood phenomena; (c) understand differences between stated and implemented policies or theories; and (d) discover unspecified contextual variables. Creswell (2013) indicated the process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants' settings, inductive data analysis building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

The researcher should be able to gather data from the participants in their natural environment. Creswell (2007) also stressed that the researcher is the key instrument at gathering data for the study rather than relying on other researchers. Qualitative research is appropriate to use when "a problem or issue needs to be explored" (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is utilized to let participants share their stories and to allow the interaction to be less of an overpowering experience between the researcher and the participant. The participants in my study were allowed to express their concerns and experiences using a comfortable method.

Case studies are "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). Creswell (2007) proposed that a case study looks into an issue and explores it through one or more participants within a certain setting. According to Creswell (2007), some case studies may generate theories, some case studies may just be simple case descriptions, and others may be more analytical to where they cross with another case or end up being a comparison. Saint-Germain (2014) found that qualitative research is aimed



at gaining a deep understanding of a specific organization or event, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population. It aims to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants. Maxwell (2005) viewed qualitative studies as having four main components:

- the research relationships that one establishes with his or her study;
- site and participant selection: what settings or individuals one selects to observe or interview, and what other sources of information one decides to use;
- data collection: how one gathers the information one will use; and
- data analysis: what one does with this information in order to make sense of it.

Obtaining data requires the researcher to process the information to formulate specific reasons that make sense. Interviewing was a vital part of this project study.

Janesick (2004) explained that interviewing is a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic. Janesick noted that the role of the qualitative researcher in research projects is often determined by the researcher's stance and intent, much like a historian.

Yin (2003) explained that the need for case study arose out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, a case study allows investigators to focus on a case and retain a holistic and real-world perspective. Any other research design would not allow for the researcher to obtain responses from the participants that are constructed from their experiences, understandings, and meanings. Quantitative studies

place emphasis on numerical representation. Often, quantitative studies create numerical data based on the number of people who agree with certain statements. I was interested in collecting individual statements of principals about how they viewed quality principal preparation programs; numbers would not reveal emerging ideas, but qualitative interviews would, which is why a qualitative study in this project was the best approach to obtain desired data. Asking the participants about the seven habits of an effective principal preparation program (J. Davis & Jazsar, 2005) was a way to find out which habits they felt were most important. This process shed light on what the principals perceived to be most important to support a successful program. The purpose for the study involved finding out which habits the participants perceived as being the most important for preparation programs.

Other qualitative methods such as narrative, ethnography, and short-term observation were not appropriate for this study. Constable et al. (2012) suggested that narrative inquiry includes field notes, interviews, journals, letters, autobiographies, and orally told stories. The researcher takes notes, journal entries, interviews, and constructs a narrative of the study creating a story. A narrative is how people observe humanity. The research in a narrative is done through storytelling. A narrative, therefore, was not appropriate for this case study.

Constable et al. (2012) also suggested that ethnography is a long-term investigation of a culture based on participation in that group or culture. It is a detailed study of the group's activity. Ethnography research should conclude with a complete understanding of a group or culture. In this case study, the objective was not to

understand a culture, but to review data that would take into account the views of the participants. Additionally, Constable et al. (2012) found that short-term observation is based on recorded observations. They focus more narrowly on specified categories of group behavior. A short-term observation would not be appropriate because my study was not on group behavior.

### **Participants**

The participants were selected based on their position in the field of education, and in this study that position was a public school principal. A purposeful sample of principals was used for this study. The principals were selected from elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and alternative schools in one area of Texas.

Creswell (2007) noted that the concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the researcher selects participants and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study. The participants were 16 school principals who varied from both the elementary and secondary levels, all of whom had varying years of experience as principals. The participants were from the 16 different school districts around a large metropolitan area in Texas. There was one principal from each school district participating in the study. Including a principal from each school district allowed for broad and varied coverage because student populations and district locations varied in different socioeconomic areas of the city. The principals were concerned about AYP and student progress, and this would be a plan to address those issues.

Authorization to perform this case study was required from Walden University Institutional Review Board and the participating school principals. The Walden University IRB arrival number was 05-20-14-0039233. All of the principals received a request to take part in this case study through a verbal conversation so that no e-mails were sent to their work computers, and they were made aware participation was strictly voluntary. This project design best suited the participants because it kept their identities confidential from any supervisor they may have in their respective school districts. All notes and recordings were kept under lock and key with only me having access to them.

I met the principal participants through networking, meeting at professional developments, and from personal encounters. Each principal was contacted through email to contact me through their personal emails so that the information pertaining to the interview would not be district property through their emails. Once each participant had emailed me to find out about the study, the specific interview times, locations, confidentiality guarantees and questions were explained to each participant.

### **Researcher and Participants' Working Relationship**

I am presently a coordinator for specials needs in southwestern Texas. My undertaking in this case study was to perform the case study research in 16 school districts in the area. My plan was to set up an appointment with each principal who may be interested in participating in the study. An explanation of my case study was given to each one. During the meetings I cleared up any questions participants had about the study. Those who choose to participate signed an agreement form.

### **Ethical Protections**

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form which acknowledges that their identities and responses will not be revealed now or in the future and that no data can be traced to identify them. The data will be protected and kept in confidence and will only be used for the research case study for Walden University. The participants were told that any information collected as data will not be shared with the participants' supervisors and will be stored in a password protected USB flash drive with no identifiers.

### **Data Collection**

In my triangulation strategy I collected data through interviews. The interviews allowed for comparative results in the responses. It takes into account the fairness of participant views. Shuttleworth (2008) defined research to include any gathering of data, information, and facts for the advancement of knowledge. The strict definition of scientific research is performing a methodical study in order to prove a hypothesis or answer a specific question. Shuttleworth also found that scientific research must be organized and undergo planning, include performing literature reviews of past research, and evaluating what questions need to be answered. The data collected from the interviews enabled me to develop a rich study of principals' ideas about good preparation. While I was careful not to be judgmental I did see similarities in participant needs and recommendations.

Fifteen principals were asked in person to participate in this study. The participants were interviewed at times where their schedules allowed them to be off

campus or on campus which was their decision to honor confidentiality. The questions in the interview were derived from *The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs* by J. Davis and Jazzar (2005). The goal of the study was to find out what principals describe are the most important components of an effective principal preparation program. I went to a site chosen by the participants' to interview them with questions that were asked within a 30 minute time frame. The locations of the interviews varied since the participants were allowed to choose the venue they felt most comfortable when answering since they will not be at their work sites. Open-ended questions allowed for feedback on principal preparation programs and how it contributes to a principal's success or failure.

The data were collected and recorded at the interview times depicted in Table 2. The data were gathered by me as I recorded and transcribed the responses the participants gave to the interview questions. I then emailed a copy of the interview responses to each participant so that they could look over the responses to ensure that the data recorded was correct.

Table 2

*Interview Timetable and Steps*


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Week 1- 2	<p>Interviews will take place with participants</p> <p>Week 1 – 8-10 interviews dependent on availability</p> <p>Week 2 – 2 – 4 interviews dependent upon principal availability</p>
Week 1 - 2	<p>Responses will be shown to participants to ensure data was recorded correctly.</p> <p>Researcher will secure days off from work to type up responses and email them to participants for their approval.</p>
Week 2 – 3	<p>Researcher will analyze data to see what components are the most important for a principal preparation program</p>

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This project study provided the views of the participants as they viewed their leadership preparation programs. Twelve questions covering the seven habits of effective principal preparation programs were asked to the participants, as outlined in Appendix A. I kept notes in my possession at all times to ensure that the confidentiality of the data was maintained. I utilized research logs where I wrote the responses to the interview questions

as well. I was able to start using the logs to find similar responses and identify potential themes for the project.

My current role is a Special Needs Coordinator in one of the districts included in the study, but past roles have been an assistant principal at the secondary and elementary school levels. I have come to know the participants through classes in school, professional developments, district meetings, and friends of retired administrators. My past roles will not affect the data because principals are very interested in improving their schools performance on state assessments as well as meeting AYP so that all stakeholders including students, staff, families, and the community will benefit from improved student performance. My biases include knowledge of various school districts and the limited school district resources such as lack of training, facilities, shortage of good trainers, and limited time allotted for training for administrators. Budget will also play a vital part on whether school districts can afford to send their administrators to trainings and workshops. I also know that responses could differ because of the difference in the severity of problems that arise at the different education levels such as discipline, attendance, teacher support, morale, parent participation, and the number of students that the school contains. The schools will be from different districts so that a sample can be taken from varying demographics as well as varying socioeconomic situations. The focus area in Texas includes 16 school districts; the property values vary. Those districts with higher property values will collect more funding through tax assessment. Therefore, these districts will have more resources and provide more opportunities for some of the participants.



## **Data Analysis**

The qualitative content analysis process was used with the data compiled from the participants. The University of Surrey (2014) found that ten steps of content analysis should be followed as such:

1. Copy and read through the transcripts
2. Go through the notes made in the margins and list the different types of information found
3. Read through the list and categorize each item in a way that offers a description of what it is about
4. Identify whether or not the categories can be linked in any way and list them as major categories or minor categories
5. Compare and contrast the various major and minor categories
6. If there is more than one transcript repeat the first five stages again for each transcript
7. Collect all of the categories or themes and examine each in detail and consider if it fits and its relevance
8. Once all the transcript data is categorized into minor and major categories review them in order to ensure that the information is categorized as it should be
9. Review all of the categories and ascertain whether some categories can be merged or if some need to be sub-categorized

10. Return to the original transcripts and ensure that all of the information that needs to be categorized has been so (The University of Surrey, 2014).

The original transcripts were reviewed by me to double check participant responses. This review was done so that the common themes along with other answers were taken into account when writing out answers. Each answer was thematically analyzed. I utilized open coding which allowed me to read through my data and capture emerging themes. The data were then organized into categories where I searched for the most common themes.

Creswell (2007) indicated that during the process of describing, classifying, and interpreting qualitative data researchers develop codes or categories to sort text or visual images. The qualitative content analysis process will allow me to view the information in a complete or total manner I can then present the findings in a common sense arrangement that is simple to understand. Grouping the code words around a particular concept in the data called categorizing can reduce the number of words with which to work according to Merriam (2002).

I allowed participants to check their responses at the conclusion of the interviews. It also gave the participants the opportunity to correct errors and challenge what may be perceived as wrong interpretations. It gives participants the opportunity to volunteer additional information. This member validation allowed the researcher to submit materials relevant for checking by the participants submitting those materials. Bygstad (2007) found that examples of different forms of member validation include distributing interview transcripts to informants for verification, presentation of case study reports and

summary to key stakeholders for approval prior to publication, and/or group meetings with informants for discussing different interpretations of the case material. I sent a copy of the transcribed responses to the participants so they could read and process it. Two days later I contacted each participant through a personal visit or telephone call during which time to ensure participants agreed with the conclusions of the study and they did agree. Discrepant or unexpected data is always possible. It is important that all participants be given the same information and most importantly the same guidelines in responding. This procedure may limit off task responses. This type of data can also be addressed by the researcher when meeting with the participants.

The honesty of the participants could be considered a limitation. Although they have consented to participate in the study they may be hesitant to give their true feelings on their principal preparation programs. Due to the number of responses which met the goal of 16, I feel comfortable saying that the data collected represents a true perception of what components principal's feel are the most important in a principal preparation program. Despite this limitation, the benefit of offering an internship and exposure to school budget/finance would be very beneficial to share with aspiring principals. As documented in section one, the amount of time devoted to training principal interns and the content and experiences in these programs are important (Devlin-Scherer & Devlin-Scherer, 2003).

I constructed the questions so as to decrease embellishment or falsification by the participants. I tried to construct the questions in a manner to substantiate participant responses. I constructed questions in order for the participants to describe what they

experienced and how they experienced it. Was it direct or second-hand information?

Clarification of data can occur by posing the same question in a different manner and if there are contradictions, you can respectfully ask the participant to clarify. One must be prepared for many kinds of responses when you ask what type of preparation do you feel is most important for a first year principal.

### **Protection of Participants' Rights**

Siegle (2013) indicated that we cannot collect data without permission. All subjects must give their permission to be part of a study and they must be given pertinent information to make an informed consent to participate. Siegle (2013) found that researchers are bound by a code of ethics that includes the following protections for subjects

- protected from physical or psychological harm
- protection of privacy and confidentiality
- protection against unjustifiable deception
- the subject must give voluntary informed consent to participate in research.

I clarified the goal of the case study research to the participants. The participants were asked to review and endorse a consent form containing the information on the case study. Information such as the following from may be included in a consent form: the records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report made public no information will be included that may identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file. The purpose, the researcher's responsibility, and the participant's

involvement were explained. Participants were told that their input was voluntary and they may pull out of the study at any time.

### **Summary**

Section 2 of the project study has explained the qualitative case study research design, choice of 16 participants, protection of participants' rights, data collection through interviews, and data analysis. The next section of the study will present the findings from the study. Also, social change implications will be discussed because of its importance to policy makers. I proposed to examine what principals in 16 southern Texas districts felt were the most important components of a principal preparation program from their experiences through the program they attended previous to the principal position they currently hold. Results will be shared with policy makers to assist in creating principal preparation programs that fully prepare future principals.

The data were generated through interviews with 16 public school principals in south Texas. I randomly selected principals four principals were from elementary schools, 4 from middle schools, 4 from high schools, and 4 alternative school principals were chosen. I wanted to ensure that I had participants for each type of campus each school district contains.

### **Data Collection**

I called each principal to explain my study and ask if they would participate in the study. Once they agreed to participate I asked them when would be a good time to meet for the interview. There were no participants who refused to participate in my study. The data were gathered from principals who were asked 13 interview questions to find out

which components each principal felt were the most important for a principal preparation program. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes, but an hour time slot was utilized in case responses ran long or the participant ran late. The interviews took place at a site chosen by the participant so there would be no inconvenience and confidentiality could be honored. Give an indication of what some of the locations were. The interviews took place over a four day period and I digitally recorded then transcribed each interview. So it would then allow me to learn from the responses and add depth to my data. The questions in the interview were derived from the seven habits of an effective principal preparation program presented by J. Davis and Jazzar (2005). A copy of the interview questions is included in Appendix B.

### **Data Analyses**

I interviewed 16 principals, which indicated an interview rate of 100%. I kept all of the responses separated by grade level from the 16 interviews completed, four were from elementary school principals, four were from middle school principals, four were from high school principals, and four were from alternative school principals so that I could ensure I had an equal sample from each grade level. For the purpose of this project study and to protect the identities of the participants, the participants are referred to as E1, E2, E3, and E4 for elementary principals, M1, M2, M3, and M4 for middle school principals, H1, H2, H3, H4, for high school principals and A1, A2, A3, and A4 for alternative school principals.

The system utilized to organize the data were research logs for each question. In meeting with each participant for clarification I recorded each participant's interview in a

log. Prior to the clarification interview I transcribed each participants response from the interview question transcriptions taken and included this data into the log. For each question responses were written down and common themes were identified. I collected all of the participant responses giving each one ample time to respond and modify after which I began to transcribe the responses. I worked on the first question for approximately two days as I looked for related issues to surface. As I became more familiar with the process, it was taking me about one day for each question. I began to categorize and look for patterns to surface. As I continued to transcribe the participant responses I began to formulate my own thoughts through the data recorded. These thoughts continuously changed as I analyzed the data. From this process finally appeared themes which I could now compare with the existing literature utilized in my study.

Dunning (2014) indicated that open coding is the first stage after data acquisition and involves describing the overall features of the phenomenon under study. Dunning also indicated that variable features or factors in the phenomenon are identified, labeled, and categorized by their properties and dimensions. Benaquisto (2008) indicated that open coding was used to uncover ideas and meanings in the text. Benaquisto also indicated that the intent of open coding is to break down the data so that it may be interpreted. Once a common theme was identified the themes were placed in the log and responses were placed under their correlating theme.

### **Evidence of Quality**

As the researcher, I ensured that the data found were of quality to assist with the study. I then sent a copy of the transcribed responses (Appendix F) to the participants so

they could validate the responses which were given. It gives the participants the opportunity to correct any errors. It also gives participants the opportunity to volunteer additional information. According to Creswell (2007) member checking in research is an aspect of most qualitative studies, which also involve taking data, analyzing data, interpreting data, and making conclusions based on the data then allowing the participants to read conclusions so they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account. The participants were all pleased with the transcription of their responses because they were correct and did not need to be updated. They felt that each response they gave was captured exactly by the researcher.

### **Interview Findings**

**Question 1. Please describe your principal preparation program.** While in my present position as Special Needs Coordinator, I discovered in discussions with principals that they were seldom complimentary of their administrative preparation. Thus the problem I chose to study is the need to improve principal preparation programs. I first wanted to find out just what kind of programs each participant had experienced. The participants described their preparation that took place in at least five different states. It is possible to earn a principal certification in a variety of ways. 12 of the 16 participants studied in university-based certification programs that culminated in a master's degree and principal certification. Four of the participants reported earning their certifications in a program once they had already earned their master's degree.

**Question 2. How prepared do you feel you were in the area of curriculum and instruction through your program?** I wanted to find out how prepared the



participant felt in the area of curriculum and instruction. Participant responses varied slightly, but the majority indicated curriculum and instruction was for the most part missing. Responses such as E3, “My program did not make any mention of curriculum and instruction because we were taught how to manage a school and keep it in order. There was nothing on curriculum and instruction.”, E2, “My program quickly introduced the class to the topic of curriculum and what it entailed, but it was just a quick introduction nothing with substance.”, and A2, “My program had no aspect of curriculum and instruction. I thought we would at least get a class or two about it, but there was none.” 10 participants shared that they did not have any experience in curriculum and instruction and 6 shared that they did receive exposure to it. Curriculum and instruction experience is important to support improving student progress as well as AYP.

**Question 3 Did your program have an internship component? Please elaborate on your response?** Participant responses were positive for this question. While the time spent in the internships varied, some of the participants answered in the following manner: E1, “Yes, my program had an internship component. It was a 40 hour internship that we needed to do for a grade.”, E3, “My program consisted of a 60 hour internship component.” We had to ask the principal or assistant principal to be our mentor and sign off that we had completed our hours working with them.”, and E4, “Yes, my program had an internship component. The internship we were asked to do and keep a log of was for 45 hours.” Participants had varying hours of internship hours they had to complete. Four participants did not have an internship component at all while the other 12 participants had internships varying from 30 to 60 hours. Some participants had to

complete internship hours merely logged hours that they worked for the mentoring administrators mentoring.

**Question 4. Did your program provide mentors for the candidates? Please elaborate on your response.** Fourteen participants responded that they were given a mentor and two participants responded that they were not given a mentor. Most of the responses indicated there was a mentor assigned. Some of the positive responses were as follows: M1 stated, “Yes, I was assigned a mentor.” and E1 stated, “The professor assigned a mentor and I met with him periodically.” Two of the participants responded they had not been assigned a mentor. H4 for example responded, “I asked about a mentor, but I was told it was too late in the semester to acquire one.” Twelve of the participants indicated their mentor was a campus administrator. M1 reported, “My mentor was the school principal.” E1 stated, “My mentor was the campus assistant principal who met with me periodically.” A mentor provides aspiring principals with someone to guide them and answer questions. If there is a mentor to lead the way for the candidates then they will learn more and be successful in their first principal role.

**Question 5. Did your program have an aspect that exposed you to collaborative experiences with your program faculty, peers, and experienced principals?** Eleven of the participants responded that they did have exposure to collaborative experiences while 5 of the participants responded that no part of their program included any exposure to collaborative experiences. The majority of the participant responses point out that the program had collaborative experiences. A1 stated, “I was assigned tasks to be performed with the guidance of my principal.” H2 reported, “I

worked on instructional and discipline goals with the teaching staff.” This was not the case for all of the participants. E4 stated, “I was left on my own to work through situations.” Sixty nine percent of the participants seemed to have experienced collaboration.

**Question 6. Did your program provide you with opportunities to practice decision making for your future role?** Eleven participants responded that their programs did provide them with opportunities where former principals gave feedback to responses aspiring principals gave for practice decision making situations. 5 of the participants responded that there were no opportunities for decision making exercises. While decision making is common place in education the participant responses were not one hundred percent positive on this question. Eleven participants responded their program provided decision making opportunities such as, M3 stated, “The principal allowed me to make several decisions on things that occurred on campus.” While five of the responses were negative such as E3 stated, “My administrator did not allow me to make decisions.” and A1 explained, “I was never asked to make a decision.” Thirty one percent of the participants were not given the opportunity to formulate a way of handling a situation.

**Question 7. Do you feel your program prepared you for the transition into the role of principal? Please elaborate on your response.** The participant responses to this question varied, but there were more participants who felt they were not prepared for the transition for different reasons. Participants did not know what to expect from the new position for example, E4 stated, “No, I was not prepared for the transition. It was a

difficult transition because I did not know what to expect in the position.”, M1 reported, “No, I wasn’t prepared for the position. I feel more help in scenarios that would happen in the position would have helped.”, and H4 exclaimed, “No, I do not feel I was prepared for the transition. Other people I know were able to have guest speakers who were in the positions of the topics they were there to discuss so we could get some exposure.” Four principals felt they were ready for the transition and 12 felt they were not ready. Seventy five percent of the participants indicated that they were not prepared for their role as a principal. This is certainly an important portion of this study. This seems to reaffirm the need for a well managed administrator training program that will encompass those training needs that have been acknowledged by the participants. It also seems like sound responses to share with policymakers in an effort to make an impact.

**Question 8. Are there any habits of a principal preparation you feel are helpful which were not mentioned?** J. Davis and Jazzar’s (2005) seven habits of effective principal preparation programs were shared with the participants so they could know what they were. Each participant had the same response though some interchanged the terms budget and finance. This was a theme that was recurring through all the responses. For example, E4 stated, “School finance would be of great help if explained to us for the position.” M1 expressed, “School budget would be helpful to include because I never got exposure to it.”. In reviewing participant H4’s response there seems to be agreement among all participants as noted by the response which reads “School finance is difficult to teach yourself so some exposure is better than none.” Some participants made their response sound like a request such as a1 stated, “Finance is a habit that needs to be

added. I had no idea how to do it when I went into the position.” All 16 participants felt that exposure to school budget/finance would have been helpful in the program.

**Question 9. What do you feel is the most important aspect of an effective principal preparation program?** The participants all felt the same about this question. They all expressed it in a different way, but the overall theme formed was of an internship as the most important aspect. Some responses included E2, “Exposure through an internship allows future principals to see what they will be doing in their position.” M1 reported, “An internship allows one to gain hands on experience for their future role.” H3 expressed, “Internship to experience real life scenarios lets candidates see what they will be doing and how to respond to situations that arise.” After reviewing all of the participant responses it was unanimous that an internship is the most important aspect of an effective principal preparation program.

**Question 10. What are your recommendations for preparedness?** Each participant had a different response on being prepared. Each one was very adamant about preparation because most felt they were not ready for the role of principal. Some samples of the varying responses were E3 expressed, “No one can be fully prepared for the position. Always be on your guard and expect the unexpected.”. M4 stated, “Be aware of your surroundings and never let your guard down. Kids are sneaky.”. H1 explained, “Be prepared for a fast moving, never ending position. You’re always on the go”. A3 confirmed, “Be prepared because if something bad can happen more than likely it will happen.” All responses are varying, but I felt these gave a good indication of why one should be prepared.

**Question 11. What type of preparation do you feel would be important for a first year principal?** The responses to this question varied, but there were similar ideas on internship and school budget/finance with a few outliers. Some responses that involved internship were expressed, “Real world experiences through internships allow principals to see what the position will be like”. H3 explained, “A meaningful internship that has real world exposure would allow a principal to prepare for what he/she may face in the role.” Some responses that involved school budget/finance were as M2 stated, “School budget experience will prepare a future principal to be ready to run the school and not waste a lot of time learning about budget.” M3 confirmed, “School finance and state assessment preparation would allow principals to just into the role and be ready to work with the budget and come up with strategies for teachers to utilize with students takings the assessments.” Some responses that include outlying responses were as M4 acknowledged, “Being flexible with others prepares a principal who will be dealing with many different personalities be calm and patient with students, parents, and staff.” H1 added, “Staying organized when under pressure would allow principals to always seem calm and in control so that they don’t look like they are not prepared for the position.” Eight participants responded with budget preparation as being most important while 6 participants responded with internship being most important and two participants responded with outlying responses as most important which are shown above.

**Question 12. Do you have any other information about your preparedness or lack of preparedness that you would like to share?** The responses for preparedness or lack of preparedness also varied. Each principal shared what they felt was most important

in relation to their current position. Some of the responses that were shared for this question were E4's commented, "I would have been prepared if I was trained properly so ask questions and pay attention during your internship." M1 expressed, "Network with others so that you can ask questions and get assistance." H3 stated, "Programs should prepare principals for any and every scenario that may arise. Good guest speakers can help give ideas about what to expect from the role." H4 acknowledged, "Get to know colleague's that you can ask questions to especially veteran principals." Each participant expressed varying views on being prepared or not prepared for the position, and no two responses were exactly the same.

All principals who completed the interviews were current public school principals. The findings which came from the participant responses were direct answers to the research problem which was to find out which components principals felt were the most important in a principal preparation program.

### **Themes in Analysis of Data**

Several reoccurring themes and responses emerged. The lack of curriculum and instruction training appeared to be a common theme amongst the participants. The assignment or non-assignment of mentors as well as the quality of mentors was pointed out by the participants. Decision making or practice in decision making was not provided for forty five percent of the participants. Internship and exposure to school budget/finance were the two predominating themes that emerged. The participant responses led me to recognize internship as an essential component of administrative training. Participants seemed honest and sincere in their responses. Statements such as E1

expressed, “The internship is the most important aspect. It gives hands-on experience.”. H1 explained, “An internship component lets candidates see what they will be doing in their role.”. H3 stated, “Internship to experience real life scenarios lets candidates see what they will be doing and how to respond to situations that arise.” Participants seem to feel that an internship component will give them exposure to situations that will arise as they begin their responsibility as principal.

The second major theme that surfaced from the participant responses was school budget/finance as another important component of administrative training. The following are examples of participant responses emphasizing the need for school budget/finance preparation. E3, “Budget was not mentioned and would be of great help if explained thoroughly.”, M4, “School budget is an important part of the job and needs to be explained to principals in their preparation.”, and A4, “Budget has to be a habit because it is an essential part of the job of a principal.” Participant responses indicate a definite need for a budget/finance component in principal training programs. Two participants responded more differently than the other fourteen with responses such as, M4 stated, “Being flexible with others prepares a principal who will be dealing with many different personalities be clam and patient with students, parents, and staff.” and H1 stated, “Staying organized when under pressure would allow principals to always seem calm and in control so that they don’t look like they are not prepared for the position.” These are valid responses even though they do not agree with the overall themes.



### **Outlying or Disconfirming Data**

Each participant felt that the internship component was the most important of a principal preparation program. Most participants did take part in some kind of internship component, but not one felt the experiences fully prepared them to take the role of principal. The component not mentioned in J. Davis and Jazzar's (2005) *The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs* was exposure to school budget/finance. Through the responses from the principals this was the area they felt they had a lack of knowledge in when they went into their positions. The outlier that I had not anticipated was the emphasis principals placed on practice with school budget. J. Davis and Jazzar did not include school budget as one of their seven habits of principal preparation programs so it was not anticipated, but situations vary by individual.

Twelve percent of the participants responded differently than the other participants when asked what preparation was most important. One of the two participants responded as such, H1 responded, "Staying organized when under pressure would allow principals to always seem calm and in control so they don't look like they are not prepared for the position." While this participant's thinking is well-founded, J. Davis and Jazzar (2005) did not mention it in *The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs*, and it was not in agreement with the other participant responses.

### **Evidence of Quality**

Creswell (2008) explained the idea of data validation by use of triangulation, the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data such as field notes, case studies, and methods of data collection. Creswell (2008) concluded that by

drawing on multiple view points, researchers can establish accuracy and credibility. Triangulation or cross checking the data will assist in understanding different participant perceptions. The researchers' task is to demonstrate to the reader that the findings are trustworthy. Validity, a quantitative term, in qualitative research refers to whether the findings of a study are true and certain, true in the sense that research findings accurately reflect the situation, and are certain in the sense that research findings are supported by the evidence according to Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2002). Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish trustworthiness in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives. I found that by comparing the participant responses it gave me the opportunity to see the different viewpoints as well as common ones. By speaking to each participant it allowed a better understanding of the data and enhanced the confidence and trustworthiness of the responses. The original participant transcripts are located in Appendix B and Appendix D to check for trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative research.

### **Summary and Interpretation**

It was the intent of this study to determine what principals reported they perceive as the most important habits of a principal preparation program. Schools need to respond to changing societal and educational needs, thus educational leadership preparation needs to change. Sharing J. Davis and Jazsar's (2005) *The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs* allowed me to see that principals did agree that the J. Davis and Jazsar's seven habits were important, but there was one they felt was most important there was one lacking. The interviews in this study gave an indication of administrators'

thoughts of their preparedness and offer an idea of what may be needed to be included for administrative training programs.

Through the response to the interview questions, it can be summarized that the principal participants felt that the most important components of a principal preparation program are the internship and extensive research on school budget/finance. The principals stated that if they had had a better internship experience that would have given them exposure to decision making situations and exposure to school budget/finance they would have been more prepared for their first year as a principal. The responses gave a direct answer to the research question.

As I read the participant responses I began to get an idea of how important internships and exposure to school budget/finance would have been especially to first year principals. Responses such as E3, "Incorporating real life scenarios allowed me to see how to respond to situations where split second decisions need to be made." and H4, "Real world experience like an internship would be helpful. I wish my program would have identified the internship component of training as one of the most important." The responses on the internship component definitely fall in line with what Crooner, et. al. (2005) indicated the concept of internships is grounded in blending of principal leadership theory and practice for participants.

In the area of school budget/finance responses were just as plentiful. M1 for example, indicated that "School budget would be helpful to include because I never got exposure to it." and A3, said "School finance was never reviewed so it was hard for me in my first year as a principal." Principal preparation programs seem to vary in content, but

they also seem to have a lack of specific needs. Some of these needs are identified by the participant responses. A first year principal, for example, should have been exposed to and gained experience with topics such as budget/finance and should have been given a worthwhile internship. By having this exposure a new principal is more likely to be successful in those areas.

I agree with the components identified by the principals. During my principal preparation program I had an internship experience that was 30 hours and all my principal did was sign off that I did the hours. The experience gave me no help on what to experience with the position. There was also only one class on school budget/finance. All the instructor did was talk about how good of a superintendent he used to be when he was working. Again, there was no assistance in the area.

Ensuring that principals have a more meaningful internship can help them prepare for situations that arise. An internship can allow them to see how to work with state assessments and how to plan to raise scores. Based on participant responses there seemed to be a lack of curriculum and instruction training. Responses such as E2, "My program quickly introduced the class to the topic of curriculum and what it entailed, but it was just a quick introduction nothing with substance." which indicated a clear lack of curriculum and instruction material and information. It can also allow an aspiring principal to see how a principal plans to meet AYP and improve any stages of AYP they may be presently. Experience in curriculum and instruction would be beneficial for beginning administrators who could be assigned to a school with low achievement and problematic for AYP purposes. It is possible that training could give beginning administrators the

proper direction to take in approaching AYP issues as well as issues most crucial to students, families, and the community.

Anast-May, Buckner, and Geer (2011) stressed that internship programs too often do not provide the types of experiences that effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice to prepare school leaders who are capable of leading and transforming schools. Anast-May, et al. also suggested that if principals are to share in the responsibility of meeting the educational needs of students and their communities, then interns must be provided with different types of experiences and activities. Anst-May, et al. suggested that internship programs for future school leaders need to provide real world learning opportunities for the modern school. Internship programs may provide learning opportunities that otherwise would not be there for beginning principals. Issues such as curriculum to dealing with students, parents, teachers, and community members could be introduced and would provide a beginning principal with skills needed to overcome those issues. These activities would allow those participants in my study the opportunity to experience needed leadership skills. Those experiences and activities in internship programs should facilitate improved instructional leadership, school improvement, and student achievement.

Researchers suggest different methods for developing leadership. Stevenson, Cooner, and Fritz (2011) indicated that the concept of internships is grounded in the need to blend principal leadership theory and practice for participants. Stevenson, et al. also noted that successful internships have master principals who are also quality mentors. Good administrative leadership programs should guide prospective leaders towards a

successful outcome. Williams (2009) found that by assisting principal interns become expert observers of their own leadership skills, they acquire the necessary skills and are able to self-direct as well as change their behaviors towards the desired outcome of their preparation program. As the intern is exposed to several leadership situations their knowledge base will increase and the skills acquired should become even better. A good internship program will assure that the intern practices desired skills and eventually the intern should make appropriate decisions that ultimately affect the education of children in a positive manner.

Well-designed internship programs provide leaders with the ability to make an effort and resolve different circumstances. Interns need to have a clear picture of all the duties and responsibilities that are expected of a principal, as well as the knowledge and skills that enable them to be effective school administrators (Ringler, Rouse, & St. Clair, 2012). Internships would allow aspiring principals to experience firsthand decision making scenarios and learn how to improve state assessment scores as well as improve AYP. Exposure to school budget/finance allows a principal to run their school more smoothly and efficiently so they can focus more on state assessments and meeting AYP. As I discovered from the principals in my study, Duncan, Range, and Scherz (2011) found that in regards to areas of deficiency in the internship, the majority of principals in their study pinpointed training in budgeting and financing. School economy has always had a positive or negative effect in a school district and its schools. Education Partnership Inc. (2010) suggested that the decline in school funding will lead to reinventing schools characterized by innovation. Education Partnership Inc. also indicated that it is clear that

the current economy has significantly impacted schools, their programs and services, the families in their school community, and the employees who work in these schools.

Budget concerns will require a principal to make important decisions regarding education, safety, and the welfare of students. Cline and Dufresne (2009) indicated that a concern was maintaining an academic focus and continuing to do what was best for students during an economically stressful period. Perry (2013) was instrumental in utilizing a new schedule that gave principal and school site councils the time to begin with a needs assessment and goal setting. Perry (2013) recognized that school site budgeting needed to change if principals were to conduct a more strategic process where planning could drive budgeting. These innovative strategies would achieve their goals and develop a time for planning and budgeting plus more effective tools for doing so collaboratively. The result would be an improved principal's capacity to manage the school's budget. The principals in my study recognized the importance of having more experiences with budgeting.

### **Description of Project**

A professional development session has been developed as a project that will allow policymakers to see what current principals feel are the most important components of a principal preparation program. They will see the original participant responses plus the responses from the principals who will be questioned the day before the policymakers begin their professional development sessions. The 3-day professional development sessions will not only share principal responses, but will also give background literature

on the components which are identified to help policymakers plan for improving principal preparation programs.



### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

The findings of this study demonstrated which components the principals thought would be the most important in a principal preparation program in relation to J. Davis and Jazzar's (2005) *The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs*. The responses to interview questions lead one to foresee leadership training programs to include an intensive and well-prepared internship component that would provide the new leader with additional experiences with making decisions affecting the school, students, staff, and community. They also affirmed the need for more direction on school budget/finance. This information supported development of principal preparation programs that will include an internship and school budget/finance components.

The purpose of this project is to present the findings to policymakers so that they will in turn initiate a change in principal preparation programs. According to the principals' responses, each felt that he or she was not adequately prepared for the position. Proponents of current principal preparation programs may feel that they adequately prepare future principals, but each program is different. Policymakers are the only ones who can help ensure that principal preparation programs are changed to prepare future principals. The following section describes the goals of the project.

#### **Description and Goals**

The goal of this project is to convince policymakers to change principal preparation programs based on the needs identified by current principals. The problem will be addressed through a project of professional development presented to

policymakers, and it will include a meeting with principals as well. Bird, Dunaway, Flowers, Lyons, and Lee (2010) indicated that while there is a clear case for improving administrator preparation programs across the country, there is no clear answer on how to redesign them so that they can produce effective principals. Responses from the 16 participants will be shared with the principals from participating school districts attending the professional development to see if they agree with responses and to see if their responses differ. On the first day of the professional development session, I will present the data to attending principals who are from different cities and school districts around Texas, making sure not to share confidential information. On the second and third days, I will present to policymakers in an attempt to influence them to ensure principal preparation programs include an internship and exposure to school budget/finance so that aspiring principals are prepared once they enter the position.

My study was done in order to find components of administrative training that would benefit beginning administrators. At the same time, it would provide data for policymakers to ensure principal preparation programs offered training that would meet current educational needs. The project genre is professional development. By learning important components in a principal preparation program, aspiring principals will be more likely to experience success in their first year as school principals.

### **Review of Literature**

Research on leadership training internships was pertinent and offered an outside view of leadership needs. Section 1 provided a literature review of leadership preparation programs. In this section's literature review, the focus is on the professional development

presentation style for the components and the two components of training, internship preparation and school budget/finance knowledge.

Multiple sources provided information for the literature review, including the Walden University electronic library. Databases such as EBSCO host and ERIC supported the retrieval of online journals and research studies. Search terms included *principal internships*, *principal budget experience*, *professional development*, and *principal finance exposure*.

In the literature review, I discuss internship and budget within principal preparation programs. Current literature indicated a need to include the above-mentioned two components in preparation programs in an effort to improve first-year administrators' knowledge of school needs. The implementation, evaluation, and social change implication appear in the final part of Section 3.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development must grow along with the current needs of educators. Administrators are expected to create direction for their schools to succeed. While there are programs that provide development, it is not an easy task. Laresen and Rieckhoff (2012) documented the effects that a professional development school partnership had on school leadership. The program, titled *Professional Development School*, allowed the school leaders and university faculty to work collaboratively so that both university and school needs and goals were met. Laresen and Rieckhoff found the work of a professional development school had an impact on the development of school leadership, provided an opportunity for principals to reflect upon their own growth and development

as leaders, and created new ways to develop school culture and bring about sustainable change within their schools.

Upon examining a professional development school partnership, Carpenter and Sherretz (2012) found that through partnerships, new approaches for examining and improving practices were gained by integrating partners' expertise and knowledge of practice. Professional development schools are also learning organizations in which partners share the common goals of preparing quality teachers and other school personnel through participation in seminars, problem solving groups, reflection, inquiry, skills development activities, and college. This type of participation would be beneficial for participants in my study because it would (a) further prove that good internships are needed for aspiring administrators and (b) provide data to back up the findings. Presenting the findings during the professional development would support the need for an internship component.

Professional development is needed and should be done to meet individual needs. Online professional development as studied by Bolt (2012) can facilitate both formal and informal learning, which can be accessed just in time and sustained over time. It also allows teachers to form communities of practice and collaborate with people beyond their face-to-face associations in both time and space.

Professional development for beginning principals should be part of school improvement. According to Sappington et al. (2012), in 106 field studies evidence suggested that in the past 35 years little progress has been made to link professional development and school improvement. Sappington et al. indicated that, if this is the case,

then policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels must find ways to allocate and redirect resources to articulate and develop a systematic relationship between the improvement of the core technology of education, teaching, and improvement of schools.

Job-embedded professional development requires one, instead of attending one-shot workshops and journeying to conferences, to be able to learn on the job with plenty of opportunities for collaboration and individualized support. The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (2012) concluded that the United States spends as much as \$14 billion on forms of professional development every year, and teachers say most experiences do little to help them improve.

### **Professional Development for Policymakers**

Policymakers have the capacity to change administrator preparation programs to meet the current needs. It is, therefore, important for policymakers to have the latest and most important data available. Professional development is a valuable means of disseminating and informing policymakers. Heneman (2007) found that professional development programs incorporate interaction among program participants into the lessons.

Pan et al. (2005) suggested that state data can be utilized by policymakers to better understand the issues in education. Pan et al. indicated that the data must be available at central source or collaboration between agencies; data must be consistent, valid, and reliable; data systems must be user friendly; data should include all levels of schools, districts, and state; and data must measure a wide range of instructional resources.

Having a resource library readily available would benefit policymakers. Up to date news and data should be available such as Edvance Research Inc (2014) indicated policymakers news provides legislators and other state policymakers with concise, timely overviews of rigorous evidence based research conducted on high priority, regionally relevant educational issues, such as assessment, college readiness, professional development, intervention strategies, and special populations.

Policymakers should have the responsibility to ensure that well prepared administrators learn up-to-date techniques that will provide skills whose ultimate goal is to increase student achievement. Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2008) suggested that to train administrators and school board members in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills so that they can be effective role models and decision makers for integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into every aspect of teaching, learning, and administration. Some of the recommendations from Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills include developing intensive professional development programs that focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills instruction, integrate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into certification, work with administrators to create environments of professional collaborative relationships, work with district superintendents to develop leadership teams, create learning communities to support administrators and state department of education , and develop professional development for the leadership of state colleges of education. Presentation of the data provided by the participants should produce excellent dialogue with policymakers and ultimately might change principal preparation programs.

## **Internship**

Principals who have had internship experience may make good instructional leaders as well as building leaders. In the Chicago public schools data skills in understanding student performance will be a component of principal preparation programs. R. Harris (2010) found in the Chicago public schools that data savvy is a key component of principal's tool kits since the advent of performance management, which requires continuous analysis of student performance and how it is linked to different instructional strategies. Stevenson, Cooner, and Fritz (2011) indicated that the concept of internships is grounded in the need to blend principal leadership theory and practice for participants. Stevenson, et al. also noted that successful internships have master principals who are also quality mentors. The intent of the Stevenson, et al. study was to learn about principal interns perceptions of their grasp on the identified state principal standards for Colorado.

Internship programs should contain relevant situations and material in order for leaders to succeed. Anast-May, Buckner, and Geer (2011) stressed that internship programs too often do not provide the types of experiences that effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice to prepare school leaders who are capable of leading and transforming schools. Anast-May et al. suggested that if principals are to share in the responsibility of meeting the educational needs of students and their communities then interns must be provided with different types of experiences. Anst-May et al. suggested that internship programs for future school leaders need to provide real world learning opportunities for the modern school. These activities will allow those participants in my

study the opportunity to experience needed leadership skills. Those experiences and activities should facilitate instructional leadership, school improvement, and student achievement. There has been improvement in some preparation programs. Roewe (2013) in a study on principal effective standards found that recent educational trends have altered the model of the traditional school principal. The exclusively administrative manager has been replaced with knowledgeable leaders eager and able to place emphasis on student achievement, teacher development, and overall school success.

Creative training programs for administrators should be crucial. Zubrzycki (2012) in a study involving leadership training programs in Philadelphia, Chicago, Maryland, Georgia, Denver, and New York found that a growing number of principal preparation initiatives were forsaking university classrooms in favor of much more familiar training grounds such as the school districts in which the aspiring leaders will end up working. The more familiar a candidate is with his work place, the better chance he/she has for success. Zubrzycki also pointed out that through coaching and mentorship initiatives, residencies and internships, and other new programs, both districts and university education schools are turning their focus to building readiness. The programs are also offering continued learning and support for principals already on the job.

Internships can provide a wealth of knowledge and ideas for a prospective leader. Hackman, Russel, and Elliot (1999) indicated that at the commencement of the internship, the student should complete a self-assessment identifying activities collaboratively with the mentor that will complement prior experiences and strengthen perceived weaknesses. They recommend that potential administrators need to experience



confrontational situations, such as conferencing with a hostile parent or working with a manipulative teacher. Good administrative leadership programs should guide prospective leaders towards a successful outcome. Williams (2009) found that by assisting principal interns become expert observers of their own leadership skills, they acquire the necessary skills and are able to self-direct as well as change their behaviors towards the desired outcome of their preparation program.

There are several internship programs that may or may not be successful. Stevenson and Cooner (2011) concluded that several factors challenge effective implementation of internships. Two of these factors include candidates that are teaching full time while completing their internships and utilizing a mentor who is not helpful. They also noted that successful internships include master principals who are quality mentors for their interns. Internships should be set up during normal school operating times. Huang, Beachum, White et al. (2013) found that by being in the schools and working through the myriad of situations that characterize school life that candidates integrate the theory learned in classes with the practice in school. By experiencing some of the day to day situations such as meeting with parents, dealing with an unruly child, conferencing with teachers, and meeting with community members aspiring principals would be better prepared to lead. Principals felt that aspiring principals would benefit from an internship because it would allow them to work through real life scenarios and find out ways to improve state assessment scores and improve AYP.

Internship opportunities should be an intricate part of a principal preparation program. Dunaway, Bird, Flowers, Lyons, and Lee (2010) concluded that in the vast

majority of professional graduate programs in which students earn a license and/or professional certification to engage in practice in a particular field, some type of internship is normally required. The internships require students spend a specific period of time gaining firsthand experience working under the supervision of experienced professionals in a specific field and a university-based faculty member. They also indicated that it is during this phase of the training that these students relate classroom theory and knowledge to the on-the-job realities of the profession. Well- designed internship programs provide leaders with the ability to make an effort and resolve different circumstances. Interns need to have a clear picture of all the duties and responsibilities such as assigning teachers to duty stations for student safety and making sure all students attend class as well as the knowledge and skills that enable them to be effective school administrators (Ringler, Rouse, & St. Clair, 2012). Internships would allow aspiring principals to experience firsthand decision-making scenarios such as dealing with divorced parents when one parent wants to withdraw the child from school and learn how to improve state assessment scores as well as improve AYP.

In order to make changes in leadership preparation, cost is usually an issue, so lawmakers must be educated as to the importance of leadership preparation programs. Shoho, Barnett, and Martinez (2012) examined what a full-time job-embedded internship looks like and the importance of designing on the job training experience. Shoho et al. found that the given criticism of cost is often cited as the biggest deterrent to school districts and preparation programs from implementing full time job- embedded internships with coaching on a larger scale. Shoho et al. also found that one way to

implement high quality, full time, job-embedded internships is to communicate and advocate to policymakers and legislators about the importance of providing such experiences.

If potential administrators are to be successful with student learning then they should be presented with real work conditions during training. If principals are to share in the responsibility of meeting the educational needs of students and their communities then principal interns must be provided with the types of experiences and activities that facilitate instructional leadership, school improvement, and student achievement (Angst-May, Buckner, & Geer, 2011). Principal interns must be presented with experience to disaggregate data, select instructional material to be used in the classroom, and work with individual teachers to enhance instructional delivery for students.

One of the most important qualities of an internship program is an accomplished mentor. Lehman (2013) found that the building mentor must not only make time for the intern, but the practicing administrator must have a desire to serve as a role model. This service is one of sharing expertise, assigning the intern to meaningful duties, and permitting to the degree possible access to the administrator's world. If available, a stipend is one type of incentive for an intern. If a stipend is not available then a non-monetary reward such as duty-free time would be appropriate. Van Tuyle and Hunt (2012) concluded that internship experiences should be opportunities for interns to experience the world of principal leadership with exposure to the reality of principal day-to-day roles, but without paid full time internships the expectation of preparedness may fall short of the desired goal.

Involving interns in daily tasks should develop their skills. In assisting principal interns to become expert observers of their own leadership skills, they acquire the necessary skills and are able to self-direct and change their own behaviors toward desired outcomes of their school administration preparation programs (Williams, 2009). According to S.H. Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) survey results from the Stanford research project and anecdotal testimonials from graduates and faculty directors uniformly pointed to high levels of student satisfaction with their programs. The reason for student endorsement according to the Stanford research project is the constructive elements that were included. Three elements found by S.H. Davis and Darling-Hammond were they work with one or more local districts to recruit and retain candidates, they use the cohort model and the group moves together through the course work, and candidate competence is assessed through multiple performance measures. All three elements described above can be valuable and effective when setting up leadership training programs. The results also showed high levels of confidence as well as efficacy relating to administrative tasks and working with teachers to promote teaching and learning.

Mentors also face the difficult task of assessing the intern's strengths and weaknesses during the assigned period of time. Finding time for assessing the intern is among the greater issues facing busy mentoring principals in the field (Koonce & Causey, 2011). Koonce et al. described the instrument used for assessing interns is a critical component of principal preparation. Koonce and Causey also found that few mentors have time to elaborate the evaluation process. Assessing the intern should be one

of the most important points. It will allow valuable feedback for the intern to continue or readdress any issue in question.

Black (2011) found that proactively defending educational leadership preparation from outside attack and engaging in self-improvement is an ambitious affair. Yet, they found, there may be no better first step than examining existing practices. A full time internship is a critical element of the redesigned program (Bartee, 2012). The internship is designed to provide candidates with a quality-filled experience that exposes them to realistic demands involved with the principalship (Bartee, 2012). A well designed internship program should allow a mentor to introduce those skills that will enable a student to experience success. Barton and Cox (2012) indicated that instructors guide students in the development of field work plans. These plans identify specific leadership tasks and responsibilities to be completed under the direction of their mentors who are experienced administrators. These are tasks such as a teacher's instructional delivery and giving the teacher feedback.

Interns need the support of cooperating principals and other administrators. Handley (2009) was lucky to be surrounded by many wonderful principals who kindly guided her around the difficulties of each day and who cheered on her when she was tired during her internship experience. She learned that it is possible to enjoy the road to leadership if the decisions made are in the best interest of the children. Handley stated that if she modeled professionalism and respect then she knew she would be supported.

Creating a quality internship program within administrative leadership training is an essential component in managing potential principals. These effective principals are

then capable of handling the increased responsibilities and expectations of the role.

Interns clearly reported that they learned more in those activities in which they performed at higher levels of involvement (Bird, Dunaway, Flowers, Lyons, & Lee, 2010).

Participants in the researcher's study expressed that internships were a very important component of principal preparation programs. Even though the number of hours in an internship varied the principals all felt that this component is very helpful in getting real life experience in their future role.

Education challenges vary, therefore, there is an increased need for capable leaders in today's educational setting. With assistance from quality mentors these future leaders can be effective. Interns must be able to assess issues immediately and in some cases without policy or guideline direction. No textbook that the aspiring principal encounters in preparing for the role of the school leader discusses what steps to follow when a member or members of the school staff challenge standards of professional judgment and moral rectitude (Larsen and Derrington, 2012). Aarons (2010a) indicated that principal training cannot be classroom-based exclusively and the most striking differences happen when a building principal, who has not yet been placed, works under a principal who has been successful. An intern's mentor should be well experienced and successful.

Data should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of interns as they work with school leaders. Eddins, Kirk, Hoofen, and Russell (2013) concluded that data from sources include an ongoing review of school leadership literature, a self-assessment by program faculty, a critical review by educational leadership experts, an analysis of

internal and external student performance data, focused conversations with advisory groups, and perceptions of program completers as well as their supervisors as they move forward on professional leadership pathways. Interns can provide data on what key program components are best included in an internship to prepare school leaders. The program components include student recruitment and selection, program curriculum, instructional delivery, internship, mentoring support, stakeholder involvement, program staffing and faculty development (Eddins et al., 2013).

Internships have goals that include paid employment, a foundation for job responsibilities, promoting skills, and engaging students. According to Moore and Gomez (2013) employment, while a primary goal for internship, is not the only benefit. An internship may allow the student to have the time and be in the environment to reflect on what has happened, creating a foundation for serious consideration of the future (Moore & Gomez, 2013). Internships allow a prospective leader to understand the complexities of education or it can provide the candidate with a choice of continuing. E. Levine (2010) concluded that by immersing principal interns in work related to their interest, internship programs aim to increase student engagement and promote skills and knowledge needed for achieving goals.

Mentoring interns has benefits for both the mentor and intern. It creates an understanding for one and a matter of putting one's best foot forward for the other. Caldarella, Gomm, Shatzer, and Wall (2010) indicated the need to increase the potential for understanding could be addressed by ensuring that volunteer mentors are offered

learning opportunities that can increase their understanding and knowledge possibly through a training program or in development sessions with other mentors.

### **Budget**

School finance has been a difficult task for many administrators. One way to assist during principal leadership training is to include segments of school finance. My study suggests that leadership training should include school budget/finance topics.

Duncan, Range, and Scherz (2011) found that in regards to areas of deficiency in the internship, the majority of principals in their study pinpointed training in budgeting and financing. School economy has always had a positive or negative effect in a school district and its schools. Education Partnership Inc. (2010) suggested that the decline in school funding will lead to reinventing schools characterized by innovation. Education Partnership Inc. also indicated that it is clear that the current economy has significantly impacted schools, their programs and services, the families in their school community, and the employees who work in these schools. As a result of the economic impact some more affluent school districts find themselves enrolling greater numbers of less affluent students from families qualifying for greater number of services like the school lunch program or subsidies for participation in co-curricular programs (Education Partnership Inc., 2010). Knowledge in school budget/finance should be an important part of leadership training programs as seen in the study's findings.

Financial support at the school level is usually controlled by the administrator in charge. The new administrator must be able to utilize the funding available and determine which programs are the most important. In an article referencing the principals' ability to



financially support education programs Church (2009) found that adequate funding is necessary to purchase print and electronic materials which support the reading interests and the instructional program of the school. Church also found that principals have to know that money invested in the library collection and library program serves every student and teacher.

Budget concerns may cause a principal to make important decisions regarding education, safety, and the welfare of students. Cline and Dufresne (2009) indicated that a concern was maintaining an academic focus and continuing to do what was best for students during an economically stressful period. Cline et al. faced an economic dilemma as the impact of national, state, and local issues affected the school system and discussion such as school closings, teacher layoffs, and program cuts began. School finance and budgetary experience is important especially for newly appointed administrators as participants in my study noted.

School leaders could be utilizing their schools site-based decision making committee in reviewing and recommending new methods to address the school's needs. Perry (2013) was instrumental in utilizing a new schedule that gave principal and school site councils the time to begin with a needs assessment and goal setting. Perry recognized that school site budgeting needed to change of principals were to conduct a more strategic process where planning could drive budgeting. These innovative strategies would achieve their goals and develop a time for planning and budgeting plus more effective tools for doing so collaboratively. The result would be an improved principal's capacity to manage the school's budget.

New leaders must learn to assess and be able to make both favorable and unfavorable decisions that will affect the school's budgetary needs. Caposey (2012) concluded that cutting programs is never easy, but in unfavorable economic times leaders must make appropriate decisions in how to allocate resources. School budgets can have a bad effect on personnel when finances cannot meet the demand. Making financial cuts is an important part of school finance and must be weighed very closely when making a decision. Ginsberg and Multon (2011) found that principals were clear that anyone who thinks that all cuts, no matter where they are focused do not affect classrooms surely doesn't understand the culture of schools. Students, teachers, parents, and community members will all be affected by cuts leveled at schools.

Technological advances do not always reach the school or students due to financial needs. McCrea (2013) indicated that in Minnesota there was a debate on how to put more computing power into the student's hands. Getting the necessary equipment would require a major effort from the district and its teachers who were working with 20<sup>th</sup> century technology. It was believed the budget and equipment resulted in a student body that was underwhelmed and disengaged. Technological needs are a must for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A large number of jobs in today's society require substantial technology skills so it is imperative that students be able to have hands-on equipment opportunity. Budgets must be created to include the necessary equipment that will assist students skills.

### **Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

The resources needed for this project are J. Davis and Jazsar's (2005) *The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs*. Interview questions were derived

from those seven habits of an effective principal preparation program and were presented to principals in the professional development session. The responses from the original participants and the responses from the principals who partake in the meeting during the Professional Development will be resources. The group of the original participants were principals who were from the original group of 16 chosen to complete the study and the principals from the professional development are from different cities and school districts around Texas who were invited to the professional development. There will be 56 principals invited to the Professional Development where they will be put into groups of 8 so that when there are group discussions each of the 7 habits of effective principal preparation program can be covered. The responses will be shared with policymakers through a PowerPoint presentation during the Professional Development to assist in creating of updating principal preparation programs to ensure that they are more effective. Located in Appendix B and Appendix D will be the handouts that will be in the packet for the Professional Development which include a list along with a description about the 7 Habits, the themes that were found, evidence supporting the themes that were found, and the original interview questions and responses from the original participating principals. At the conclusion of the Professional Development a reflection form would be passed out for the individuals to complete both participating principals and policymakers from the Texas Education Agency. The form would include what they learned, if they felt it helped, and if they agreed with the responses given by the original participants.

### **Potential Barriers**

Cost, time, and personnel are the potential barriers to successful implementation of this project. Principals and policymakers will need to make the time to come and attend the Professional Development. Policymakers would have to be convinced that current principal preparation programs are not adequate and that updates for the programs are needed.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

The Professional Development for both principals and policymakers will take place in the spring of 2015. The professional development will take place over a 3-day period. Day 1 would include a meeting with principals and the next 2 days would include meetings and presentations with the policymakers. One day with policymakers would be for the internship component and the other day would cover the school budget/finance component.

Table 3

*Professional Development Daily Schedule*

Day 1 (Principals' Session)	Day 2 (Policymakers' Session)	Day 3 (Policymakers' Session)
8:30 – 9:30	8:30 – 9:30	8:30 – 9:15
Introduction and Explanation of the study and the purpose of the professional development with Frank Zavala	Introduction and Explanation with Frank Zavala	Review of previous day's information and findings
9:45 – 10:45	9:45 – 10:45	9:30 – 10:30
Session 1: What are the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Principal Preparation Programs?	Session 1: What are the 7 Habits of highly Effective Principal Preparation Programs?	Session 6: Background on school budget/finance component and how principals feel it helps with the role.

*(table continues)*

Day 1 (Principals' Session)	Day 2 (Policymakers' Session)	Day 3 (Policymakers' Session)
11:00 – 12:00	11:00 – 12:00	10:30 – 12:00
Session 2: Explanation of each of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Principal Preparation Programs	Session 2: Explanation and discussion of the 7 Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs	Session 7: Putting It All Together: How are these components helpful and how do they relate to AYP and discussion on why principals eager to work on this
1:00 – 2:00	1:00 – 2:00	1:00 – 3:00
Present interview questions, explain each to the principals, and ask them to discuss as a small group and write down responses to be turned in	Session 3: Present principal responses from original participants and from the previous day	Session 8: Putting It All Together: How can these components be incorporated into principal preparation programs to better prepare principals? Including discussion and feedback from the policymakers

*(table continues)*

Day 1 (Principals' Session)	Day 2 (Policymakers' Session)	Day 3 (Policymakers' Session)
2:00 – 2:15	2:00 – 2:15	3:30 – 3:45
Coffee	Coffee	Coffee
2:15 – 3:45	2:15 – 3:15	3:45 – 4:15
Share responses to questions and allow for whole group discussion on thoughts of principal preparation. Get the responses, transcribe responses and see if they correlate to original participant responses.	Session 4: Presentation of common themes among principal responses on what they feel are the most important components	Debrief, sharing of results, and thank policymakers for their participation. Provide presenters contact information in case it is needed to help reach the goal of the study

*(table continues)*

Day 1 (Principals' Session)	Day 2 (Policymakers' Session)	Day 3 (Policymakers' Session)
3:45 – 4:15	3:15 – 4:15	
Debrief, provide summary on the days events, sharing of results, share how I will proceed to effect policy change, and thank principals for their participation	Session 5: Background on internship component, how principals feel it helps with the role, and principals recommendations to effect this change	

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Student**

Roles and responsibilities only exist for the Walden University student, me. The role of the student was to be the project creator. I also served as the transcriber and data analyzer. The responsibility of the student will be to arrange the Professional Development venue and invite principals as well as policymakers. I will then need to meet with principals to discuss findings and find out what the principals feel about the responses. The same interview questions will be asked of the principals at the first day of the Professional Development.

As the student, I will then need to present the PowerPoint on the findings from the internship component for the policymakers and present a PowerPoint on the findings from the school budget/finance component for the policymakers from the Texas



Education Agency. I will provide handouts of the PowerPoint and note taking material for the policymakers.

### **Project Evaluation**

Evaluation of the project will be summative. According to Michigan State University (2014) a summative evaluation assesses achievement with an end in mind such as a goal. A summative evaluation is being utilized to see if the goals of the professional development were met which were the first goal of having principals in agreement with the original participants responses on the most important components of a principal preparation program and the second goal of influencing the policymakers who are from the Texas Education Agency to change principal preparation programs based on data received from the professional development. The overall evaluation goals would be to ensure principals are in agreement with the original participant responses and ensure policymakers have been given enough data to change the principal preparation programs. A summative evaluation will be used to measure the growth and understanding of the professional development participants. The format utilized for this summative evaluation will be a yes or no response along with a one or two sentence written response.

The idea for a Professional Development to be shared with policymakers became more fully developed once I got my study started. During the data analysis phase of section one, I realized I needed to produce something that would be beneficial to aspiring principals and would allow institutions to prepare all aspiring principals in the same manner. As the project began to unfold, I realized I would be putting together a Professional Development that would support aspiring principals, but it was not until the

second part of the study that I finalized the project study product that would share the important components.

During the interview and data collection, I uncovered principals' perceptions regarding their preparedness for the principalship. Principals shared that they needed a principal preparation program that included the following components:

- Internship
- Exposure to school budget/finance

A questionnaire will be used to evaluate the Professional Development on whether the principals' and policymakers felt that the components would be feasible and help improve preparation programs. The evaluation will also ask principals and policymakers if they have any suggestions on improving the Professional Development and/or how they feel better responses could be collected. Overall, the project for the study addresses the components principals felt should be a part of preparation programs. In order to remain effective, policymakers will need to identify what actions are needed as well as ensure preparation programs are implementing these important components to train aspiring principals.

### **Project Implications**

#### **Possible Social Change**

This project study will address the need of principal preparation programs to better prepare aspiring principals. Serving as a Special Needs Coordinator and administrator of a head start campus I have witnessed areas in which I could have used additional training. Principal preparation programs with differing requirements have led

to a large number of principals who may not be fully prepared to take on their roles. After collecting data through the use of interview questions posed to current principals, it became apparent that aspiring principals needed two important components in their preparation programs to be successful in their jobs. They need to have meaningful internships and extensive involvement with school budget/finance. The principals who were interviewed expressed not being prepared with scenarios that arose as well as not being prepared to deal with a school budget. During the interviews, the principals expressed feeling ill-prepared for their roles which led some of their school to be low performing and not able to meet AYP.

Well prepared principals ensure that their students and staff are successful (personal communication May 29, 2014). Huang et al. (2012) emphasized that by being placed in the kinds of complex situations that characterize school interactions that aspiring leaders begin to develop the skills they will need to assume full responsibility for leading a school. In order for new principals to be successful in their roles principal preparation programs must ensure they have trained each candidate thoroughly to meet all needs of the position. This would lead to social change by allowing prepared principals to lead schools and students to be successful in state assessment scores and meeting AYP.

This Professional Development was developed to provide insight to policy makers for changes to me made to principal preparation programs. As evidenced by data collected during the study, principals expressed a need for improved preparation programs for aspiring principals. Implementing the proposed components could provide

aspiring principals with the training needed to be successful early on in their careers. School districts, students, parents, and community stakeholders will benefit from well-prepared administrators and this study will assist educational administrators with developing the most effective pedagogy to reinforce good habits among future principals. The information gathered from this study will be used to assist policy makers in developing leadership training programs for future K-12 administrators. Local stakeholders would include parents and local businesses who would know that the principal at their local school would be adequately prepared for the position he/she will be taking on.

### **Importance of the Project**

A thorough literature review on principal internships found that there was a need for these on-the-job training experiences for future principals. There are many different programs that prepare future principals and all of them have different program requirements as well as components. Despite the fact that these components were specific to school districts in south Texas, the components could be shared with school districts across the country via policymakers to ensure thorough preparation of aspiring principals. By improving the quality of mentoring and internship experiences, universities can increase the ability of new school leaders to address real school problems before they leave the starting gate for their first principalship (C. Gray, Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2006).

By providing principal preparation programs that are effective and contain the important components, school districts will be able to ensure success of first year principals.

### **Conclusion**

The project investigated veteran principals' ideas to find out what they feel are the most important components in preparing an aspiring principal. The project included a presentation for principals other than the participants. While the principals provided data indicating a need for specific component training, the principals attending the presentation provided either affirmation or disagreed with the data. As for the policymakers, the data was basically two fold. First was to present the data so policymakers understood the importance of including the identified component training. Second was to have policymakers take this data and assist in changing rules, guidelines, or law as needed to include these components in principal preparation programs. The presentation demonstrated what the participating principals felt were the most important components of a principal preparation program. This Professional Development could be used to assist preparation programs in providing experiences to aspiring principals that will be meaningful. The professional development will focus on two components:

- Principal Internship
- Exposure to School budget/finance

The following section includes personal reflections and a scholarly analysis of the project study. The project strengths and recommendations for remediation of limitations will be discussed to identify how the components could improve the performance of first

year principals. Suggestions for future research and alternative solutions to the problem will also be addressed.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

This qualitative case study was conducted to explore what components current principals felt were the most important for a principal preparation program in the local area. The research for this project took place in a large city in southern Texas. The goal of this project was to examine what principals felt were the most important components of a principal preparation program.

After examining the participants' responses and conducting a second thorough review of literature on internships and school budget/finance, I decided to produce a professional development for policymakers to assist in creating effective principal preparation programs. Ideally, this professional development could be supported by policymakers and would provide the needed components to ensure aspiring principals were taught using effective components as documented in the findings of this research project.

The professional development would be done over a 3-day period. Day 1 would include a meeting with principals invited to attend to share the seven components found by J. Davis and Jazzar (2005), showing principals the original interview questions and responses from principals involved in the study, and asking the 16 principals the 12 interview questions as a whole group. The principals would then engage in discussions about preparedness in school budget and internships and how they prepare aspiring principals. All responses would be transcribed to share with the policymakers over the next 2 days of the professional development. Day 2 would consist of a presentation to

policymakers on school budget/finance showing the responses from the original interview questions and responses from the principal discussion the previous day. Day 3 would consist of a presentation to policymakers on an internship showing the responses from the original interview questions and responses from the principal discussion from the previous day. A closing meeting would include a roundtable discussion amongst the policymakers on how to incorporate the components into principal preparation programs.

### **Project Strengths**

This project study addresses the need for policymakers to create more effective principal preparation programs. A professional development session would share the responses of participating principals with other practicing principals and policymakers such as the Texas Education Agency to give a true indication of the need for principal preparation program changes. Meeting with practicing principals to share the findings of the participating principals and get their input on the identified components may reinforce the notion of the need for principal preparation program changes. The two components of internship and school budget/finance may also be reinforced by the practicing principals as possibly the content areas most in need. The professional development schedule also allows time for policymakers to have a discussion on how to improve principal preparation programs after listening to the interview responses. Clifton and Harter (2009) indicated two basic premises in development work. First, capitalizing in one's areas of talent is likely to lead to greater success. Therefore, professional development would enhance the attendees' knowledge and they would be more informed to make sound



decisions. Second, individuals gain more when they build on their talents than when they make comparable efforts to improve their areas of weakness.

The strength of training will be to impart knowledge. Through professional development, Fullan (2006) found that the main objectives are to deepen understanding of educational change, extend knowledge of cutting-edge research and practices of educational reform, show what capacities are needed to bring about effective school and community, and provide an opportunity to apply these lessons to the project. It is important to deepen the understanding of educational change for policymakers in order to facilitate change.

### **Project Limitations**

A 3-day time period for a professional development could be seen as a limitation, whereas using several smaller periods of time over a 6-month period may allow for policymakers to go back and reflect on ideas and come to the next session with new ideas. Albion, Forkosh-Baruch, and Tondeur (2013) found that despite progress in some areas, a major challenge remains to engage all stakeholders in developing a shared vision about the role in education, with a focus on professional development, in order to realize the vision and there is a need for educational research more closely connected to the practice.

Another limitation could be only meeting with policymakers from the Texas Education Agency and not including other states. Delivery to policymakers may also be seen as a potential limitation. Thomas, Billington, and Getliffe (2004) indicated that there

are many ways to communicate; it is not only the idea of transmitting a message, but also how to deliver the message effectively.

### **Alternative Ways to Address the Problem**

The problem of principal preparation programs that do not fully prepare future principals can be addressed in alternative ways. Policymakers can ensure preparation programs employ instructors and guest speakers who give aspiring principals firsthand knowledge of the program content. Ensuring every preparation program has an internship along with a mentor and the same number of hours or more could allow aspiring principals to get a good grasp of situations they will be dealing with in their future role. Making internship hours mandatory in the school budget/finance area would allow aspiring principals to gain knowledge in a critical area and incorporate the internship component as well.

### **Scholarship**

Over the course of this research project, I have learned a wealth of information regarding scholarly research and reporting. I have learned how to read and interpret scholarly writing and how to question everything I read for validity. I have found that I am able to quickly navigate through an article of scholarly writing to retrieve the information I need. I have noticed through this process that I have become a source of information for people as they begin their own academic journey as well as when they begin their first principalship.

I have become a master at organizing information in order to retrieve it as well as cite it. I credit this to sessions I attended while at the Walden University residency. Even

though I prefer printing out all journal articles I need, I have found a way to extract the exact data I need rather than printing out entire documents. This makes it easier for me to disaggregate data and gives me an organized way to keep track of scholarly sources.

As I conducted my research, I learned to embrace the unexpected. When I originally started my study, I intended to carry out a quantitative study. I wanted something I could validate with numbers and not come out with a product that would include perceptions. After several conversations with my chair, we decided a qualitative study would fit better with my topic and let me fully examine what components principals felt were the most important of a principal preparation program. It was not until I concluded the interviews that I realized the importance of a qualitative study. The insight I gained from the principal responses was invaluable to my research and really allowed me to produce a professional development that will benefit policymakers and aspiring principals.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

Evaluation of the project study will be two-fold. One part will be the feedback from the principals attending the professional development. The second part will be feedback from the policymakers. Principals will either agree or disagree with the data presented and suggest that principal preparation programs should change or remain the same. Policymakers will either agree or disagree with the data and will attempt to make changes in principal preparation programs or allow them to remain the same.

## Leadership and Change

Ever since I can remember, the principalship, has been a term and practice that has intrigued me. As a young child I remember looking at my father and thinking a principalship took extensive hard work. I recall going through elementary school and observing the interactions the principal would have with the students as well as the influence the principal had on the staff, students, and parents. I continued on this path all the way through high school because I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps and become a school principal.

Cheney and Davis (2011) defined a principal as one who develops teachers by creating a culture of high expectations and teacher collaboration, establishing the foundational data and instructional systems that are key to strong teaching, observing and giving feedback on teacher practice, and providing targeted professional development to improve instruction. (p. 23-24)

The principalship of today is a demanding position. The complex role of the principal is not an accidental product of history, it was an intentional component of the role when it was originally conceived (Rousmaniere, 2013). On reflection, I think that being a leader in the national honor society as well as an athlete helped me to realize that it was my responsibility to be a leader in all aspects of life. I needed to lead by example in the classroom and on the field. I had to demonstrate my ability to listen to others as well as perform to my potential on and off the field. I attribute those early leadership experiences to my own personal development of my leadership practices today.

When I was teaching I heard my father tell the district staff, “Parents send you the best kids they have and if they had any better they would send you those also.” I found as an assistant principal I had to continue to educate myself and learn to assist others in becoming successful with their students. As a campus administrator and Special Needs Coordinator, I feel that it is my job to utilize my past experiences and school knowledge to support the teachers I work with at school. As a leader of two first year teachers I am not required to have every answer to questions they have, but to work with them and ensure they are successful in educating the students. A leader is one who will do what they can to assist his staff and lead by example. Over the years through my experiences and through watching my father I have learned to be a servant for the students, parents, staff, and community by always keeping the best interests of the students at heart.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

Throughout this academic journey I have learned a great deal about myself. I found that when I set goals for myself I was able to accomplish tasks in a reasonable amount of time. I learned how to be a full time administrator, adjunct faculty member, and avid runner. This program taught me to believe in myself and never give up no matter how much more work I had to complete. When I began the program I felt that writing a more than 100 page document would be almost impossible and boring. While going through the literature and countless submissions of drafts, I have successfully completed the task and have gained the attributes necessary to say my writing is scholarly and I know how to research and report in a manner that is nothing but scholarly.

### **Analysis of Self as a Practitioner**

Through this project study I discovered what I had felt was true about myself, I would like to assist principals since I hope to be one soon. This was fully evident when I was doing the interviews and saw how the principals I was interviewing wanted to be of help to aspiring principals so they wouldn't make the same mistakes. When I was listening to the responses I could see how these components would be helpful to me and other aspiring principals. During the interviews and getting to know the principal participants, I recognized that my ideal job for the present time would be a principal and after some years of experience to move into a role to assist aspiring principals. I am passionate about being successful and seeing others being successful whether it's my students or co-workers.

As an individual who is an aspiring principal, I plan to continue to research this topic and keep up to date with literature to ensure my first year as a principal will be successful. I am hoping policymakers will instill these components in principal preparation programs so that future leaders will be set up for success.

### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

As a project developer, I learned the importance of patience and revision. I learned that you have to be able to accept criticism, be open to new ideas, and utilize feedback. I have discovered that what I wanted to develop ended up becoming clearer and easily done with suggestions from my committee members.

I learned how to make a schedule that I could stick to and that it was important to follow it. I learned that in order for me to have a life, work, and complete my degree that

I had to adjust my hours for work, play, and school. I became an evening writer and would go to the computer lab at the university I taught at where I would put on my headphones to ensure I would not be interrupted.

One area of project improvement that I would recommend is that of finding a topic at the beginning of the program and gearing all of your research papers in the program towards your topic. During this journey I have encountered and still continue to talk to other doctoral candidates who did not get supporting documentation during their program. Each stage of the project was included in a course and developed as part of the course, but if the topic changes all of that work does not apply. If I had a topic that was useable this type of structure would have helped me develop my project better and cut back on the setbacks of finding a new topic.

As a project developer I motivated myself to take steps and get to the different stages in the project which led me to the culminating project. My time in this program has allowed me to develop a PowerPoint which will not only impact aspiring principals, but also the students, parents, staff, and community. This Professional Development will allow policymakers to incorporate issues that are most pressing into principal preparation programs. By doing this it will assist the educational community to succeed.

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

The results of this project study will allow policymakers to see principals responses on what they feel are the most important components of a principal preparation. In the case of this research study the components identified were an internship and exposure to school budget/finance. Walden University defines social

change as, “as a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies” (Walden University Catalog, para. 1). The implementation of this project study touches on many of the descriptive words of this definition. The Professional Development on the most important components of a principal preparation program will provide positive social change in preparing aspiring principals to be successful in their future roles and, consequently, improve success for students.

The Professional Development may bring about positive social change for aspiring principals as well as veteran principals who may want to get extra exposure to school budget/finance. The researcher found that an internship component is very important and that was evident from participants who had an internship as well as some who did not have an internship. According to T. I. Gray (2001) learning is best when it is hands-on. An individual can read and study all literature available but the ultimate test comes when the individual is actually in the trenches doing what needs to be done. Principal internships can equip interns with the skills and experience that is necessary to be successful in their first year. Columbia University Center for Career Education (2014) found that learning opportunities can help you make informed decisions by participating in internships because they provide the opportunity to get an inside view of the organization, gain valuable skills, make professional connections, and get experience in the field. If the Professional Development gets policymakers to change preparation programs it could provide lasting changes for future principals and certifying institutions.



The potential for this study to make positive social change could be reproduced on a larger scale to include more states or go nationwide.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

This project study addresses the need to provide an effective principal preparation programs for aspiring principals. While the results of the study specifically target the perceptions of current principals in a large city in southern Texas, the findings are supported by literature. It is my hope that the research findings for this study will assist not only my city and state, but school districts across the nation one day to recognize how to effectively prepare aspiring principals.

Being a principal in today's schools requires leaders to be well prepared and able to make split second decisions. According to the job description of a principal from the South San Antonio ISD website (2014) a principal must be able to: Direct and manage instructional program and supervise operations and personnel at campus level, provide leadership to ensure high standards of instructional service, oversee compliance with district policies, guarantee success of instructional programs, and guide operation of all campus activities. With this in mind, research for this study found that principals, although going through different certifying programs, all felt that the most important components of a principal preparation program are an internship and exposure to school budget/finance.

This project study was designed to meet the demands and challenges of a principal. Although the results are meant for aspiring principals it can also be applied to

professional development for veteran principals and inform certifying institutions who can benefit from the findings.

Future research could improve upon the findings of this study by questioning principals about the components once again after policymakers have improved the internship and exposure to school budget/finance in preparation programs. Conversations with a former Superintendent from this city in southern Texas revealed that principals are not coming into their new roles fully prepared for the task of being a principal (personal communication May 30, 2014). The biggest challenge to institutions, that could also be an important research study, would be to document this need and find a way to financially support effective internships and exposure to school budget/finance.

### **Conclusion**

This project study was developed as a response to conversations with principals who felt that they were not adequately prepared for their roles as principals and the performance of their schools showed the unpreparedness. The findings for the study indicated that current principals felt that aspiring principals in preparation programs could benefit from an internship and exposure to school budget/finance. Using interviews with current principals afforded me the opportunity to gather data on what components principals felt were most important for principal preparation programs. During the study the following determination of the most important components of a principal preparation program were made:

- Internship
- Exposure to school budget/finance

From these findings I was able to develop a PowerPoint presentation that would be shared with policymakers to improve principal preparation programs.

This section involved my personal reflections on the project and my conclusions as a project developer, scholar, recommendations of strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for future research, and the impact my project had on social change. It was very rewarding to me to complete this section of the project study because it allowed me to look back at the last 6 years in Walden's doctoral program and reflect on my ability to transform into a professional scholar. It is exciting to realize that my research could potentially assist future principals to go into their roles to be set up to be successful. By providing this information to policymakers it will promote social change in the field of principal preparation.

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Appendix A: Principal Professional Development PowerPoint



**THE MOST IMPORTANT  
COMPONENTS OF A PRINCIPAL  
PREPARATION PROGRAM  
(PRINCIPAL SESSION)**

## GOALS

- Present findings to the principals and see if there is agreement and/or additional findings



## 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

- Locate the handout with the 7 habits with each habits explanation
- Please take 10 minutes to read over the handout
- Do you see any habits that are missing that you may have encountered in your role?



### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Please break up into groups of 6
- There will 7 groups which will rotate through each of the 7 habits
- On each table you will find a pad and pen
- Each group will discuss the habit and jot down notes from your discussion on the question below
- All notes will be collected at the conclusion of the session
- Do you agree with this being an important habit of a principal preparation program and why?



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Break into 12 groups of 5
- Each group will take an interview question and rotate through all 12 tables to discuss the interview question and answer it as a group
- Please read the question and write your groups response to the question. If there are different responses please note them in a bulleted fashion



## SHARING OF PARTICIPANT DATA

- Please look at the handout with the themes found in the original participant responses along with literature which supports the themes
- A poll will be taken with show of hands on agreement with the interview question responses and themes found



## DEBRIEF

- Original participant data along with data taken from the notes taken from each group at the 7 habits will be shared with policymakers over the next 2 days
- Please complete the evaluation for this Professional Development
- Thank you for your participation



## Appendix B: Handouts for Principal PowerPoint

## Handout #1

## The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs

1. Curriculum & instructional experiences
2. Clinical learning internships
3. Providing mentors
4. Collaborative experiences
5. Authentic assessment
6. Research-based decision making
7. Turnkey transitions

## Brief explanation of the habits

1. Curriculum and instruction to provide relevant, standards based, and job-embedded curricular and instructional experiences. This habit allows for the aspiring principals to learn and share activities related to curriculum and instruction to lead school improvements. Once the activities were learned and shared the aspiring principals could reflect on how to utilize them for their specific school improvements.
2. Clinical learning internships allowed aspiring principals to experience relevant and timely learning opportunities by participating in them. These internships were designed to embrace bold, new strategies and provide realistic experiences beyond descriptive studies. Some programs required candidates to take part in these intensive learning experiences at various sites.
3. Providing mentors who act as coaches, guides, or resource leaders for aspiring principals which is integral to all successful preparation programs. They found the key to successful mentors was to have principals who were experienced who could encourage the candidates. The aspiring principals should be encouraged to be candid, critical, and reflective.
4. Collaborative experiences resulted in internal networking, teamwork, and cooperative initiatives, and were considered vital experiences of good principal preparation programs. The authors supported collaboration in learning communities especially communities with other



aspiring principals. The learning communities should also include experienced exemplary principals and university faculty.

5. Authentic assessment of participants in effective principal preparation programs no longer is based on paper pencil testing. Instead aspiring principals are asked to write a student include a community relations manual or a new teacher orientation.
6. Research-based decision making instilled the importance of making decisions based on research rather than impulse or nearsightedness. Davis & Jazzar (2005) suggested for the aspiring principals to be given opportunities to utilize a systematic approach where they gather and analyze data. This data would then be used for school improvement and student achievement.
7. Turn key transitions should be focus on strong leadership skills, grounded with in-depth knowledge of leadership theory and best practices. These programs produce graduates primed for success in their first principalship. The authors feel the principals should be able to get – ready, set, go, succeed. These four words should be the intent of an effective principal preparation program.

## Handout #2

### Interview Question Responses

#### **Question 1. Please describe your principal preparation program?** Each

participant seemed relaxed as the interviews began with the first question. Question 1 asked the participants to describe the preparation program they went through to get their principal certificate. 12 of the 16 participants went through a university-based certification program where they received their master's degree and principal certificate. Four of the participants went through a certification-only program after they had already received their master's degree.

**Question 2. How prepared do you feel you were in the area of curriculum and instruction through your program?** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

**1:** “I feel that my program prepared me to go into the classroom and share strategies for teachers to help their instruction.”

**2:** “My program quickly introduced the class to the topic of curriculum and what it entailed, but it was just a quick introduction nothing with substance.”

**3:** “My program did not make any mention of curriculum and instruction because we were taught how to manage a school and keep it in order. There was nothing on curriculum and instruction.”

**4:** “The program I went through had us go through the state standards of what is expected for each grade level. This really opened my eyes to a side of education I had never really experienced because I was only a PE teacher.”

**5:** “My program had a current Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum come in to teach the course and show us how their curriculum departments function. She was very helpful and answered all questions we had. There is so much involved in the curriculum aspect of being a principal.”

**6:** “The program I went through started out with a course on curriculum and instruction with a retired superintendent of instruction, but she could not teach anymore so a retired principal came in to teach. The insight we got was not as good from the principal as from the superintendent.”

**7:** “There were no courses or exposure to curriculum and instruction in my program. The main focus was on campus climate and discipline. I sure wish we would have got at least a crash course on curriculum.”

**8:** “We actually had a class which took place at a district curriculum office. The director of curriculum was our instructor and was awesome. He knew all his information and gave us scenarios and examples to use for future reference.”

**9:** “The program I went through was very quick. We were taught how to manage a campus and how to work with teachers. There was never a class or session on curriculum.”

**10:** “I went through a program that gave the class a quick rundown of what was involved with curriculum so I don’t feel it prepared me at all.”

**11:** “There was no mention of curriculum in my program. It seems our instructors just wanted to rush us through the program.”

**12:** “I wish our program would have given us a course or two on curriculum. I had to learn my information on curriculum as being the curriculum assistant principal.”

**13:** “My program gave us a speaker on curriculum each session we met. The program coordinators brought in different curriculum directors each session to give us different views on the topic.”

**14:** “My program had no aspect of curriculum and instruction. I thought we would at least get a class or two about it, but there was none.”

**15:** “My program director quickly went over how curriculum is incorporated in the principal role, but it was not enough to fully understand the duties of a principal within the topic.”

**16:** “My program had no mention of curriculum. Other colleagues told me their programs gave them session with substance on the subject, but mine gave me no experience.”

**Question 3 Did your program have an internship component? Please elaborate on your response.** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

**1:** “Yes, my program had an internship component. I was a 40 hour internship that we needed to do for a grade.”

**2:** “Yes, my program consisted of an internship that was 45 hours. We had to keep a log of what we did during those 45 hours.”

**3:** “My program consisted of a 60 hour internship component. We had to ask the principal or assistant principal to be our mentor and sign off that we had completed our hours working with them.”

**4:** “Yes, my program had an internship component. The internship we were asked to do and keep a log of was for 45 hours.”

**5:** “Yes, my program consisted of a 55 hour internship. We were given a log to fill out to tell what we did for our hours and it had to be signed by the principal.”

**6:** “My program consisted of a 30 hour internship. I was very surprised because other people I talked to had to do more hours. I kept track of what I did so that I could provide a list to the professor for a grade.”

**7:** “Yes, my program consisted of an internship of 60 hours. We were asked to keep a log of duties we did during the hours.”

**8:** “No, there was no internship component to my program.”

**9:** “The program I went through had a 55 hour internship. We had to work with our principal and do any duties assigned or go to meetings with them as instructed.”

**10:** “Yes, my program had a 60 hour internship component. We had to keep a log that was turned in at the end of the semester to show the professor we completed our hours.”

**11:** “Yes, in my program we had to do a 40 hour internship. We kept a journal to explain what we did during our internship hours.”

**12:** “There was no internship component in my program.”

**13:** “No, my program did not have an internship component. When I told my principal he was surprised that the program did not require an internship.”

**14:** “Yes, my program had a 60 hour internship component. We had to keep a log of the hours and what we did during the hours of the internship.”

**15:** “No, my program did not require an internship. I thought it was weird because I had other colleagues who had to do internships in their programs.”

**16:** “My program consisted of a 60 hour internship. We were required by our teacher to keep a journal to document what we did during our hours.”

**Question 4. Did your program provide mentors for the candidates? Please elaborate on your response.** 14 participants responded that they were given a mentor and 2 participants responded that they were not given a mentor. 12 of the participants responded that their mentor was a principal or assistant principal who was working at their current campus, 2 of the participants responded that their mentor was a former principal working with their certification only program, and 2 participants responded they did not have mentors in their certification-only programs.

**Question 5. Did your program have an aspect that exposed you to collaborative experiences with your program faculty, peers, and experienced principals?** 11 of the participants responded that they did have exposure to collaborative experiences while 5 of the participants responded that no part of their program included any exposure to collaborative experiences.

**Question 6. Did your program provide you with opportunities to practice decision making for your future role?** 11 participants responded that their programs did provide them with opportunities where former principals gave feedback to responses aspiring principals gave for practice decision making situations. 5 of the participants responded that there were no opportunities for decision making exercises.

**Question 7. Do you feel your program prepared you for the transition into the role of principal? Please elaborate on your response.** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

- 1:** “Yes, it prepared me for the transition. It helped me to be prepared for all the duties and multi-tasking that would need to take place.”
- 2:** “No, I do not feel I was prepared. My program could have given us more information on curriculum and assessments to help be ready for state assessments.”
- 3:** “No, I do not feel I was ready. The program just seemed to rush and get through with no real substance to help us.”
- 4:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. It was a difficult transition because I did not know what to expect in the position.”
- 5:** “No, I wasn’t prepared for the position. I feel more help in scenarios that would happen in the position would have helped.”
- 6:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. The instructors in the program just seemed bored and like they wanted to hurry and get us through without giving us any real exposure to what we would experience.”
- 7:** “Yes, I was prepared for the transition. My program allowed me to get proper internship experience and brought in great guest speakers to help us prepare for what to expect.”
- 8:** “No, I was not ready for the transition. Not having an internship really hurt me because I had no idea what to expect in the position.”
- 9:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. I don’t feel my program fully prepared me or at least somewhat prepared me to take on the extensive duties of the position.”

**10:** “Yes, I feel I was prepared for the transition. The instructors were very courteous and knowledgeable. They shared a lot of information from their work experiences and that helped to prepare for the job.”

**11:** “No, I was not ready for the transition into the job. I think the program could have allowed us more hands on opportunities or at least real life decision making situations.”

**12:** “No, I do not feel I was prepared for the transition. Other people I know were able to have guest speakers who were in the positions of the topics they were there to discuss so we could get some exposure.”

**13:** “No, I do not feel I was ready for the transition. An internship would have allowed for some real life exposure to what we would be doing in the position.”

**14:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. My program seemed to just want my money and wanted to get me through the program quick. A well planned out program would be helpful.”

**15:** “No, I wasn’t ready for the transition. A principal needs to be knowledgeable and know answers. My program did nothing to prepare me for the position.”

**16:** “Yes, I feel I was ready for the transition. I gained a lot of information and techniques to assist me have a smooth transition into the principal role.”

**Question 8. Are there any habits of a principal preparation you feel are helpful which were not mentioned?** The habits were shared with the participants so they could know what they were. Responses from the participants are included for the research question.



- 1:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be helpful.”
- 2:** “Finance exposure would surely be helpful.”
- 3:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be of great help if explained thoroughly.”
- 4:** “School finance would be of great help if explained to us for the position.”
- 5:** “School budget would be helpful to include because I never got exposure to it.”
- 6:** “Budget is an area that would be helpful to have some background in.”
- 7:** “Finance is very important and I’m surprised it was not part of the habits already.”
- 8:** “School budget/finance is an important part of the job and needs to be explained to principals in their preparation.”
- 9:** “Budget needs to be taught to future principals because there is no previous exposure to it.”
- 10:** “Financial exposure would help principals get some experience with school budgets.”
- 11:** “School budget should be a habit because it is a difficult part of the job.”
- 12:** “School finance is difficult to teach yourself so some exposure is better than none.”
- 13:** “Finance is a habit that needs to be added. I had no idea how to do it when I went into the position.”
- 14:** “Budget is very difficult and needs to be incorporated in the principal preparation programs.”

**15:** “School finance/budget was never reviewed so it was hard for me in my first year as a principal.”

**16:** “Budget has to be a habit because it is an essential part of the job of a principal.”

**Question 9. What do you feel is the most important aspect of an effective principal preparation program?** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

**1:** “The internship is the most important aspect. It gives hands on experience.”

**2:** “Exposure through an internship allows future principals to see what they will be doing in their position.”

**3:** “Incorporating real life scenarios allowed me to see how to respond to situations where split second decisions need to be made.”

**4:** “An internship with a mentor allows you to ask questions of someone in a position you can learn from.”

**5:** “An internship allows one to gain hands on experience for their future role.”

**6:** “A meaningful internship

**7:** Internship

**8:** “A mentored Internship would be very beneficial since my program did not have one.”

**9:** “An internship component lets candidates see what they will be doing in their role.”

**10:** “An internship allows aspiring principals to see what a day in their future role will most likely involve.”

**11:** “Internship to experience real life scenarios lets candidates see what they will be doing and how to respond to situations that arise.”

**12:** “Real world experience like an internship would be helpful. I wish my program would have had that aspect.”

**13:** “An internship would really be beneficial in a program all colleagues I had who went through one seemed to have an easier time easing in their role.”

**14:** “An internship puts aspiring principals in a role to be successful and learn from a veteran in the role already.”

**15:** “An internship with mentors is helpful so that you can gain experience from those in the position already.”

**16:** “Internships allow us to experience the position in real life so that we can be prepared for when we are in the principal shoes.”

**Question 10. What are your recommendations for preparedness?** Responses from the participants are included below.

**1:** “You can never be too prepared for the principal role.”

**2:** “Ask a lot of questions to veteran principals. You can always use assistance.”

**3:** “No one can be fully prepared for the position. Always be on your guard and expect the unexpected.”

**4:** “Meet with department staff to see what the campus needs are and collaborate for decision making.”

5: “Always be professional in all encounters because you never know who people know.”

6: “You have to be able to multitask daily. The job doesn’t pause for you.”

7: “Be ready for anything because each day is a new day.”

8: “Be aware of your surroundings and never let your guard down. Kids are sneaky.”

9: “Be prepared for a fast moving, never ending position. You’re always on the go.”

10: “Get as much exposure as you can during your internship because it comes in handy.”

11: “Prepare yourself with the internship and ask a lot of questions.”

12: “You have to be able to make well thought out split second decisions.”

13: “Don’t be afraid to ask questions because you need to get answers.”

14: “Look at the big picture and for any repercussions that may come from decisions you make.”

15: “Be prepared because if something bad can happen more than likely it will happen.”

16: “Always make your decisions with the best interest of the kids in mind.”

**Question 11. What type of preparation do you feel would be important for a first year principal?** Responses from the participants are included below.

1: “Real world experiences through internships allow principals to see what the position will be like.”

- 2:** “Budget exposure and a more meaningful internship can help a first year principal experience success.”
- 3:** “Internship and exposure to Adequate Yearly Progress lets principals see what the position will be like.”
- 4:** “School finance preparation will give a principal a experience in an area they won’t have to learn later.”
- 5:** “Real world scenarios for all roles of a principal allow you to know what to expect in the position and be prepared for the role.”
- 6:** “School budget experience will prepare a future principal to be ready to run the school and not waste a lot of time learning about budget.”
- 7:** “School finance and state assessment preparation would allow principals to just into the role and be ready to work with the budget and come up with strategies for teachers to utilize with students takings the assessments.”
- 8:** “Being flexible with others prepares a principal who will be dealing with many different personalities be calm and patient with students, parents, and staff.”
- 9:** “Staying organized when under pressure would allow principals to always seem calm and in control so that they don’t look like they are not prepared for the position.”
- 10:** “School budget preparation would allow a principal to spend more time on focusing on state assessments and AYP.”
- 11:** “A meaningful internship that has real world exposure would allow a principal to prepare for what he/she may face in the role.”

**12:** “Internships and school finance would prepare principals for the situations they will encounter and teach them how to work the schools budget in a positive manner.”

**13:** “Budget experience and better internships would give principals the experience needed to transition into the role and make a positive impact on the school.”

**14:** “School budget/finance exposure would allow a future principal to take one their role and be ready to know what areas are being discussed when the budget is referenced rather than having to learn from scratch.”

**15:** “Internship exposure allows aspiring principals to experience tasks that they will need to do in the role and they can learn how to be successful at those tasks.”

**16:** “School budget and internship experience will allow future principals the opportunity to step into their roles with a good foundation on how to perform successfully in their new role.”

**Question 12. Do you have any other information about your preparedness or lack of preparedness that you would like to share?** Responses from the participants are included below.

**1:** “Always be prepared for the worst to happen even if you have good training.”

**2:** “Be ready for a fast paced work life the day does not wait for you it keeps on going.”

**3:** “Lack of preparedness made it difficult to transition so learn as much as you can and be ready for the role.”

- 4: "I would have been prepared if I was trained properly so ask questions and pay attention during your internship."
- 5: "Network with others so that you can ask questions and get assistance."
- 6: "Be ready for anything to happen because if it can happen more than likely it will."
- 7: "Get mentor input when you can because they have been through similar situations."
- 8: "Programs need to expose to candidates more of what they will experience so they can be successful in their new roles."
- 9: "Programs need to better prepare principals to meet the changing demands of Education so they can be ready to be successful and make a positive impact."
- 10: "Visit others to see how they go about their roles to get ideas and assistance."
- 11: "Programs should prepare principals for any and every scenario that may arise. Good guest speakers can help give ideas about what to expect from the role."
- 12: "Get to know colleague's that you can ask questions to especially veteran principals."
- 13: "Be prepared for anything to happen and ready to act each day is interesting."
- 14: "Stay calm and take a look at the big picture before making drastic decisions."
- 15: "As long as you keep the best interest of students at heart you will be successful."
- 16: "Network with colleague's so that you can have someone to ask questions for

things you may not fully understand.”

All principals who completed the interviews were current public school principals. The findings which came from the participant responses were direct answers to the research problem which was to find out which components principals felt were the most important in a principal preparation program.

#### Handout #3

Several reoccurring themes and responses emerged. Internship and exposure to school budget/finance were the themes that emerged.

The responses which led an internship to be a theme are listed below

- 1:** “The internship is the most important aspect. It gives hands on experience.”
- 2:** “Exposure through an internship allows future principals to see what they will be doing in their position.”
- 3:** “Incorporating real life scenarios allowed me to see how to respond to situations where split second decisions need to be made.”
- 4:** “An internship with a mentor allows you to ask questions of someone in a position you can learn from.”
- 5:** “An internship allows one to gain hands on experience for their future role.”
- 6:** “A meaningful internship
- 7:** Internship
- 8:** “A mentored Internship would be very beneficial since my program did not have one.”



**9:** “An internship component lets candidates see what they will be doing in their role.”

**10:** “An internship allows aspiring principals to see what a day in their future role will most likely involve.”

**11:** “Internship to experience real life scenarios lets candidates see what they will be doing and how to respond to situations that arise.”

**12:** “Real world experience like an internship would be helpful. I wish my program would have had that aspect.”

**13:** “An internship would really be beneficial in a program all colleagues I had who went through one seemed to have an easier time easing in their role.”

**14:** “An internship puts aspiring principals in a role to be successful and learn from a veteran in the role already.”

**15:** “An internship with mentors is helpful so that you can gain experience from those in the position already.”

**16:** “Internships allow us to experience the position in real life so that we can be prepared for when we are in the principal shoes.”

The responses which led exposure to school budget/finance to be a theme are listed below

**1:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be helpful.”

**2:** “Finance exposure would surely be helpful.”

**3:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be of great help if explained thoroughly.”

**4:** “School finance would be of great help if explained to us for the position.”

- 5:** “School budget would be helpful to include because I never got exposure to it.”
- 6:** “Budget is an area that would be helpful to have some background in.”
- 7:** “Finance is very important and I’m surprised it was not part of the habits already.”
- 8:** “School budget/finance is an important part of the job and needs to be explained to principals in their preparation.”
- 9:** “Budget needs to be taught to future principals because there is no previous exposure to it.”
- 10:** “Financial exposure would help principals get some experience with school budgets.”
- 11:** “School budget should be a habit because it is a difficult part of the job.”
- 12:** “School finance is difficult to teach yourself so some exposure is better than none.”
- 13:** “Finance is a habit that needs to be added. I had no idea how to do it when I went into the position.”
- 14:** “Budget is very difficult and needs to be incorporated in the principal preparation programs.”
- 15:** “School finance/budget was never reviewed so it was hard for me in my first year as a principal.”
- 16:** “Budget has to be a habit because it is an essential part of the job of a principal.”

## Evaluation

**Professional Development Evaluation Reflection**

Title of Professional Development: Most Important Components of Principal Preparation Programs

Professional Development Provider: Frank Zavala

Subject area/Grade levels:

Short Description of Activities: Review and develop any new components for principal preparation programs that can be shared with policymakers to improve preparation programs.

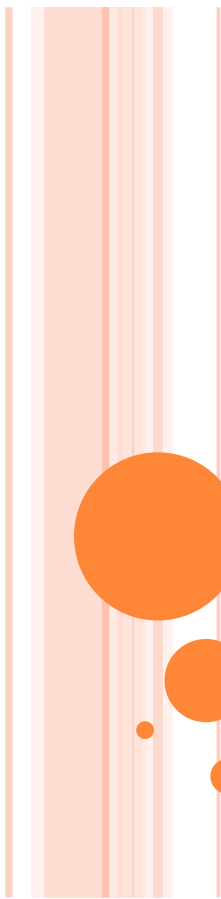
*These questions are intended as a guide for you to reflect on the design of the content of the Professional Development and best practices for Professional Development.*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Yes/No/NA</i>	<i>Evidence/Reflection</i>
Is the professional development based on the needs of participants?		
Is the professional development based on the needs of participants?		
Does the professional development incorporate components you feel are a true representation of the principal role?		
Does the professional development incorporate components you feel are a true representation of the		

principal role?		
How does the new learning assist principals in creating a safe, supportive and equitable learning environment for students?		
What skills were shared to help update preparation programs?		
Is the professional development determined based on principal role preparation data?		
How does this professional development program support a plan for better principal preparation programs?		
How helpful do you feel the professional development was in gaining information on better preparing principals?		

Appendix C: Policymakers Professional Development PowerPoint

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**THE MOST IMPORTANT  
COMPONENTS OF A PRINCIPAL  
PREPARATION PROGRAM  
(POLICYMAKERS SESSION)**

## THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

- Explanations of the 7 habits can be found on the handouts at your table
- Please take a moment to look at the habits and discuss at your table whether you feel they are sufficient or if there are some that may be missing



## PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

- On the next handout you will find the responses from the original participants along with themes that were found
- When you turn that sheet over you will find notes taken by principals from the first day of the professional development to see similarities and differences with original responses and themes
- Do you agree with the responses? Please mark down how many participants are in agreement and how many are not in agreement



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Handout on literature supporting valuable professional development
- Please discuss at your table whether you feel the literature does support the themes found in the responses. Please take a vote and notate the agreement or disagreement on the sheet of paper





## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Sharing of information on effects of proper preparation
- Look at handouts on the issues affecting principals without proper preparation



## DEBRIEF

- Conclusion on positive effects of proper principal preparation
- Please complete the evaluation for this Professional Development
- Thank you for your participation

- Presenter

Frank Zavala

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## Appendix D: Handouts for Policymakers Professional Development

### Handout #1

#### The Seven Habits of Effective Principal Preparation Programs

1. Curriculum & instructional experiences
2. Clinical learning internships
3. Providing mentors
4. Collaborative experiences
5. Authentic assessment
6. Research-based decision making
7. Turnkey transitions

#### Brief explanation of the habits

1. Curriculum and instruction to provide relevant, standards based, and job-embedded curricular and instructional experiences. This habit allows for the aspiring principals to learn and share activities related to curriculum and instruction to lead school improvements. Once the activities were learned and shared the aspiring principals could reflect on how to utilize them for their specific school improvements.
2. Clinical learning internships allowed aspiring principals to experience relevant and timely learning opportunities by participating in them. These internships were designed to embrace bold, new strategies and provide realistic experiences beyond descriptive studies. Some programs required candidates to take part in these intensive learning experiences at various sites.
3. Providing mentors who act as coaches, guides, or resource leaders for aspiring principals which is integral to all successful preparation programs. They found the key to successful mentors was to have principals who were experienced who could encourage the candidates. The aspiring principals should be encouraged to be candid, critical, and reflective.
4. Collaborative experiences resulted in internal networking, teamwork, and cooperative initiatives, and were considered vital experiences of good principal preparation programs. The authors supported collaboration in learning communities especially communities with

- other aspiring principals. The learning communities should also include experienced exemplary principals and university faculty.
5. Authentic assessment of participants in effective principal preparation programs no longer is based on paper pencil testing. Instead aspiring principals are asked to write a student include a community relations manual or a new teacher orientation.
  6. Research-based decision making instilled the importance of making decisions based on research rather than impulse or nearsightedness. Davis & Jazzar (2005) suggested for the aspiring principals to be given opportunities to utilize a systematic approach where they gather and analyze data. This data would then be used for school improvement and student achievement.
  7. Turn key transitions should be focus on strong leadership skills, grounded with in-depth knowledge of leadership theory and best practices. These programs produce graduates primed for success in their first principalship. The authors feel the principals should be able to get – ready, set, go, succeed. These four words should be the intent of an effective principal preparation program.

Handout #2

#### Interview Question Responses

##### **Question 1. Please describe your principal preparation program?** Each

participant seemed relaxed as the interviews began with the first question. Question 1 asked the participants to describe the preparation program they went through to get their principal certificate. 12 of the 16 participants went through a university-based certification program where they received their master's degree and principal certificate. Four of the participants went through a certification-only program after they had already received their master's degree.

**Question 2. How prepared do you feel you were in the area of curriculum and instruction through your program?** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

**1:** “I feel that my program prepared me to go into the classroom and share strategies for teachers to help their instruction.”

**2:** “My program quickly introduced the class to the topic of curriculum and what it entailed, but it was just a quick introduction nothing with substance.”

**3:** “My program did not make any mention of curriculum and instruction because we were taught how to manage a school and keep it in order. There was nothing on curriculum and instruction.”

**4:** “The program I went through had us go through the state standards of what is expected for each grade level. This really opened my eyes to a side of education I had never really experienced because I was only a PE teacher.”

**5:** “My program had a current Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum come in to teach the course and show us how their curriculum departments function. She was very helpful and answered all questions we had. There is so much involved in the curriculum aspect of being a principal.”

**6:** “The program I went through started out with a course on curriculum and instruction with a retired superintendent of instruction, but she could not teach anymore so a retired principal came in to teach. The insight we got was not as good from the principal as from the superintendent.”

**7:** “There were no courses or exposure to curriculum and instruction in my program. The main focus was on campus climate and discipline. I sure wish we would have got at least a crash course on curriculum.”

**8:** “We actually had a class which took place at a district curriculum office. The director of curriculum was our instructor and was awesome. He knew all his information and gave us scenarios and examples to use for future reference.”

**9:** “The program I went through was very quick. We were taught how to manage a campus and how to work with teachers. There was never a class or session on curriculum.”

**10:** “I went through a program that gave the class a quick rundown of what was involved with curriculum so I don’t feel it prepared me at all.”

**11:** “There was no mention of curriculum in my program. It seems our instructors just wanted to rush us through the program.”

**12:** “I wish our program would have given us a course or two on curriculum. I had to learn my information on curriculum as being the curriculum assistant principal.”

**13:** “My program gave us a speaker on curriculum each session we met. The program coordinators brought in different curriculum directors each session to give us different views on the topic.”

**14:** “My program had no aspect of curriculum and instruction. I thought we would at least get a class or two about it, but there was none.”

**15:** “My program director quickly went over how curriculum is incorporated in the principal role, but it was not enough to fully understand the duties of a principal within the topic.”

**16:** “My program had no mention of curriculum. Other colleagues told me their programs gave them session with substance on the subject, but mine gave me no experience.”

**Question 3 Did your program have an internship component? Please elaborate on your response.** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

**1:** “Yes, my program had an internship component. I was a 40 hour internship that we needed to do for a grade.”

**2:** “Yes, my program consisted of an internship that was 45 hours. We had to keep a log of what we did during those 45 hours.”

**3:** “My program consisted of a 60 hour internship component. We had to ask the principal or assistant principal to be our mentor and sign off that we had completed our hours working with them.”

**4:** “Yes, my program had an internship component. The internship we were asked to do and keep a log of was for 45 hours.”

**5:** “Yes, my program consisted of a 55 hour internship. We were given a log to fill out to tell what we did for our hours and it had to be signed by the principal.”

**6:** “My program consisted of a 30 hour internship. I was very surprised because other people I talked to had to do more hours. I kept track of what I did so that I could provide a list to the professor for a grade.”

**7:** “Yes, my program consisted of an internship of 60 hours. We were asked to keep a log of duties we did during the hours.”

**8:** “No, there was no internship component to my program.”

**9:** “The program I went through had a 55 hour internship. We had to work with our principal and do any duties assigned or go to meetings with them as instructed.”

**10:** “Yes, my program had a 60 hour internship component. We had to keep a log that was turned in at the end of the semester to show the professor we completed our hours.”

**11:** “Yes, in my program we had to do a 40 hour internship. We kept a journal to explain what we did during our internship hours.”

**12:** “There was no internship component in my program.”

**13:** “No, my program did not have an internship component. When I told my principal he was surprised that the program did not require an internship.”

**14:** “Yes, my program had a 60 hour internship component. We had to keep a log of the hours and what we did during the hours of the internship.”

**15:** “No, my program did not require an internship. I thought it was weird because I had other colleagues who had to do internships in their programs.”



**16:** “My program consisted of a 60 hour internship. We were required by our teacher to keep a journal to document what we did during our hours.”

**Question 4. Did your program provide mentors for the candidates? Please elaborate on your response.** 14 participants responded that they were given a mentor and 2 participants responded that they were not given a mentor. 12 of the participants responded that their mentor was a principal or assistant principal who was working at their current campus, 2 of the participants responded that their mentor was a former principal working with their certification only program, and 2 participants responded they did not have mentors in their certification-only programs.

**Question 5. Did your program have an aspect that exposed you to collaborative experiences with your program faculty, peers, and experienced principals?** 11 of the participants responded that they did have exposure to collaborative experiences while 5 of the participants responded that no part of their program included any exposure to collaborative experiences.

**Question 6. Did your program provide you with opportunities to practice decision making for your future role?** 11 participants responded that their programs did provide them with opportunities where former principals gave feedback to responses aspiring principals gave for practice decision making situations. 5 of the participants responded that there were no opportunities for decision making exercises.

**Question 7. Do you feel your program prepared you for the transition into the role of principal? Please elaborate on your response.** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

- 1:** “Yes, it prepared me for the transition. It helped me to be prepared for all the duties and multi-tasking that would need to take place.”
- 2:** “No, I do not feel I was prepared. My program could have given us more information on curriculum and assessments to help be ready for state assessments.”
- 3:** “No, I do not feel I was ready. The program just seemed to rush and get through with no real substance to help us.”
- 4:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. It was a difficult transition because I did not know what to expect in the position.”
- 5:** “No, I wasn’t prepared for the position. I feel more help in scenarios that would happen in the position would have helped.”
- 6:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. The instructors in the program just seemed bored and like they wanted to hurry and get us through without giving us any real exposure to what we would experience.”
- 7:** “Yes, I was prepared for the transition. My program allowed me to get proper internship experience and brought in great guest speakers to help us prepare for what to expect.”
- 8:** “No, I was not ready for the transition. Not having an internship really hurt me because I had no idea what to expect in the position.”
- 9:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. I don’t feel my program fully prepared me or at least somewhat prepared me to take on the extensive duties of the position.”

**10:** “Yes, I feel I was prepared for the transition. The instructors were very courteous and knowledgeable. They shared a lot of information from their work experiences and that helped to prepare for the job.”

**11:** “No, I was not ready for the transition into the job. I think the program could have allowed us more hands on opportunities or at least real life decision making situations.”

**12:** “No, I do not feel I was prepared for the transition. Other people I know were able to have guest speakers who were in the positions of the topics they were there to discuss so we could get some exposure.”

**13:** “No, I do not feel I was ready for the transition. An internship would have allowed for some real life exposure to what we would be doing in the position.”

**14:** “No, I was not prepared for the transition. My program seemed to just want my money and wanted to get me through the program quick. A well planned out program would be helpful.”

**15:** “No, I wasn’t ready for the transition. A principal needs to be knowledgeable and know answers. My program did nothing to prepare me for the position.”

**16:** “Yes, I feel I was ready for the transition. I gained a lot of information and techniques to assist me have a smooth transition into the principal role.”

**Question 8. Are there any habits of a principal preparation you feel are helpful which were not mentioned?** The habits were shared with the participants so they could know what they were. Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

- 1:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be helpful.”
- 2:** “Finance exposure would surely be helpful.”
- 3:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be of great help if explained thoroughly.”
- 4:** “School finance would be of great help if explained to us for the position.”
- 5:** “School budget would be helpful to include because I never got exposure to it.”
- 6:** “Budget is an area that would be helpful to have some background in.”
- 7:** “Finance is very important and I’m surprised it was not part of the habits already.”
- 8:** “School budget/finance is an important part of the job and needs to be explained to principals in their preparation.”
- 9:** “Budget needs to be taught to future principals because there is no previous exposure to it.”
- 10:** “Financial exposure would help principals get some experience with school budgets.”
- 11:** “School budget should be a habit because it is a difficult part of the job.”
- 12:** “School finance is difficult to teach yourself so some exposure is better than none.”
- 13:** “Finance is a habit that needs to be added. I had no idea how to do it when I went into the position.”
- 14:** “Budget is very difficult and needs to be incorporated in the principal preparation programs.”

**15:** “School finance/budget was never reviewed so it was hard for me in my first year as a principal.”

**16:** “Budget has to be a habit because it is an essential part of the job of a principal.”

**Question 9. What do you feel is the most important aspect of an effective principal preparation program?** Responses from the participants are included for the research question.

**1:** “The internship is the most important aspect. It gives hands on experience.”

**2:** “Exposure through an internship allows future principals to see what they will be doing in their position.”

**3:** “Incorporating real life scenarios allowed me to see how to respond to situations where split second decisions need to be made.”

**4:** “An internship with a mentor allows you to ask questions of someone in a position you can learn from.”

**5:** “An internship allows one to gain hands on experience for their future role.”

**6:** “A meaningful internship

**7:** Internship

**8:** “A mentored Internship would be very beneficial since my program did not have one.”

**9:** “An internship component lets candidates see what they will be doing in their role.”

**10:** “An internship allows aspiring principals to see what a day in their future role will most likely involve.”

**11:** “Internship to experience real life scenarios lets candidates see what they will be doing and how to respond to situations that arise.”

**12:** “Real world experience like an internship would be helpful. I wish my program would have had that aspect.”

**13:** “An internship would really be beneficial in a program all colleagues I had who went through one seemed to have an easier time easing in their role.”

**14:** “An internship puts aspiring principals in a role to be successful and learn from a veteran in the role already.”

**15:** “An internship with mentors is helpful so that you can gain experience from those in the position already.”

**16:** “Internships allow us to experience the position in real life so that we can be prepared for when we are in the principal shoes.”

**Question 10. What are your recommendations for preparedness?** Responses from the participants are included below.

**1:** “You can never be too prepared for the principal role.”

**2:** “Ask a lot of questions to veteran principals. You can always use assistance.”

**3:** “No one can be fully prepared for the position. Always be on your guard and expect the unexpected.”

**4:** “Meet with department staff to see what the campus needs are and collaborate for decision making.”

**5:** “Always be professional in all encounters because you never know who people know.”

**6:** “You have to be able to multitask daily. The job doesn’t pause for you.”

**7:** “Be ready for anything because each day is a new day.”

**8:** “Be aware of your surroundings and never let your guard down. Kids are sneaky.”

**9:** “Be prepared for a fast moving, never ending position. You’re always on the go.”

**10:** “Get as much exposure as you can during your internship because it comes in handy.”

**11:** “Prepare yourself with the internship and ask a lot of questions.”

**12:** “You have to be able to make well thought out split second decisions.”

**13:** “Don’t be afraid to ask questions because you need to get answers.”

**14:** “Look at the big picture and for any repercussions that may come from decisions you make.”

**15:** “Be prepared because if something bad can happen more than likely it will happen.”

**16:** “Always make your decisions with the best interest of the kids in mind.”

**Question 11. What type of preparation do you feel would be important for a first year principal?** Responses from the participants are included below.

**1:** “Real world experiences through internships allow principals to see what the position will be like.”

- 2:** “Budget exposure and a more meaningful internship can help a first year principal experience success.”
- 3:** “Internship and exposure to Adequate Yearly Progress lets principals see what the position will be like.”
- 4:** “School finance preparation will give a principal a experience in an area they won’t have to learn later.”
- 5:** “Real world scenarios for all roles of a principal allow you to know what to expect in the position and be prepared for the role.”
- 6:** “School budget experience will prepare a future principal to be ready to run the school and not waste a lot of time learning about budget.”
- 7:** “School finance and state assessment preparation would allow principals to just into the role and be ready to work with the budget and come up with strategies for teachers to utilize with students takings the assessments.”
- 8:** “Being flexible with others prepares a principal who will be dealing with many different personalities be calm and patient with students, parents, and staff.”
- 9:** “Staying organized when under pressure would allow principals to always seem calm and in control so that they don’t look like they are not prepared for the position.”
- 10:** “School budget preparation would allow a principal to spend more time on focusing on state assessments and AYP.”
- 11:** “A meaningful internship that has real world exposure would allow a principal to prepare for what he/she may face in the role.”



**12:** “Internships and school finance would prepare principals for the situations they will encounter and teach them how to work the schools budget in a positive manner.”

**13:** “Budget experience and better internships would give principals the experience needed to transition into the role and make a positive impact on the school.”

**14:** “School budget/finance exposure would allow a future principal to take one their role and be ready to know what areas are being discussed when the budget is referenced rather than having to learn from scratch.”

**15:** “Internship exposure allows aspiring principals to experience tasks that they will need to do in the role and they can learn how to be successful at those tasks.”

**16:** “School budget and internship experience will allow future principals the opportunity to step into their roles with a good foundation on how to perform successfully in their new role.”

**Question 12. Do you have any other information about your preparedness or lack of preparedness that you would like to share?** Responses from the participants are included below.

**1:** “Always be prepared for the worst to happen even if you have good training.”

**2:** “Be ready for a fast paced work life the day does not wait for you it keeps on going.”

**3:** “Lack of preparedness made it difficult to transition so learn as much as you can and be ready for the role.”

- 4:** “I would have been prepared if I was trained properly so ask questions and pay attention during your internship.”
- 5:** “Network with others so that you can ask questions and get assistance.”
- 6:** “Be ready for anything to happen because if it can happen more than likely it will.”
- 7:** “Get mentor input when you can because they have been through similar situations.”
- 8:** “Programs need to expose to candidates more of what they will experience so they can be successful in their new roles.”
- 9:** “Programs need to better prepare principals to meet the changing demands of Education so they can be ready to be successful and make a positive impact.”
- 10:** “Visit others to see how they go about their roles to get ideas and assistance.”
- 11:** “Programs should prepare principals for any and every scenario that may arise. Good guest speakers can help give ideas about what to expect from the role.”
- 12:** “Get to know colleague’s that you can ask questions to especially veteran principals.”
- 13:** “Be prepared for anything to happen and ready to act each day is interesting.”
- 14:** “Stay calm and take a look at the big picture before making drastic decisions.”
- 15:** “As long as you keep the best interest of students at heart you will be successful.”
- 16:** “Network with colleague’s so that you can have someone to ask questions for

things you may not fully understand.”

All principals who completed the interviews were current public school principals. The findings which came from the participant responses were direct answers to the research problem which was to find out which components principals felt were the most important in a principal preparation program.

### **Themes in Analysis of Data**

Several reoccurring themes and responses emerged. Internship and exposure to school budget/finance were the themes that emerged.

The responses which led an internship to be a theme are listed below

- 1:** “The internship is the most important aspect. It gives hands on experience.”
- 2:** “Exposure through an internship allows future principals to see what they will be doing in their position.”
- 3:** “Incorporating real life scenarios allowed me to see how to respond to situations where split second decisions need to be made.”
- 4:** “An internship with a mentor allows you to ask questions of someone in a position you can learn from.”
- 5:** “An internship allows one to gain hands on experience for their future role.”
- 6:** “A meaningful internship
- 7:** Internship
- 8:** “A mentored Internship would be very beneficial since my program did not have one.”

**9:** “An internship component lets candidates see what they will be doing in their role.”

**10:** “An internship allows aspiring principals to see what a day in their future role will most likely involve.”

**11:** “Internship to experience real life scenarios lets candidates see what they will be doing and how to respond to situations that arise.”

**12:** “Real world experience like an internship would be helpful. I wish my program would have had that aspect.”

**13:** “An internship would really be beneficial in a program all colleagues I had who went through one seemed to have an easier time easing in their role.”

**14:** “An internship puts aspiring principals in a role to be successful and learn from a veteran in the role already.”

**15:** “An internship with mentors is helpful so that you can gain experience from those in the position already.”

**16:** “Internships allow us to experience the position in real life so that we can be prepared for when we are in the principal shoes.”

### Handout #3

The responses which led exposure to school budget/finance to be a theme are listed below

**1:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be helpful.”

**2:** “Finance exposure would surely be helpful.”

**3:** “Budget was not mentioned and would be of great help if explained thoroughly.”

- 4:** “School finance would be of great help if explained to us for the position.”
- 5:** “School budget would be helpful to include because I never got exposure to it.”
- 6:** “Budget is an area that would be helpful to have some background in.”
- 7:** “Finance is very important and I’m surprised it was not part of the habits already.”
- 8:** “School budget/finance is an important part of the job and needs to be explained to principals in their preparation.”
- 9:** “Budget needs to be taught to future principals because there is no previous exposure to it.”
- 10:** “Financial exposure would help principals get some experience with school budgets.”
- 11:** “School budget should be a habit because it is a difficult part of the job.”
- 12:** “School finance is difficult to teach yourself so some exposure is better than none.”
- 13:** “Finance is a habit that needs to be added. I had no idea how to do it when I went into the position.”
- 14:** “Budget is very difficult and needs to be incorporated in the principal preparation programs.”
- 15:** “School finance/budget was never reviewed so it was hard for me in my first year as a principal.”
- 16:** “Budget has to be a habit because it is an essential part of the job of a principal.”

## Handout # 4

## Issues Showing a Need for a Change in Preparation Programs

- District records found that a lack of broader range of topics or situations was apparent as administrators criticized the administrative preparation they had received. District records also found that some first year administrators have had serious issues when it comes to the inability to motivate teachers and students. These problems can be seen in adequate yearly progress (AYP) reports from schools in my district in a large city in southern Texas, where many students are not meeting state requirements for progress.
- For the district the researcher worked for in the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years the district of focus missed AYP in math and reading because of various campus scores. After speaking with some principals and looking at district benchmark scores for this school year in the Fall and Spring administrations the scores show that the district will once again miss AYP in math and reading putting them in Stage 3 of not meeting AYP. The stages of AYP vary from Stages 1 – 5 with sanctions that may occur at varying levels.
- When a district/campus reaches stage 1 an improvement plan must be developed and the schools must offer students an option to transfer to a campus that meets the AYP requirements. If stage 2 is reached, tutoring must be offered to the students who come from outside the district, but must be funded by the district and the tutoring is referred to as supplemental educational services by the Texas Education Agency. The tutoring is only offered to the students who attend a school that is in Stage 2. On a campus at stage 3 a teacher or administrator responsible for not meeting AYP may be terminated, and at the district level after 3 years in stage 3 the district may be restructured or have someone else administer the affairs of the district. Stage 4 involves giving school choice to students with the district of the campus which did not meet AYP paying for the student's transportation to and from their school of choice. Stage 5 deals with new governance of the school district.
- The principals with whom I spoke said that they were ill prepared in leading a school because they lacked onsite training such as an internship, budgetary courses, strategies on how to research posed questions as opposed to answering right away, and extended exposure to curriculum & instructions models and techniques. Consequently, according to Boyland (2011) further research is needed in order to investigate principals' current levels of job-related stress and examine factors that may promote the health and retention of quality individuals in these

principal roles. Lashway (2003) indicated that if experienced principals find their jobs to be exhausting and stressful, and most surveys indicate they do, then what is it like for newcomers?

- Hollowell (2012) found that problems in educational administration stem from lack of leadership. When looking at AYP there is data to support a lack of leadership in the schools in southern Texas. A former superintendent in the southern Texas area where this study is taking place emphasized that the creation of openness in communication also creates the emotional closeness necessary to promote collegiality and collaboration among a staff (personal communication, July 30, 2012). This administrator (2012) led a school district with principals of different preparation backgrounds and found some were better prepared than others to take on the role. This administrator also found that working with students and staff to find common ground is a practice that will improve our school climate and lead to a safer school for all (Personal communication, July 30, 2012).
- As new school administrators begin their positions they may start to ask themselves if they were prepared to manage the school's every day operation. They should ask, "Was I prepared enough to make decisions that would enhance the education of students? Or, was my decision going to cause a dilemma?" As I spoke to other administrators about the same topic, the problem that prompted my study was conversations with 12 fellow administrators in three school districts where they expressed their concerns that they were not efficiently trained to handle all tasks which need to be accomplished by first year administrators. I concluded by those concerns that the principals were not satisfied with their preparedness. There are many challenges administrators must face. Accountability as described by Butler (2008) has put pressure on principals to improve student performance, resulting in school leaders transitioning from a more administrative role to becoming more heavily involved in assessment, instruction, curriculum, and data analysis. Administrative leadership training seems to be lacking a more modern approach to today's issues and situations that arise in the educational field.
- Arlestig (2012) found that what we know is that it requires more than reading books or attending lectures and seminars about various research findings and how theory can be used. It is not enough to have conversations where practitioners exchange ideas and experience. The challenge in principal training is to prepare principals who can aptly apply their new knowledge in their everyday work. Problems arise when there is a lack of training.

- Harris (2010) indicated that leaders will have to work with teachers to communicate with the districts school board and community members about school improvement, and work with teachers, parents, and community members to build support for their ideas.
- Research from the Wallace Foundation (2009) found that there are few opportunities for state and district leaders and their teams to come together to consider the intricacies of leadership, take stock of their own leadership abilities, and think more collectively about how state, district, and school policies and actions can be better coordinated to focus everyone on the success of students. Preparation programs will need to meet the needs of today's educators. Unfortunately, the quality of these preparation programs is criticized.
- Stewart (2012) indicated that admissions standards are low, clinical training and mentorship are inadequate, and little attention is paid to data or to ways of turning around low performing schools. Stewart (2012) also found that states approve teacher and principal preparation programs without much question and licensing, and certification exams do not measure what is really important. The only substance for the local problem is what comes from word of mouth from school principals. These areas are not made public because of the school district fear to look bad. Word of mouth from those principals showed that they knew what is wrong, but feared expressing their inadequacies.
- Texas has changed the standards for passing the state assessment and the results were just released in 2013 with the new ratings. The old ratings included exemplary, recognized, and below expectations where as the new ratings are either met standard or improvement needed.
- Six of the 12 principals I had spoken to told me that they had been rated by the state as improvement required because of their tests scores which count for AYP. The other six principals received a rating of met standards, but said they were also close to not meeting AYP with a rating of improvement required.
- The principals all spoke of a concern for meeting AYP and avoid undesirable stages of sanctions that may require state restructuring of the school. This is one of the main reasons they felt that they were not adequately prepared to take on the principal role because they wanted more exposure to AYP through aspects of their principal preparation programs.
- Anonymous Principal (2013) stated that "if I would have learned more about AYP and techniques to keep my campus meeting standards through an internship or courses taught by experienced principals that would have helped my campus achieve a rating of met standard instead of improvement needed" (personal



communication. October 25, 2013) Another Principal (2013) stated that “AYP plays a big role in the retention of school leadership so we need more focus on this area. I don’t want to lose my job over something I wasn’t adequately prepared for” (personal communication, October 25, 2013)

- Schools can fail to meet AYP in 4 categories which are passing rate on the mathematics state exam, passing rate on the reading/language arts state exam, number of students participating in the test, graduation rate, or attendance rate. The percentages that must be met to stay out of AYP are a passing rate of 87% in reading/language arts on the state assessment, 83% passing rate on the mathematics state assessment, 95% of students participating in the exam (grade level appropriate), 75% graduation rate, or 90% attendance rate. In 2012 according to the Texas Education agency only 28% or 339 school districts in Texas met AYP. If a school does not meet one of the areas they will fall into stage 1 of AYP. If the next year they meet AYP they stay at the same stage of AYP, but if they fail to meet AYP in one of the above mentioned areas they will fall into the next stage of AYP. Of the 15 school districts, presented in Table 1, in the city in which I will carry out the study:
  - 1 district has stayed in stage 2 for 2 years in a row;
  - 3 districts have moved from stage 2 to stage 3 in the areas of math and reading;
  - 1 district has stayed in stage 3 for 3 years for reading;
  - 2 district has stayed in stage 1 for reading and math for 2 years;
  - 4 districts have met AYP for 3 years in a row; and
  - 1 district went from stage 3 to stage 2 in reading and math

#### Handout: Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) levels

The stages of AYP vary from Stages 1 – 5 with sanctions that may occur at varying levels. When a district/campus reaches stage 1 an improvement plan must be developed and the schools must offer students an option to transfer to a campus that meets the AYP requirements. If stage 2 is reached, tutoring must be offered to the students who come

from outside the district, but must be funded by the district and the tutoring is referred to as supplemental educational services by the Texas Education Agency. The tutoring is only offered to the students who attend a school that is in Stage 2. On a campus at stage 3 a teacher or administrator responsible for not meeting AYP may be terminated, and at the district level after 3 years in stage 3 the district may be restructured or have someone else administer the affairs of the district. Stage 4 involves giving school choice to students with the district of the campus which did not meet AYP paying for the student's transportation to and from their school of choice. Stage 5 deals with new governance of the school district.

Handout: How to best incorporate school budget/finance component

- Classes in the preparation program
- Guest speakers who are current district financial administrators
- Exposure through an internship
- Research project for participants
- Simulated practice budget
- Working with a mentor

### **Professional Development Evaluation Reflection**

Title of Professional Development: Most Important Components of Principal Preparation Programs

Professional Development Provider: Frank Zavala

Subject area/Grade levels:

Short Description of Activities: Review and develop any new components for principal preparation programs that can be shared with policymakers to improve preparation programs.

*These questions are intended as a guide for you to reflect on the design of the content of the Professional Development and best practices for Professional Development.*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Yes/No/NA</i>	<i>Evidence/Reflection</i>
Is the professional development based on the needs of participants?		
Is the professional development based on the needs of participants?		
Does the professional development incorporate components you feel are a true representation of the principal role?		
Does the professional development incorporate components you feel are a true representation of the principal role?		
How does the new learning assist principals in creating a safe, supportive and equitable learning environment for students?		

What skills were shared to help update preparation programs?		
Is the professional development determined based on principal role preparation data?		
How does this professional development program support a plan for better principal preparation programs?		
How helpful do you feel the professional development was in gaining information on better preparing principals?		

## Appendix E: Most Effective Habit of a Principal Preparation Interview Questions

## Interview questions

1. Please describe your principal preparation program?
2. How prepared do you feel you were in the area of curriculum and instruction through your program?
3. Did your program have an internship component? Please elaborate on your response.
4. Did your program provide mentors for the candidates? Please elaborate on your response.
5. Did your program have an aspect that exposed you to collaborative experiences with your program faculty, peers, and experienced principals?
6. Did your program provide you with opportunities to practice decision making for your future role?
7. Do you feel your program prepared you for the transition into the role of principal? Please elaborate on your response.
8. Are there any habits of a principal preparation you feel are helpful which were not mentioned?
9. What do you feel is the most important aspect of an effective principal preparation program?
10. What are your recommendations for preparedness?
11. What type of preparation do you feel would be important for a first year principal?

12. Do you have any other information about your preparedness or lack of preparedness that you would like to share?

## Appendix F: Interviewee Consent Form

## Interviewee Consent Form

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Frank Zavala and I would like to talk to you about your experiences participating in the Most Effective habit of a Principal Preparation Program project. Specifically, as one of the components of the project evaluation I am assessing program habit effectiveness in order to capture habits of an effective principal preparation program that can be used for policy makers in creating and updating current principal preparation programs. The interview should take less than an hour. I will be taping the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can't possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we're on tape, please be sure to speak up so that I don't miss your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will not be shared and I will ensure that any information I include in my report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to and you may end the interview at any time. Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee

Witness

Date

## Appendix G: Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

- What to say to interviewees when setting up the interview/survey?

I am doing a project study for my Educational doctorate about what principal's feel is/are the most important habits of an effective principal preparation program. Would you like to take part in my study by answering 10 questions? Your identity will remain anonymous and any responses will be kept locked in a file only to be viewed by myself.

- What to say to interviewees when beginning the interview?

See consent letter

- What to say to respondent in concluding the interview?

Thank you for your time I know your answers will assist me in answering my research question.

- What to do during the interview?

Take notes and audiotape.

- What to do following the interview?

Fill in notes, summarize the key information, and submit my findings.



#### Appendix H: Phone/E-mail Script to Participate in Study

Good morning/afternoon Mr./Ms./Mrs. My name is Frank Zavala and I am a doctoral student in the college of education at Walden University. I wanted to see if you would participate in my doctoral study which will be researching what components of a principal preparation program you feel are the most important. The study would include an interview which would take no longer than 30 minutes and in no way would you be identified or would anyone have a way of tracing you responses to you. Are you interested in learning more about this study?

## Curriculum Vitae

Frank Alcorta Zavala

EDUCATION

Ed.D. (Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning) October 2014

Walden University

MA Education (Curriculum and Instruction) May 2004

The University of Texas at San Antonio

BA Criminal Justice (Law Enforcement) December 2002

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Associate of Science, May 2000

Palo Alto College, San Antonio, TX

WORK HISTORYAdministration

Special Needs Coordinator, South San Antonio ISD – Head Start 09/2013-

Present

Assistant Principal, Mark Twain Middle School 11/2011-

08/2013

Assistant Principal, Somerset Elementary School (Texas Recognized Campus)

08/09- 10/11

Assistant Principal, Jackson Middle School 08/2007-

07/2009

Principal for Summer School, Morrill Elementary	04/2007-
06/2007	
Vice Principal for Summer School at Holy Cross High School	05/2007-
06/2007	
Vice Principal for Summer School at Holy Cross High School	05/2006-
07/2006	

### Teaching

Physical Education Teacher/ Administrative Assistant, Vestal Elementary 08/2005-  
08/2007

Special Education Behavior Unit Instructor, Vestal Elementary (Harlandale ISD)  
08/2003-05/2005

### Other

Lecturer, Texas A&M University San Antonio – part time 01/2010-06/2014

### CERTIFICATIONS

- PDAS and ILD certified
- Texas Superintendent Certificate EC-12
- Texas Principal Certificate EC-12
- Texas Educator Certificate in EC-12 Generic Special Education
- Texas Educator Certificate in EC-12 Physical Education
- CPR and First Aid certified
- CPI certified

### QUALIFICATIONS □

- Completed Harlandale Leadership Program for future administrators.
- Completed North East ISD Administrative Training Program.

- Training in Dr. Stephen Covey's 8<sup>th</sup> Habit of Highly Effective Leaders entitled *Leadership: Great Leaders, Great Teams, Great Results, The 4 Imperatives of Great Leaders and Clarifying Your Team's Purpose and Strategy*.
- Completed all 3 technology proficiency levels to meet State Board of Education technology standards.
- 3 Minute Walk-Through training completed
- 360 Walk-Through training completed
- Texas A&M University – 2011 Teaching Excellence Award