

# Bennett Public School Principal Induction Program

Authors: Colleen Beaudoin, Ruben Carmona, Michael Delahanty, William Gartside, Abidemi Oyedele, Lynne Mooney Teta, Ross Charles Wilson

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BOSTON COLLEGE  
Lynch School of Education  
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BENNETT PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRINCIPAL INDUCTION PROGRAM

Dissertation by

COLLEEN BEAUDOIN  
RUBEN CARMONA  
MICHAEL DELAHANTY  
WILLIAM GARTSIDE  
ABIDEMI OYEDELE  
LYNNE MOONEY TETA  
ROSS WILSON

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abidemi Oyedele, Lynne Mooney Teta, & Ross Wilson

## Abstract

Ensuring equity in education and academic success for all students requires a highly skilled principal engages others in continually improving the instructional program in order to meet the needs of students. Over the past few years, a number of reports have indicated that the role of principal is becoming more challenging. School districts are having trouble attracting and retaining highly qualified principals, and principal candidates and current principals are not prepared or supported enough for managing the various demands of the job. In 2010, according to the district, 49 of the 129 active principals had been in their role for three years or fewer. The Bennett Public Schools are designing a leadership development program for aspiring and new principals. This study is designed to support the Bennett Public Schools in its efforts to develop effective school leaders and is focused on answering two research questions:

*What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?*

*Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?*

Twelve novice Bennett Public Schools principals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. The pool of interviewees reflects the diversity of the population in characteristics including gender, racial diversity, elementary and secondary schools, as well as the various structures of schools in the district: traditional, pilot, innovation and in-district charter.

A synthesis of literature and interviews reinforces the importance of the Bennett Public Schools establishing an induction program with a clear set of competencies, or a competency framework, aligned with the 2011 standards for effective school leadership

from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This program should include five components: recruitment and selection strategy, year-long site-based internship, mentoring and coaching, relevant professional development and evaluation of the program and participants.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

As the landscape of our national education system changes with the latest reforms under the Race to the Top program, the role of principals is changing and stronger support systems are needed for school leaders. These developments in educational policy, including the creation of accountability systems, impact the leader's role and thus influence leadership strategies. Due to these changes and external pressures focused on improving student outcomes, it is essential for school systems to select, develop and support school leaders (Huber & Pashiardis, 2008). The quality and effectiveness of traditional leadership preparation programs at universities are in question, and are perceived by some as disconnected from real-world leadership and the changing role of the principal (Chapman, 2005; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005).

Over the past few years, a number of reports have indicated that the role of principal is becoming more challenging. School districts are having trouble attracting and retaining highly qualified principals, and principal candidates and current principals are not prepared or supported enough for managing the various demands of the job (Davis et al., 2005). While universities are criticized for not adequately preparing principals, school districts and states are failing to implement structures that support novice principals in leading school improvement (Bottoms & Davis, 2010). A number of school districts are working to develop intensive support systems to build the skills needed to effectively lead schools (Davis, et al., 2005). The Bennett Public Schools (BPS) are considering designing a leadership development program with the aim of preparing aspiring principals and providing intensive support for leaders in their first three years

in the role. This study is designed to support the Bennett Public Schools in its efforts to develop effective school leaders.

This study is focused on answering two research questions:

- **What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?**
- **Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?**

### **Literature Review**

In order to undertake a comprehensive study of the skills that are required to be an effective urban principal, as well as the components of an induction program to support these principals, a review of current research was undertaken, which was then synthesized with the voices of the principals in the field. The literature review focused on three areas: effective leadership, the urban context, and induction programs. Research on the role of effective principals identified shared leadership, instructional leadership and data-driven leadership as critical (Davis et al., 2005; Hallinger, 2010). Next, the context of the urban school principal was examined as a way of underscoring the specific circumstances of urban school leadership. “The skill set required to lead a small, suburban, middle-income elementary school is distinct from that needed to lead a large, urban, low-income high school” (Davis et al., 2005, p. 14). Research identified individual leadership characteristics required to lead an urban school, such as commitment to multiculturalism, innovativeness, entrepreneurialism, and a belief system that supports urban students and faculty (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Haberman & Dill, 1999; Hite, Williams, Hilton & Baugh, 2006; Portin et al., 2009; Thomas, 2008). Finally, principal

induction programs in urban districts were reviewed to illustrate support structures in settings with similarities to the Bennett Public Schools. Researchers found that improved leadership quality begins with states and districts developing comprehensive leadership systems that provide a continuum of learning for aspiring education leaders, including induction, year-long internships, context specific professional development during their first three years as principal, and effective coaching and mentoring to promote school wide gains (Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, 2007; Orr, King, LaPointe, 2010). With an understanding of the principal's role, the context of urban schools, and effective induction, this study then turned to data provided by principals through interviews regarding the complexities of their roles, and the skills required to respond to the demands. They also discussed supports needed to lead their schools effectively.

### **Research Sample**

In order to answer the research questions, 12 novice Bennett Public Schools principals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. In 2010, according to the district, 49 of the 129 active principals had been in their role for three years or fewer. The sample principals were purposefully selected from this list of 49, and individuals were selected to gather diverse perspectives for the study. The pool of interviewees selected attempted to draw from the diversity of the population in characteristics including gender, racial diversity, elementary and secondary schools, as well as the various structures of schools in the district: traditional, pilot, innovation and in-district charter. This diversity of perspectives was valuable for efforts to gather information generalizable across the district, and to similarly situated urban districts.

## **Findings**

*What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?*

- The role of the principal has become increasingly complex, especially in the urban setting.
- Individual leadership characteristics required to lead an urban school include cultural proficiency, innovativeness, and a belief system that supports urban students. In addition, urban principals must be supported through district-wide leadership development.

*Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?*

### **Effective school leadership.**

- Principals stated that shared leadership is important; however, they expressed a lack of proficiency in executing this leadership strategy.
- Principals stated the importance of acting as an instructional leader to improve classroom instruction and recognized the challenges when serving as an instructional leader.
- Principals cited instructional rounds as a model for professional development that positively impacted their capacity to act as an instructional leader.
- Principals stated that using data to drive instruction was important; however they needed training and support for its appropriate use.
- Contrary to the literature, no principal in our study discussed the need to set the direction for their school or described how a professional learning community would be essential in meeting the demands of the urban setting.

### **The urban context.**

- The complexity of the urban environment diminishes the principals' ability to focus on instructional leadership; district based support is critical to mitigate the impact of outside forces on student learning.
- In response to the demands of the urban context, almost all principals cited a core belief in high expectations for all students as critical to supporting student achievement.
- Principals value partnerships with families, despite the challenges of language, distance, and participation.
- Principals believe that a diverse and culturally proficient faculty is important, but the district's collective bargaining agreement complicates hiring and retention practices.

### **Induction programs.**

- A comprehensive system of support for new principals is essential to actuate school-wide gains.
- Successful induction programs have five essential components guided by a clear competency framework.
- Induction program must include a comprehensive plan for providing robust, targeted supports including professional development, internships, coaching, and mentoring.

### **Recommendations**

A synthesis of literature and interviews resulted in two overarching recommendations. First, the Bennett Public Schools should explicitly develop and implement a district-wide competency framework for school leadership, based upon the state regulations for principal induction and informed by research and interviews with principals. Second, the Bennett Public

Schools should systematically support new school leaders in meeting the standards of the competency framework through a five part induction program.

**Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework.**

A competency framework is the set of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that a principal must have, in his or her context, in order to lead a school effectively to drive high levels of student achievement. This set of standards uses the school as the lens to highlight/ focus on what high-performing principals must know and be able to do (Cheney et al., 2010, p. 16).

The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should support principals in their efforts to develop the following capacities:

- **Shared leadership.** The Bennett Public Schools should develop norms and models of shared leadership, including supporting effective teams, which principals can adapt to the unique contexts of their schools. Essential for establishing a culture of shared leadership, the district must help principals understand their own core values, how these values are then reflected in the decisions they make, and how to articulate these core values to others within their individual contexts.
- **Instructional leadership.** Principals must be given effective strategies for managing their time and methods for remaining focused on improving instructional practices in their schools. In order to emphasize Bennett Public Schools' expectation for a team approach to instructional improvement, training should include how to establish, develop, and manage high-functioning teams of teachers.
- **Data-driven leadership.** Principals should understand the procedural administration of assessments and develop their own capacity as well the capacity of teachers on a data team to analyze the data and how to effectively translate data to improve instruction,

curriculum, and programs. Principals need to develop a better understanding of the purposes for various assessment instruments and how the data from those instruments should be used to inform instruction.

- **Leadership for high expectations.** Principals should be able to articulate this commitment and to organize the school to support a culture of high expectations. Clear ways to communicate these dynamics and to confront biases and assumptions about the intellectual capability, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomics of students is imperative.
- **Leadership for family and community engagement.** The Bennett Public Schools should support principals in partnering with families by encouraging a team approach to organizing the parent-home partnership, redefining the role of parents and the community in the school governance, linking involvement activities to student academic outcomes and by reaching out in meaningful ways that account for the socioeconomic and cultural needs of the parents and their children.
- **Culturally proficient leadership.** The Bennett Public Schools principal induction program should support principals in their own journey toward cultural proficiency, and support faculty in this endeavor as well. Principals must share this commitment across all members of the school community: students, faculty, parents, and partners. Supporting faculty in implementing culturally proficient school culture includes relevant curriculum choices, instructional strategies and assessment practices.

**Bennett Public Schools induction program.**

Based upon a review of the literature, in conjunction with interviews with principals, the Bennett Public Schools induction program should support new school leaders in the development of the competencies outlined above. An investigation of current induction programs, sponsored

by districts, universities and non-profit organizations, helped identify five essential components of an induction program for new Bennett Public Schools principals.

- A clear and intentional recruitment and selection strategy
- A yearlong site-based internship
- Mentoring and coaching
- Relevant professional development
- Participant and program evaluation

### **Conclusion**

A synthesis of literature and interviews reinforces the importance of the Bennett Public Schools establishing a clear set of competencies, or a competency framework, to guide leadership development for the district. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight the importance of the Bennett Public Schools developing a comprehensive induction program which includes five components: recruitment and selection strategy, year-long site-based internship, mentoring and coaching, relevant professional development and evaluation of the program and participants.

As established in the literature review, the role of the principal in the age of accountability has changed. Ensuring equity in education and academic success for all students requires a highly skilled principal who engages others in continually improving the instructional program in order to meet the needs of students. New principals in the Bennett Public Schools need comprehensive support and guidance from the district as they develop into the leaders who will improve educational outcomes for all students.

## Statement of Problem

This is a time of great change in public education systems across the country. In a speech to superintendents and national policy makers, Arne Duncan, the United States Secretary of Education outlined major challenges for the future of education in America. He stated that the overwhelmingly high school dropout rate of 30 percent of students equates to 1.5 million students a year leaving school before they gain the skills necessary for the workforce. The large majority of these students are dropping out of just 2,000 high schools, predominantly in urban areas across our country. “There are no good schools in our country without a great principal...If our 95,000 schools each had a great principal, this thing [dropout problem] would take care of itself” (Duncan, 2009, p. 29).

Principals play a vital role in student learning. Research states that school leadership is strongly correlated to student learning, second only to classroom instruction. “Nearly 60% of a school’s impact on student achievement is attributable to principal and teacher effectiveness. These are the most important in-school factors driving school success, with principals accounting for 25%, and teachers 33% of a school’s total impact on achievement” (Martorell, Heaton, Gates & Hamilton, 2010, p. 5). In the context of continuous school improvement demands under federal legislation, the importance of school leadership is critical (Davis et al., 2005; Huber & Pashiardis, 2008).

The role of the principal has grown in complexity over the past decade, especially in urban schools, to include leadership in instruction, operations, community relations, family engagement, strategic planning and marketing. Many experts in education argue that the job requirements far exceed the capacity of any one person (Davis et al., 2005; Levine, 2005; Peterson, 2002).

Our principals today, I think are absolutely CEOs. They have to manage people. They have to be first and foremost instructional leaders. They have to manage multi-million dollar budgets. They have to manage facilities. They have to work with the community. The demands and stresses on principals have never been greater. (Duncan, 2009, p. 22)

According to Duncan, efforts aimed at developing and supporting principals have been dramatically under-invested in the past. With a budget of tens of billions of dollars, the U.S. Department of Education has, until recently, not invested significant resources in principal leadership (Duncan, 2009). Leadership is now on the federal and state agenda for education reform. The Race to the Top program states that one of its core goals is to not only develop great teachers but also great principals (DeVita, 2009). A recent survey by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Association of State Boards of Education found that most state superintendents and school board leaders believe that principals have strong impacts on student learning and are making the support of principals a priority on state improvement agendas (DeVita, 2009).

As the landscape of our national education system changes with the latest reforms under the Race to the Top program, there is greater focus on principal leadership. Given this prioritization, stronger support systems are needed for school leaders. These developments in educational policy, including the creation of accountability systems and turnaround schools (schools designated for turn-around follow strict guidelines such as replacement of the principal and at least 50% of staff members), impact the leader's role and influence leadership strategies. Because of these changes and external pressures focused on improving student outcomes, it is essential for school systems to select, develop and support school leaders (Huber & Pashiardis, 2008). Concerns linger about the quality and effectiveness of leadership preparation programs at universities, centered on the disconnect with real-world leadership and the changing role of the principal (Chapman, 2005; Davis et al., 2005).

Over the past few years, a number of reports have indicated that the role of principal is becoming more challenging, and that districts are having trouble attracting and retaining highly qualified principals (Cheney et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2005; Orr et al., 2010). Principal candidates and current principals are not prepared or supported enough for instructional leadership and managing the various demands of the job (Davis et al., 2005). While universities are being criticized for not adequately preparing principals, school districts and states are failing to implement structures that support principals in leading school improvement (Bottoms & Davis, 2010). A number of school districts are working to develop intensive support systems to build the skills needed to effectively lead schools (Davis et al., 2005). In fact, for the Bennett Public Schools in 2010, 49 out of 129 principals (38 percent) were in their first three years in the role. Because of these numbers, the Bennett Public Schools is currently considering designing a leadership development program with the aim of preparing aspiring principals and providing intensive support for leaders in their first three years in the role. This study is designed to support the Bennett Public Schools in the development of such a program and is aimed at answering the following questions:

### **Research Questions**

- **What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?**
- **Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?**

## **Review of Literature**

With the goals of understanding the skills that are required to be an effective urban principal and the components of an induction program that support these principals, this review of literature focuses on three topics. The first section reviews the literature on the skills and competencies of effective principals. Next, the context of the urban school principal is examined as a way of underscoring the specific circumstances of urban school leadership. Finally, principal induction programs in urban districts are reviewed to illustrate support structures in settings with similarities to Bennett. With an understanding of the principal's role, the context of urban schools, and effective induction, this review, along with the data from interviews with principals about the demands of their positions and supports required, will inform the Bennett Public Schools' development of an induction program for principals.

### **Effective School Leadership**

Academic success for all students is an appropriate goal for our society. All citizens need a high level of academic achievement to succeed in the complex, knowledge-based economy in which we live (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Despite numerous educational reform efforts, student outcomes on national and state tests indicate that achievement is not equitably distributed among all students. Achievement gaps remain, particularly for students with disabilities, English language learners, and some minority groups (Lee, 2002). What will it take to close the gaps? There is convincing evidence that student achievement is directly related to the quality of the teacher (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In fact, teacher quality has been determined to have the most powerful effect on student achievement (Ferguson, 1991). A review of the research indicates the critical role of the school leader. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) assert, "leadership is only second to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student

learning, and that indirect and direct effects of leadership account for about a quarter of a school's total effectiveness" (p. 5).

Individual state accountability measures, stemming from the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed by President Bush in 2001, have placed significant responsibility on principals to provide leadership that enhances student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Numerous studies concerning effective leadership behaviors, skills, attitudes, and traits have been conducted over the years. However, there is no consensus among researchers as to the essential components of effective leadership and how school leaders influence student learning (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006; Riehl, Larson, Short, & Reitzug, 2000). In the absence of a common definition for effective school leadership at the building level and increased accountability for student achievement, district level leaders must be clear about what it means to be an effective school principal within the system. School superintendents must clearly articulate how they envision the role of the principal in student learning and create explicit expectations for successful principal leadership that promotes such outcomes. Recruiting, supporting, and evaluating principals without this level of clarity may lead to confusion, lack of coherence, disconnected support systems, and potentially unfair evaluation systems.

The focus of this portion of the literature review will highlight the complexity of the role of the principal and will focus on what effective school leaders do as they work towards improving student achievement by leading others.

As presented previously, the principal's role has grown more complex in the last decade. Strong arguments support the assertion that the principal plays the most important role in establishing a culture for learning and overall school change (Grissom & Loeb, 2009; Lashway,

2003; Orr, Berg, Shore, & Meier, 2008; Zepeda, 2008), while others provide a broader conceptualization on leadership for learning. While it would be difficult to argue that principals have authority to lead, knowing how to successfully lead others is another matter. In the simplest form, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) claim there are two primary functions of leaders, “providing direction and exercising influence” (p. 2).

Additional research has converged on two important aspects of the school principal’s job as it pertains to student learning – managing the curriculum in ways that promote student learning, and developing the ability to transform schools into more effective organizations that foster powerful teaching and learning for all students (Davis et al., 2005, p. 6). In an analysis of 40 years of empirical research on the manner in which leadership impacts learning, Hallinger (2010) examined the evolution of research to understand the practical implications for how leadership contributes to school improvement as well as student learning. The research suggests that principals seeking to impact learning should: (1) focus on values and goals that improve conditions for student learning and protect what is important; (2) seek the cooperation of others to provide mutual influence as the principal’s leadership is mediated by context, people, and work processes; (3) build capacity of others within the school; (4) develop leadership strategies that match the context of the school; and, (5) appropriately choose the right time and context to share leadership responsibilities with others (Hallinger, 2010, p. 137-138).

This review of the school leadership literature converges on three themes that capture how principals meet the demands of school leadership today. First, effective leaders set the direction for their school through developing and articulating shared values and promoting a culture in which teachers act as a professional learning community and strive towards common goals. Secondly, these leaders share the responsibility of leading the school with others to build

capacity and promote greater ownership by others for school improvement. Lastly, these leaders act as instructional leaders who relentlessly focus on student learning and effective teaching (Blasé and Blasé, 1999; Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Davis et al., 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Louise, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010; Mullen & Schunk, 2010; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006).

### **Effective leaders set the direction.**

In schools, the principal holds the positional authority to make decisions that impact the school community. However, positional authority does not necessarily translate into effective leadership. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) claim there are two primary functions of leaders, “providing direction and exercising influence” (p. 2). Their theoretical framework for leadership includes the following principles:

- setting the direction--through identifying and articulating a vision, creating shared meanings, fostering the acceptance of group goals, monitoring progress and providing frequent communication;
  - developing people--through modeling, providing individual support, and by intellectually stimulating the staff; and
  - redesigning the organization through modifying structures, strengthening the culture, building collaborative processes, and managing the environment
- (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 3-5).

Hence, in order for principals to set the direction for the school, the leader must establish a culture that promotes collaboration, develop structures that allow for the development of teams, and provide opportunities for teachers to develop leadership capacities. In addition, the

principal's capacity to build relationships with teachers is essential to building a positive school culture. Barth (1990) recommends that principals build relationships among teachers and between the principal and teachers because the people working within the school have a fundamental human need for trust, support, and professional interaction (p. 369) as a school works in unison towards improvement goals. Louis et al. (2006) contend that, "High trust schools exhibited more collective decision making, with a greater likelihood that reform initiatives were widespread and with demonstrated improvements in student learning" (p. 319). A study by Mintrop (2004) affirms this statement. Mintrop (2004) studied underperforming California schools and found that principal leadership, faculty collegiality, cohesion, and trust in the skills of colleagues were stronger in schools that made improvement gains when compared to schools that did not post academic gains. His study found that teachers were not motivated by accountability but by commitment to the school community and their collegial relationships. He explained, "...when site relationships were perceived as strong, commitment rose" (p. 2136). Further, he states, "Thus, strength of social relations and capacity rather than the motivational impact of high-stakes incentives and sanctions moved schools towards improvement" (p. 2136).

Individual need for trust and professional interaction implies a developed organizational culture and an understanding on "how we do things here." Moving from individual teacher needs to a collaborative culture requires deliberate actions from the principal. Sergiovanni (2001) explains that, "...focused school communities have strong and clear commitments to student achievement as evidenced by...teachers' personal concern for student success..." (p. 78). As such, principals must develop strong school cultures that focus on high expectations for student learning. Principals must then organize structures which allow teachers to work collaboratively. According to Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), "An approach that meets these criteria,

and that has been increasingly featured in the literature, is the professional learning community” (p. 3). Citing the success of Community School District 2 in New York City, Fink and Resnick (2001) assert that principals develop a learning community through leading a culture that provides the appropriate professional development opportunities and that even if the district decides upon the core instructional commitments, it is the responsibility of teachers and principals to make meaning of these practices. Developing a learning community at every level of the organization and a commitment to providing support with accountability are vital components of a true learning community (Fink and Resnick, 2001). Mullen and Shrunck (2010) assert that “[Principals] who are inspired to nurture their communities and achieve goals otherwise unattainable as individuals are better positioned to exercise leadership that is contextually relevant” (p. 191).

A sense of trust and collaboration is further developed when leaders ensure that all work is accomplished through teamwork and when the organization is committed to fostering personal growth and learning also known as personal mastery (Senge, 1990). Therefore, effective leaders encourage individual participation and commitment to the organization by developing highly effective teams. Team members develop a sense of ownership over the work and rely on the leader to provide the momentum needed to help teams reach their goals (Sergiovanni, 2001). Leaders build teams through developing individual capabilities and helping teams to manage and develop coping strategies when there is a gap between shared values and the current reality (Heifetz, 1994). Likewise, effective leaders support teams as they experience creative tension which can lead to a sense of anxiety, hopelessness and worry when there is a large gap between the vision and the current reality (Senge, 1990). Furthermore, building highly effective teams is dependent upon building capacity at all levels of the organization (Sergiovanni, 2001).

It is important to note that simply placing teachers together in working groups does not automatically result in a high-functioning team. Often the complexities of working in collaborative teams are not taught and teachers often lack the skills and practice necessary for high-functioning teams (Troen & Boles, 2011). Troen and Boles (2011) state that principals must take the time to consider how to develop high-functioning teams and provide five conditions that are necessary for teacher teams to be successful. Essentially, teams must first be focused on a task. In schools, the task is improved student outcomes through expert teaching and learning. The second condition is the need for leadership within the team and clearly defined roles for team members. The third condition is that teams must be embedded in a collaborative culture where working together is an expectation and a norm. The fourth condition is that individual team members hold themselves personally accountable for quality work and feel a strong sense of commitment to the team. Lastly, firm processes and structures are in place and team members continually monitor their progress towards goals and adapt when necessary.

The benefits of building a team culture and developing a professional learning community are clearly established in the literature. Stoll et al. (2006) explain that it is difficult to see how a professional learning community could develop in a school without the active support of school leadership. The authors assert, “Leadership is therefore an important resource for professional learning communities, in terms of principal commitment and shared leadership” (p. 235). Further, the authors explain, “For better or worse, principals set conditions for teacher community by the ways in which they manage school resources, relate to teachers and students, support or inhibit social interaction and leadership in the faculty...” (Stoll et al., 2006, p. 235). Developing teams and professional learning communities allows principals to provide

opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively towards improved instructional and student learning goals.

Sergiovanni (2001) writes about “communities of responsibility” (p. 61). He explains that schools where leaders develop such communities rather than seek to change things through bureaucratic authority can better succeed in improving student learning. “Schools develop academic capital by becoming focused communities that cultivate a deep culture of teaching and learning” (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 72).

### **Effective leaders share leadership.**

Shared leadership impacts student learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Hallinger, 2010) and principals who promote distributive leadership increase individual responsibility and group accountability, thereby improving opportunities for students. Other researchers concur that shared leadership affects how the work of the school gets done and influences the practices of improvement (Elmore, 2004). The centrality of learning extends to teachers, and the research supports strong benefits derived from principals who emphasize collaborative learning strategies, shared governance, and teacher leadership (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Louise et al., 2010; Mullen & Schunk, 2010; Stoll et al., 2006).

Further, the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (2009) at Washington University indicates that principals need to consider creating an instructional leadership team to support the complex changes needed in schools. Such distribution of leadership requires, “...a professional learning community with shared governance, teacher leadership, and collaboration of school staff” (Mullen & Schunk, 2010, p. 188). Such team leadership is yet another training need of new principals. Louis et al. (2010) concluded that a principal’s primary focus, “...must be on instructional and shared leadership. Increasing teachers’ involvement in the difficult task

of making good decisions and introducing improved practices must be at the heart of school leadership” (p. 332).

Heifetz, of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, and Bertalanffy and Senge (2000) offer a model of leadership that allows for greater contributions from everyone within an organization. According to this model:

- leaders should engage teachers by training people to identify and discuss difficult problems and seeking appropriate people within the system to facilitate the conversation that will end in teacher learning;
- leaders should be system thinkers with the ability to recognize the hidden dynamics of complex systems and find the necessary leverage to make change;
- leaders provide a model of a “learner-centered” approach (an umbrella term describing the re-direction of school leadership and principal professional development) to solving all problems; and
- through reflection and personal coaching, leaders are aware of the impact they have on people and how that impact changes over time (Senge, 1990, p. 414-418).

A six-year study funded by the Wallace Foundation conducted in nine states with a total of 43 school districts, 180 schools, 8,391 teachers and 471 administrators using surveys, interviews, and observations found that a collective or shared leadership approach had a significant impact on student achievement (Louis, et al., 2010). Researchers found that collective leadership had a stronger influence on student achievement than individual leadership. Louis et al. (2010) found that when principals and teachers share leadership, teachers’ working relationships are stronger and student achievement is higher. In sum, shared leadership builds

capacity for improvement toward increased student achievement, a critical and necessary consideration in the leadership competency framework.

**Effective leaders are instructional leaders.**

In response to the current climate of high-stakes testing and accountability, Leithwood and Riehl expanded their (previously discussed) leadership framework in 2006. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, and Hopkins (2006) included managing the instructional program to the list of practices of effective school leaders. According to a 2010 study of successful elementary school leaders, Crum, Sherman, and Myran emphasize the use of data to drive instructional improvement as paramount and that successful leaders need to utilize sound data-based decision-making practices to drive overall school improvement. To further accentuate the need to use data, Williams, et al. (2005) concluded:

Principal leadership in the context of accountability-driven reform is being redefined to focus on effective management of the school improvement process. In general, academic performance index scores were higher in schools with principals whose responses indicate that they act as managers of school improvement, driving the reform process, cultivating the school vision, and extensively using student assessment data for a wide variety of school improvement areas of focus, including evaluation of teacher practice and assistance to struggling students. (p. 3)

Blasé and Blasé (1999) studied 809 teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools across the United States who described the characteristics of effective instructional leadership. The “findings demonstrate that in effective principal-teacher interaction about instruction, processes such as inquiry, reflection, exploration, and experimentation resulted in teachers building repertoires of flexible alternatives rather than collecting rigid teaching procedures and methods” (p. 359). In other words, when principals engaged in conversations with teachers about instructional practices and provided feedback for growth, teachers were more likely to transfer

similar teaching techniques, such as inquiry, reflection, exploration, and experimentation, into their classrooms with their students.

In summary, it would be difficult to overstate the sophistication of principals' responsibilities in today's schools. Crow (2006) attributes these growing responsibilities to: changing student demographics; community demands for social, mental, and health services; added public scrutiny; expectations for establishing close community connections; and supporting new kinds of educational services. Given the constant evolution of schools, principals must be knowledgeable about the law and reform efforts (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004; Owings & Kaplan, 2003) and how these outside influences as well as the school context impact their leadership efforts. At the macro level, principals must take a "helicopter view" of their schools and understand how the school operates within the district. At the micro level principals must also consider what is taught, to whom, how content is allocated to time and how teachers, students, and others judge student learning outside the organization (Elmore, 2007, p. 195).

Relevant to this study, principals new to a district need to understand the context of their school within the district and possess an understanding of operations within the district. Simultaneously, principals in their first years in the role need further development as leaders. Since the principal is typically alone in a building as the highest leader, it is important to consider how leadership development will occur. Binkley (1995) argues that all principals within a district need time to construct common understandings. Like teachers, principals need time to collaborate with other principals to insure that there is consistency throughout the district that will lead to a coherent program as students progress through a system. If the district does not provide this level of support, principals have a duty to take it upon themselves to collaborate. However, while self-selected support may be beneficial, the district is vulnerable to disjointed

efforts and a lack of district coherency. Researchers (Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010) surmise that improved leadership quality begins with states and districts developing cohesive leadership systems that provide a continuum of learning for aspiring education leaders.

While these are matters almost all school leaders face, the focus of this study is the urban principal. As explored in the next section, principals in inner city settings require heightened sophistication to respond to the complex urban environment. While principals “struggle with role definition on a daily basis” (Lashway, 2003, p. 2), urban principals are faced with high poverty, cultural diversity, and disconnected reform efforts in combination with expectations to serve as leaders of student and teacher learning; provide expertise in pedagogy and strategy; accept responsibility to create and sustain a competitive school; and empower others to make significant decisions (Crow, 2006; Lashway, 2003; Leithwood, 2005). The demands can be overwhelming. Consequently, principals in an urban setting require explicit support to help them develop the leadership competencies that address this unique context.

### **The Urban Context**

Urban schools are confronted by institutional, structural and political challenges that may undermine the effectiveness of principals. High teacher turnover, discipline issues that impact instruction, accountability targets, unqualified teachers, limited financial resources, crumbling facilities, decline in enrollment and political pressure are among the most common challenges cited in the literature. Although some of these problems are also shared by non-urban districts, they appear at a higher rate and are more pervasive in cities. Debates over the effectiveness of charter, private, and public schools are also part of the political pressure that school leaders face in urban environments. Although this is not just an urban issue, these dynamics play out heavily

in urban districts when many of the underperforming school are perceived as ineffective in the public's eye.

Childress, Elmore & Grossman (2006) describes the political and social demands placed on schools from parents, donors and politicians. They argue that,

U.S. schools have very strong – and vocal – stakeholders whose views are often divergent. Parents have different ideas about what it takes to educate their children. Donors, who contributed more than \$1 billion to public education in 2005, earmark support to their favorite panacea du jour. Unions adhere to work rules in labor contracts that make it difficult to assign high-performing teachers to the struggling schools that need them most. Meanwhile, elected local, state, and federal officials pursue policies that are disconnected from student performance, are unrealistic given available resources, conflict with one another, or all of the above (Childress, et al., 2006, p. 57).

The lack of quality instruction and principal leadership in urban districts has been clearly identified in the literature as well. Ravitch & Viteritti (2000) argue that, “It is one of the gravest inequities in American urban education that public schools serving the children with the greatest educational and social needs are likeliest to have the least experienced and the greatest turnover of staff” (p. 4). The Wallace Foundation, in a 2010 report, stated that urban principals are less well prepared. “Research shows that they are more likely than their peers in other schools to be less experienced and to have earned their bachelor’s degree from lower ranked colleges” (Orr et al., 2010, p. 15). Research by Clark, Martorell, and Rockoff (2009) on New York City principals also identifies a relationship between the principal’s years of experience and student achievement on math assessments and daily attendance (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). With less experienced, less well trained staff, it makes it even harder for urban schools to overcome the disadvantages with which poor students come to school.

Shifting to the student level, the most visible challenges in urban districts are high poverty, low achievement among racial and ethnically diverse students and limited English

proficiency. The effects of poverty on student academic outcomes are well known. Family income combined with parental education is the strongest predictor of how well a student will do on most standardized tests. Belfield and Levin (2007), in a comprehensive analysis of student achievement and socio-economics, conclude that roughly 30 percent of all students in the United States are not graduating from high school (based on 2005 census data) and that those percentages are larger for Blacks and Hispanics: 52 percent of Black males and 58 percent of Hispanic males drop out. In their analysis, Belfield and Levin also describe the significant inequalities of access to quality health services and other vital public services in African-American and Hispanic neighborhoods.

Some researchers contend that the failure of schools to provide adequate education for students of color is not the sole reason for the gaps in educational achievement. “For all the reasons that social and economic disadvantages contribute to children’s failure, living amid concentrated social and economic disadvantage accelerates that contribution” (Belfield & Levin, 2007, p. 33). Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) researching the Chicago Public Schools, shares this concern. They contend that, “Improving schools could be found in all kinds of neighborhoods varying by socioeconomic and racial/ethnic composition. Stagnating schools, in contrast, pile up in very poor, racially isolated African American neighborhoods” (Bryk et al., 2010, p.28). This correlation between high poverty, racially homogenous neighborhoods and stagnated academic growth indicates the need for comprehensive supports at the federal, state, and, most importantly, at the district level.

Urban school districts provide education to the majority of students in the United States, especially students of color and English language learners (ELLs). (Some of the references used in this literature review use other terms such as language-minority or Limited English Proficient

[LEP] to refer to ELLs. Although differences exist among these descriptors, within this context, they are all meant to describe students who are in the process of learning the English language.) The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show that from 2003 to 2009 the achievement gap between Whites versus Blacks and Latinos has remained consistent and large. Furthermore, this gap in academic performance is increasing for language-minority students and students with learning disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). It is important to clarify, however, that speaking a second language is not a proxy for academic failure. Instead, most second language learners in the United States and particularly in the Bennett Public Schools face other challenging academic and socioeconomic conditions.

The persistent low levels of literacy attainment for these populations and the implications of this low attainment (low performance in standardized tests, high drop-out rates, overrepresentation in special education), as well as the negative correlation between socioeconomic conditions and mental illness pose significant challenges for urban schools.

Bennett, for example, a city with a diverse student population, fits the profile of a mid-size urban district facing many of the challenges described here,

Almost 75% of the student population qualified for free or reduced-price meals with 64% qualifying for full subsidies, a proxy for children living at or below the poverty line. Almost 20% were students with physical, cognitive or learning disabilities, about half of whom qualified for Substantially Separate Classrooms; and 18% were Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. These are the two groups at the highest statistical risk of failing or dropping out; about 77% were African American or Latino (Kahn, Davis, & Martin, 2008, p. 16).

In 2010, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education designated 35 underperforming schools in the state, 12 of which are located within the City of Bennett. These schools have not met the expected academic goals in English Language Arts and Mathematics or the Academic Yearly Progress (AYP) stipulated by the state over several

consecutive years; they are also among the highest in free and reduced lunch and African American and Hispanic populations in the district.

The 2010 Census data show that the racial and ethnic composition of the United States continues to become more diverse, at the same time that the non-Hispanic white population declines at a relatively steady pace. Logan and Stults (2011), through their 2010 Census data analysis, state that at the current rate of change non-Hispanic whites will be a minority of the child population before 2020 (p. 2).

Along with the growing patterns of the Hispanic, Asian, and African American populations, the demographic trends of the 2010 Census point to a very troubling development. Despite of the significant increase in population among the three largest minority groups in the country, cities are becoming more segregated. According to Logan and Stults (2011), Bennett ranks in 11th place for the most extreme residential segregation between blacks and whites, fifth in Asian-white segregation, and fourth, behind only LA, New York, and Newark, in Hispanic-white segregation. These trends are not likely to improve, especially given the socioeconomic dynamics of urban neighborhoods. Logan adds that,

It is especially true for African Americans and Hispanics that their neighborhoods are often served by the worst performing schools, suffer the highest crime rates, and have the least valuable housing stock in the metropolis. Few whites will choose to move back into these neighborhoods as long as they suffer such problems (Logan & Stult, 2011, p. 21).

The challenges faced by urban school leaders are numerous and multifaceted, including high poverty, low English language proficiency, and racial segregation. Although these are not unique to the urban settings, their degree and severity can overwhelm and derail the best efforts of school principals. As some maintain, a more sophisticated form of leadership is required in order to effectively meet some of these challenges. Cuban (2001) argues that, “For those who lead urban schools, different expectations, different obligations, and different city histories

require far more moxie, skills, and political finesse than for their colleagues in middle and upper-class, racially isolated suburbs” (p. 2).

Yet, there are urban schools that are successful. Urban schools that foster strong academic growth are organized and structured around student engagement, teacher and student learning. (Allington & International Reading Association, 2010). Schools that have managed to succeed with struggling populations of students of color have done so by developing strong wraparound services as well. The coordination of these efforts (focus on effective teaching and learning and securing, managing and integrating complementary services to help families in need) is the purview of the school principal. To orchestrate this balance is a complex task that requires good managerial abilities, a clear vision, focus and skills on distributing the responsibility for improvement among all school stakeholders (Bryk et al., 2010). As Cuban argues, a different approach is required of school leaders in urban environments.

### **Leadership in the urban context.**

Given this context, what does the research say about the leadership needed to address the challenges presented by urban public education today? While the role of the public school principal in general has increased in complexity, as outlined earlier, the unique demands and higher stakes of the urban school environment require both an individual skill set as well as belief systems on the part of principals for effective school leadership. Additionally, a more comprehensive framework of leadership at the district level is necessary to meet the contextualized demands of schools in large cities (Branch, Hanushek, Rivkin, 2009; Davis et al., 2005).

Portin et al. (2009) has identified specific leadership skills that are required for individuals to function as effective urban principals. Research conducted in four urban districts--

Atlanta, GA; Springfield, MA; Norwalk, CA; and New York City, NY--finds that effective urban school leaders must manage instructional priorities, assessment and accountability, data-based practices, and operational management. Effective urban leaders must expand their concept of supervision of faculty beyond the teacher evaluation process, while developing effective instructional leadership teams and a school climate that encourages honest collaborative inquiry. Additionally, urban principals must also develop entrepreneurial skills such as exercising greater discretion in strategic decision making to improve their schools. They need to set the direction of the organization, allocate resources to meet goals and creatively address operations challenges. These skills, which are important for principals, are vital in order for urban principals to meet the demands of the position (Portin et al., 2009).

In addition to above-mentioned technical competencies, research also points to the personal leadership characteristics that are critical for principals working in urban schools. Williams' (2008) study of twelve outstanding and eight typical principals in an urban Midwestern district finds that emotional and social intelligence skills are key, and that outstanding principals develop relationships with a broader range of external groups and are able to adapt to their environment. Gardiner and Enomoto (2006) cite a deep commitment to multiculturalism as a requirement. Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) expand on this notion of multiculturalism by identifying cultural proficiency as a requirement in order to sustain academic achievement in urban settings. They claim that at the heart of a culturally proficient faculty is the concept that students' race, language, ethnicity and socioeconomics are not perceived as possible deficits but as strengths. They contend that most teachers are not conscious of their biases and they are unaware of what they do while in the act of teaching. School principals, by the nature of their supervisory role, have a critical job in setting expectations for

faculty around these beliefs and values, and especially how they are communicated and sustained within the school context. Principals must ensure that students are learning in a context and from adults who value their cultural backgrounds and experience. Haberman and Dill (1999) claim that in order to serve students in poverty, principals need both a skill set and a belief set that “empowers teachers and students to succeed in school regardless of life constraints” (p. 12).

Hite et al. (2006) reason that the increased accountability on urban schools requires well-developed skills in innovation, and explore the question of how an individual might develop this capacity to innovate as related to personal demographics, position and experience of the principal. This research also finds that age and experience are positively correlated to perceptions of innovativeness (Hite et al., 2006). Thomas (2008) examined how to survive the urban school principalship in the face of the severity of NCLB sanctions, and outlined challenges such as the urban context and lack of district support, and also identified passion and moral purpose as critical to staying in the role.

The question then becomes whether an individual’s leadership skills and disposition are sufficient for effectiveness as an urban school leader, or, as Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, and Portin (2010) argue, superintendents of urban systems must look beyond a principal’s leadership characteristics and must adopt certain specific district-wide practices and priorities to support school leaders toward increased effectiveness. In cases where poverty and students’ socio-emotional and basic human needs are so pervasive, a focused district response to provide support to school leaders in working to mitigate the impact of outside forces on student learning is imperative (Krashen, 2011).

Knapp et al. (2010) research on leadership in urban systems reinforces the idea that the operational demands of running urban schools are complex and draw attention away from focus

on instruction. Knapp et al. (2010) also recommend that urban superintendents adopt a system perspective, an unwavering focus on improving leadership and student achievement, and a system for developing talent. Resnick & Glennan (2002) recommend substantial redesign of urban districts with prioritization of increased external support, development of instructional leadership skills of all principals, and on-the job coaching at all levels.

Orr et al. (2008) conducted inquiry based research of four persistently low-performing schools in New York City, looking to understand lack of improvement in student achievement and to explore the role of organizational change to improve teaching and learning in the schools. Orr et al. (2008) research supports a district-wide rather than school-based approach in order to provide integrated support and appropriate resources, and indicates that developing leadership and organizational capacity is just as critical as curricular and instructional improvements. Finally, given the leadership turnover in urban schools, these approaches must include integrated systems to support continuous improvement in a school over time, and in a district over time, rather than interventions that are dependent upon an individual principal (Orr et al., 2008).

In conclusion, urban schools face external pressures in the form of limited financial resources, political pressure, and increased accountability. The urban environment provides students to these schools with higher needs in the area of English language learning support, higher numbers of students living in poverty and in increasingly segregated neighborhoods. Research shows that “the skill set required to lead a small, suburban, middle-income elementary school is distinct from that needed to lead a large, urban, low-income high school” (Davis et al., 2005, p. 14). This review begins to outline what this urban skill set looks like. Some research has focused on identification of individual leadership characteristics required to lead an urban school, such as commitment to multiculturalism, innovativeness, entrepreneurialism, and a belief

system that supports urban students and faculty (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Haberman & Dill, 1999; Hite et al., 2006; Portin et al., 2009; Thomas, 2008). Other research indicates that individual leadership skills are not sufficient, and that urban school leaders must develop and be supported through a district-wide approach that works to systematically support leadership development, while taking into consideration the needs of individual principals and schools (Knapp et al., 2010; Orr et al., 2008).

Urban districts, such as the Bennett Public Schools, recognizing that the role of the principal is second only to that of the classroom teacher in impacting student achievement, are turning their attention to induction and support of new school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004). Based on the research, this general approach seems wise, but many details need to be sorted out: What can the districts do internally, and in conjunction with external partners from university or the not-for-profit arena, to design leadership development programs that will support new principals? How can the research on effective school leadership in the urban context inform the development of these programs? Investigation of principal induction programs will help to identify key elements that should be included in the Bennett Public Schools' plan to support new principals.

### **Induction Programs**

The literature has identified the pivotal role that principals play in developing and retaining teachers; creating a culture of learning within the school by establishing a clear school vision; and leading reform initiatives that improve student learning (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2005). Until recently, however, the literature examining the best ways to prepare principals for the increasingly complex and demanding context of schools is less abundant and available.

There is a mandate and a need for the development of an induction program for school leaders. Massachusetts' passage of the 1993 Education Reform Act states:

All school districts are required to provide an induction program for all administrators in their first year of practice. Induction programs provide the structure and support needed to maximize the effectiveness of new leaders as they confront the many challenges facing schools. New school leaders can learn from experienced mentor administrators and are better able to support teachers in their efforts to improve student learning. Guidelines based on the following Standards will be provided by the Department. [603 CMR 7.13 (1)]

In 2007, it was reported that 69 percent of principals and 80 percent of superintendents felt that principal induction programs were lacking - failing to adequately prepare principals for the challenges of managing a school- and that 85 percent of both groups thought that districts should design programs that work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Scholars suggest that principal preparation programs in the past have offered aspiring school leaders courses that teach school management principles, state laws that are applicable to schools, and administrative requirements and procedures, while forgoing courses that teach principals about developing professional development programs for teachers, curriculum development, and implementing a reform agenda. The research indicates that pre-service programs have not adapted their programs to meet the current-day realities in schools and that principals have lacked the critical assistance they need to enact change in their current challenging context (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Elmore, 2000; Lumsden, 1992).

Researchers also found that the unique context within urban districts (elevated drop-out rates, poverty, higher numbers of ELL students, transiency) makes the development of robust induction programs crucial for urban school leaders (Cheney et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004).

The Wallace Foundation and the Rainwater Charitable Foundation commissioned research to study principal preparation programs with an eye towards identifying exemplary

programs. Researchers surmised that improved leadership quality begins with states and districts developing comprehensive leadership systems that provide a continuum of learning for aspiring educational leaders (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Orr et al., 2010). “The aim is to create a system-wide, coordinated approach to state, district, and school-level policies and practices” (Orr. et al., 2010, pg. 22).

The Rainwater report is a seminal study that our research team makes frequent reference to in the following pages. This recent study essentially provides a roadmap for districts planning to institute principal preparation programs. According to the Rainwater report, three models of induction programs have been adopted by school systems: district-based, university-based, and non-profit provider programs. District-based programs are primarily funded and managed by district personnel. University-based programs provide a pipeline for future school administrators via degree and licensure programs (Cheney et al.,2010). Non-profit organizations such as New Leaders for New Schools contract with districts to provide programs that will serve to train leaders for their schools (Cheney et al., 2010). The literature suggests that school districts can be well served to develop partnerships with universities to recruit, train, and induct new leaders. University partnerships provide “expanded resources, a more embedded, hence powerful, intervention for developing practice, and a reciprocal process for institutional improvement, producing better preparation programs and stronger leaders” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 150).

According to the literature, a comprehensive principal leadership induction program includes the following components:

- a formal recruitment strategy to ensure that desirable candidates are filling the application pool;

- internships whereby future school leaders are placed in schools to work with leaders who have demonstrated success;
- a comprehensive plan for providing robust, targeted professional development;
- coaching and mentoring; and
- systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the new principal induction program (Cheney et al., 2010; Orr et al., 2010).

In 2007, the Wallace Foundation published a report that studied eight “exemplar” school leadership preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). They examined four pre-service (university-based) and four in-service (district-based) programs. There were a number of key findings. Recruitment of qualified candidates is critically important for the success of an induction program. Alignment of all aspects of the program to standards or a competency framework is essential. Coursework and clinical experiences, mentoring, coaching, and internship programs must also be framed by standards.

Candidates who did not receive strong internships wrapped around their coursework, or who did not receive ongoing professional development once in the field, were less likely to report high levels of effective practices. Thus, while alignment with standards is important, so, too, is the coherence and comprehensiveness of principals’ learning experiences before and after they enter the field. (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007, p. 150)

### **Leadership competency framework.**

The Rainwater Leadership Alliance (RLA) defined a competency framework as:

the set of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that a principal must have, in his or her context, in order to lead a school effectively to drive high levels of student achievement for all children. This set of standards uses the school as the lens to identify the most important things high-performing principals must know and be able to do. (Cheney et al., 2010, p. 16)

Leadership studies have suggested that in order to systematically develop leaders who can improve the increasingly complex conditions that exist in today's schools, key competencies for effective leadership must be identified (Leithwood, et al., 2004; New Leaders for New Schools, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Effective leaders “demonstrated commitment to academic improvement for every student.... are self-aware individuals who understand great teaching and learning, are creative problem solvers, and have strong communication and collaboration skills” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 13).

A 2010 Wallace Foundation report again found that the one common component an exemplary leadership development program was the establishment of a competency framework to guide the program and the participants. “The most common district action was establishment of leadership standards to clarify expectations and to use them to frame both principal selection and leadership preparation and development” (Orr et al., 2010).

An example of a competency framework developed by New Leaders for New Schools, a non-profit principal preparation program, was the Urban Excellence Framework. This framework outlined five areas of school leadership practice: student achievement-based teaching and learning; achievement and belief-based school-wide culture; personal leadership; high-quality staff aligned to vision; and operations and systems to help drive learning and school culture. This framework was specifically designed to guide leaders of schools in the urban context (Cheney et al., 2010).

The Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) puts forth another model for a competency framework. Centered on the imperative “Prove the possible,” the framework is structured with three main categories: drive results, build relationships, and manage people. These three

categories are broken down into competencies that KIPP says are necessary for success in school leadership. Role-specific competencies are also defined (Cheney et al., 2010).

Cheney et al., (2010) identified several noteworthy proficiencies included in the principal induction competency frameworks from various districts' programs:

- Cultural proficiency
- Innovation and change management
- Instructional leadership
- Organizational leadership
- Facilitation and communication skills
- Using data to improve teaching and learning
- Systems thinking
- High expectations culture
- Operational management
- Human capital management
- Personal leadership

In summary, the development of a competency framework to guide all aspects of principal leadership development is essential for the success of these programs.

### **Recruitment strategy.**

The literature speaks to the challenges that may impact the recruitment of qualified candidates for principal preparation programs in urban districts. The first challenge is attracting a significant number of qualified candidates who are committed to a leadership role in an area of high need. Once candidates have been selected and placed in leadership roles, the next challenges are the working conditions (especially in high-poverty schools) and limited opportunities for advancement that these principals face. These realities often cause higher turnover rates for principals in urban or high poverty districts. Finally, qualified candidates for principalships are often hesitant to embark upon the challenge of school leadership because of the lack of support and preparation being offered by local school districts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Knapp, Copeland, & Talbert, 2003; Peterson, 2002).

Principal induction programs that have been deemed successful by researchers include proactive and aggressive recruitment strategies that:

Rely on strategic, proactive and targeted recruiting strategies to ensure that they have strong candidate pools and pipeline programs from which they can select candidates most likely to thrive in the program and grow into effective principals. Because RLA programs regard school leaders as agents of systematic change within public education, they invest time and resources to identify and attract high quality candidates, not simply relying on candidates to self-select into programs. Their recruitment techniques are consistently evaluated based on data and adjusted as needed. (Cheney, et al., 2010, p. 22)

Successful induction programs implemented recruitment strategies that were purposeful, matched competency frameworks with potential candidates, and made sure their recruiters were trained to effectively communicate the mission of the program (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Successful induction programs combined broad-based and targeted approaches to attract candidates. In so doing, programs must be willing to spend money to employ recruiters and pay for marketing initiatives. Tools were designed and selectors were trained to apply competency frameworks to evaluate prospective candidates (Cheney et al., 2010). One successful recruiting strategy was developed by the NYC Leadership Academy. They cultivated a network of nominators by tapping former graduates of the program, superintendents who have had interactions with the program, and other principals and district leaders in the New York City School System. They hosted information sessions that were widely advertised and attracted a diverse pool of qualified candidates.

The Rainwater report highlights the strategy employed by KIPP schools to build a pipeline to leadership, grooming leaders from within the system. Embedded in practice in KIPP schools is shared leadership. Teachers are encouraged to join with one another and the school administration to manage decision making. Teachers who demonstrate leadership are given additional responsibilities. Teacher leaders are placed on leadership teams and successful

leadership team members who aspire to become administrators are invited to participate in specific programs that will lead to placement as principal within a school (Cheney et al., 2010).

### **Professional development.**

Principal induction programs deemed successful by the Rainwater Leadership Alliance developed training modules and required coursework. Some principal induction programs were district-based and formed partnerships with universities while others existed independently. In either case,

RLA programs believe that training and development needs to be school-based and experiential. Each fellow has an Individual Learning Plan that takes into account strengths and weaknesses identified during the selection process. The development sequences are intentionally coordinated and integrated and include coursework and school-based residencies that give fellows authentic opportunities to lead adults, make mistakes, and grow. (Cheney, et al., 2010, p. 66)

The program for training principals in their first three years must be carefully constructed: “effective programs should be long-term, carefully planned, job embedded, and focus on student achievement and how it is reached” (Peterson, 2002, p. 214). Peterson examined a number of professional development programs offered to school leaders and concluded, “The curriculum within a program should be thoughtfully designed, sequential, cumulative, and appropriate to the level of knowledge of participants. Curriculum across programs should be coordinated and aligned to enhance learning” (Peterson, 2002, p. 231). The principal preparation program at the University of Illinois at Chicago is a three year program that culminates with a capstone project. During the program students are required to collect data from their job placements to connect coursework with their experience and ultimately devise a plan of action. This model for professional development for aspiring and novice principals leverages the expertise of the University of Illinois in partnership with the district. (Cheney et al., 2010)

Internships are offered to aspiring principals in a number of principal preparation programs including KIPP, Gwinnett County Public Schools, New Leaders for New Schools, NYC Leadership Academy, Long Beach Unified School District, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. These internships vary in duration from 25 days to one full year.

### **Mentoring and coaching.**

Researchers discovered that assigning a mentor to a new principal is an important support that should be formalized (Daresh, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Peterson, 2002).

Mentors can provide valuable information and feedback to the principal concerning the day-to-day operations in a school. In addition, mentors can serve as role models for principals. Mentors can assist the new principal in navigating district policies and procedures. Mentors can play an active role in the rooting of core values. For all of the above to be optimal, great care must be taken when matching a mentor with a principal (Daresh, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Researchers have also highlighted the importance of providing coaching to new principals. While mentors are responsible for helping the principal with what to do coaches show the principal how to do it. Coaches work with principals as they set their individual learning plans. Coaches are primarily concerned with student outcomes and pushing principals to improve (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003). Coaches are assigned to give regular constructive feedback to the school leaders who have been placed in leadership positions in schools. Mentoring and coaching are highly valued by new principals who indicated that these programs should be included in a principal induction program (Wright, Siegrist, Pate, Monetti, & Raiford, 2009).

Graduates of principal training programs, once placed, were afforded supports, particularly during the first year of employment (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Districts must be willing and able to allocate financial resources to this end. The research

suggests that while there are costs associated with one-on-one coaching support, workshops and other professional development opportunities, peer support, school-level support, and district-level influence and engagement, the benefits cannot be understated (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Peterson, 2002). One principal preparation program managed by the Gwinnett County Public School System provided new principals with mentors for their first two years, workshops on how to build successful teams, and a variety of other conferences with topics including closing the achievement gap, quality teaching strategies, and how to create orderly schools (Cheney et al., 2010).

### **Program evaluation.**

The Wallace report from 2007 utilized qualitative research to determine the effectiveness of the induction programs they researched. Program participants were surveyed and observed. Superintendents were asked to rate principals who had completed a principal induction program. Comparisons were drawn between the attitudes of principals who had participated in a program with principals who had not. Researchers concluded that programs for inducting principals are beneficial (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Principal induction programs included in the Rainwater Leadership Alliance study included an evaluative component.

The mission of the RLA programs is to dramatically improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps. They rely on an ongoing data feedback loop to strengthen their own models, and in a departure from other school leader preparation programs, they ultimately hold themselves accountable for the on-the-job performance of their graduates, including student achievement results, despite limitations in the available data. (Cheney et al., 2010, p. 118)

Data collected by Rainwater Leadership Alliance programs included student achievement, instructor, coach, and mentor-principal feedback, supervisor or other district staff feedback, principal surveys, placement and retention rates and cost per participant (Cheney et al.,

2010). Data analyzed from three other programs (New Leaders for New Schools, NYC Leadership Academy, and KIPP) concluded that the principals who participated in induction programs were responsible for improvement in student achievement (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2009; Martorell et al., 2010; Tuttle, Teh, Nichols-Barrer, Gill, & Gleason, 2010). Much more research is needed in this area to determine to what degree student achievement can be attributed to principal induction programs.

**Example of a non-RLA induction program.**

Reports by the Wallace Foundation and the Rainwater Foundation provided an invaluable analysis that can guide districts in the development of leadership induction programs. The programs they studied are highly selective and place high numbers of participants in schools around the country. Each program established competency frameworks for leaders; identified protocols for recruitment and selection of candidates; placed candidates with mentors during their formative years; and implemented an explicit curriculum. Perhaps, most importantly, student achievement was connected to the evaluation process for many of the programs (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Pittsburgh has a school system with similar student demographics to (although far fewer schools) Bennett. The Pittsburgh Public School System was awarded a federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant for \$7.4 million in July 2007 to design and implement a principal induction program. The Pittsburgh Urban Leadership System for Excellence (P.U.L.S.E.) was designed “to recruit, train, support, evaluate, improve, and reward principals in order to enable their success toward the academic achievement and growth of students.” (<http://www.pulsepittsburgh.org>). The components of the program include the Pittsburgh Emerging Leader Academy, Administrative Induction Program, and Leadership Academy.

The Pittsburgh Emerging Leader Academy (PELA) actively seeks to identify aspiring principals from within the district. Aspiring principals would have to complete a year-long residency supervised by a mentor principal which would prepare them to become instructional and transformational leaders in the district. PELA residents were then asked to confront real-world problems and scenarios, and with the help of their mentors, develop practical solutions. These future leaders were also asked to conduct an action research project that identified a problem within the school system that was having a negative effect on student achievement. This research was then presented at the National Urban Leadership Symposium held in Pittsburgh.

Another component of the P.U.L.S.E. program was the Administrative Induction Program. This program was designed to provide supports for novice principals during their first two years on the job. In the first year principals were given intensive training to help them understand district policies and procedures around budgeting, building maintenance, teacher evaluation and other pertinent topics. They were also supported by executive coaches and were given information regarding the district's performance evaluation system. During the second year, principals continued to receive coaching and were paired with a mentor who provided them with continuous feedback.

The third component of Pittsburgh's P.U.L.S.E program was its Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy was created to provide on-going professional development and training for school leaders (principals and assistant principals) and central office administrators. All of the professional development programs were designed to align with the district's performance standards while simultaneously addressing individual school improvement plans.

It should be noted that the P.U.L.S.E program, like the Rainwater Leadership Alliance programs, emphasized the importance of the recruitment of qualified principal candidates. After

desirable candidates have been selected they were then given training prior to being placed in a school. Once placed, they were given mentors who understood the system and could help new principals navigate obstacles.

The Rand Corporation partnered with the Pittsburgh Public School System and served as the program evaluator. Success of the program was linked to school performance. An index has been created for evaluation purposes and includes analysis of student test scores as well as student participation in advanced courses ([www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us)). The results of this index have not been shared with the broader audience but P.U.L.S.E program administrators were optimistic that the induction and leadership programs would make a difference in student achievement.

#### **Boston's previous program.**

Under the leadership of former superintendent Thomas Payzant, a framework called The Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement was created to guide the Boston Public Schools' reform agenda. This document addressed:

effective and culturally relevant instructional practice and a collaborative school climate; data-driven instruction and PD; investments in instruction-based PD; shared leadership for sustainability; effective use of resources to support instruction and student learning; family and community partnerships; and effective, efficient, and equitable school and district operations. (Orr et al., 2010, p. 26)

In 2002, the Boston Public Schools also created a working document titled Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes Required of Boston School Principals and Headmasters that identified competencies that should be present in a candidate at the time of hiring and competencies that need to be continually developed by the new principal. This document formed the basis for a competency framework to be utilized during the recruitment and hiring process (see appendix A).

The Boston Public Schools recognized the need for school leadership training and submitted a proposal to the Broad Foundation in November 2002 seeking funding for the creation of a School Leadership Institute to address among other things the “10% vacancy rate in Boston principalships; the ongoing training experienced principals need to drive instructional improvement efforts; and the need for a career ladder that leads teachers to the principalship” (BPS proposal, pg. 3).

One aspect of the School Leadership Institute was an induction program called the New Principal Support System (NPSS) which was designed to “respond to the most pressing leadership needs of first- and second-year principals, creating a learning community that supports principals’ reflection on and inquiry into their practice” (BPS Proposal, 2002, pg. 12). There were several components associated with the School Leadership Institute, but each component was designed to support a paradigm created by district staff and University officials called the Ten Dimensions of Principal Leadership. The ten dimensions were:

- understanding and managing self
- resilience
- school culture and climate
- learning and teaching
- supervision and evaluation
- data
- professional development
- shared leadership
- resources
- family and community engagement

“When specific programs were eventually created under the auspices of the School Leadership Institute, these dimensions were used to provide curricular focus for the training modules, the in-district field experiences, and ultimately the assessments” (Orr, et al., 2010, p. 27). The School Leadership Institute’s New Principal Support System was designed to “create a system of support and a community of learning for principals in their first two years in the position that sustains them and ensures their success” (BPS Proposal, p. 17).

The NPSS had several elements and each one served a vital role in accomplishing the overall goal of training and preparing principals for demanding and challenging roles as building leaders. The first element of the NPSS required all of the new principals in the district to engage in intensive summer training with specific training modules that dealt with systems management issues (i.e. modules on budget management, hiring, technology applications, facilities management, and legal issues) (BPS Proposal, 2002). In addition to these modules, new principals were required to take a seminar that taught them how to analyze school data with an eye towards developing “instructional priorities as they enter their new school” (BPS Proposal, pg.17).

Another element of the NPSS was the pairing of new principals with experienced principals establishing a formal mentor and mentee relationship. Mentors and new principals were asked to meet weekly to discuss a variety of challenges but to also make practical and actionable plans of action. These meetings would often include the principal creating a plan for activities like analyzing current student data, observing and giving feedback to teachers, and executing parent outreach strategies (BPS Proposal, 2002). These discussions provided key guidance around topics that proved critical to a principal’s effectiveness managing a school.

Massachusetts is among several states that have identified professional standards to measure school administrators. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new Regulations on Evaluation of Educators on June 28, 2011. The regulations require districts in Massachusetts to evaluate school leaders according to four standards of professional practice: Instructional Leadership, Management and Operations, Family and Community Engagement and Professional Culture.

As stated earlier, the demographic context of an urban principalship (high rates of poverty, racial segregation and English language learners) provides a complex set of challenges for any principal, especially one in their first year on the job. The NPSS, as another element of induction, had all of its new principals establish relationships with Boston community leaders and the mayor's community liaisons. The rationale for this relationship building was to foster a better understanding of how to address the several issues that plagued students within the urban context. An urban principal must understand how to tap into community resources and identify those allies who can support the needs of students outside the school (BPS Proposal, 2002).

Principals who participated in the NPSS would also be given "personalized central support...throughout the year on critical management issues" (BPS Proposal, pg.18). These supports included follow up to the summer training modules and visits to the school from key central office personnel with experience managing budgets, hiring teachers, and supervising and evaluating staff. New principals were also provided with someone from Boston's operations management team to give concrete guidance on beginning of the year facilities and operational concerns (BPS Proposal, 2002).

Finally, new principals who participated in the NPSS were scheduled to meet with other new principals monthly for the express purposes of providing support, providing a format for

discussing challenging issues, and engaging in the active problem solving of these issues. These meetings were to have agendas that were completely driven by the needs of new principals and experienced principals were brought in to share guidance and advice around challenging or vexing topics.

It is important to note that the NPSS was one of several programs within Boston's School Leadership Institute. Boston was seeking funding for a program that identified and recruited administrative leaders to the district while also nurturing administrative talent amongst its current teachers. Boston intended to follow this recruitment and selection of personnel with preparation in the form of the two-year induction program (NPSS) and ongoing supports when these individuals began to run their own schools. While this study focuses on induction as an extremely important component of developing effective principals, one cannot ignore the impact that further professional development and supports (once a principal has assumed a school leadership position) will lead to more effective leadership (Orr et al., 2010). It is also important to note that once outside funding for aspects of the School Leadership Institute ran out, Boston was unable to sustain the program.

One purpose of this study is to examine various principal induction programs that have emerged in recent years and identify the key program components for the induction of school principals into the Bennett Public School System. This research will be examined in light of information garnered from interviews with principals in their first three years in Bennett to guide the Bennett Public School System with the development of a principal induction program.

## Methodology

### Introduction

The Bennett Public Schools has prioritized “Strengthening School Leadership” as a critical objective for addressing the key components of the district’s Acceleration Agenda, the Superintendent’s multi-year strategic plan to increase student achievement. In order to reach the district’s key targets of proficiency for all, closing access and achievement gaps and graduating students college-ready and success-bound, the district must work to support school leaders in their early years. This study reviewed relevant literature and gathered data from principals in their first three years in the Bennett Public Schools in order to support the district’s development of an effective induction program for beginning principals and is aimed at answering the following research questions:

- **What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?**
- **Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?**

This section outlines the district context, design of the study, sampling and data collection methods, and data analysis. Strategies to address reliability, validity and bias are also discussed.

### Overview of the Bennett Public Schools

The mission of the Bennett Public Schools states:

As the birthplace of public education in this nation, the Bennett Public Schools is committed to transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools. We partner with the community, families, and students to develop in every learner the knowledge, skill, and character to excel in college, career, and life. Retrieved from <http://www.Bennettpublicschools.org/committee>

Since 1992, the district has been governed by a school committee appointed by the mayor. Each of the seven members serves a four year term, which are staggered. The district serves 57,050 students in 123 schools across the city. Currently, the Bennett Public Schools portfolio includes four governance structures: traditional district schools, pilot schools, Horace Mann charter schools, and innovation schools. Traditional district schools operate under the collective bargaining agreement between the Bennett School Committee and the Bennett Teachers' Union. Pilot schools, under a particular agreement between the district and the union, are part of the school district but have autonomy over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum, assessment, and the school calendar to provide increased flexibility to meet the needs of students and families. Horace Mann charter schools, authorized by the state in 1997, are in-district charter schools that follow many district practices: hiring and firing of school personnel, employment for purposes of collective bargaining; school facility; funding; and the dissemination of innovative practices. In other aspects, especially regarding its educational program, the Horace Mann charter school is functionally distinct from the district. For example, the governing board of the school can establish their own graduation requirements for students (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003). Innovation schools, chartered by the state in 2010, are in-district and charter-like schools that operate with greater autonomy and flexibility with regard to curriculum, staffing, budget, schedule, calendar, professional development, and district policies.

Of the 57,050 students in the Bennett Public Schools, 74 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch, and 19 percent are on individualized education programs. The students identify racially as 41 percent Hispanic, 36 percent Black, 13 percent White, 9 percent Asian and 2 percent other or multiracial. There are 73 different home languages, and 45 percent of the

students speak a first language other than English. For school year 2010, 78 percent of students passed the grade 10 English Language Arts MCAS, 75 percent were successful in grade 10 Mathematics.

Of the 4,220 teachers in the district, 23 percent are Black, 62 percent White, 10 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian and less than 1 percent identify as other or multiracial. Of the 129 principals, 47 percent are Black, 35 percent White, 16 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian and less than 1 percent identified as other or multiracial. The Bennett Public Schools struggle with similar issues facing urban districts nationwide: increased accountability for student achievement decreased federal and state funding, competition from charter schools, and educating higher percentages of students with more severe special needs.

While the results of this research are most relevant to the Bennett Public Schools, findings are applicable to other urban districts.

### **Design of the Study**

This study was designed to collect data from two critical sources in order to support the Bennett Public Schools in the development of a comprehensive induction program for principals: a review of the literature and interviews with principals new to the district using a specific interview protocol (see Appendix B). Principals in their first three years were a valuable source of insight as to required supports for effective urban school leadership. In addition, this study used data gathered from the literature review in order to identify the skills necessary to lead an urban school, as well as to identify best practices from comparable urban districts for supporting new principals.

The research team gained an understanding of the challenges faced by the principals in their first three years in the Bennett Public Schools through a qualitative research study.

According to Merriam (2009), “The overall purpose [of basic qualitative research] is *to understand* how people make sense of their lives and experiences” (p.23). Researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews of principals, and elicited their perceptions about supports provided by the district that were helpful to them, as well as information they lacked and how they went about accessing it. They also recommended induction program components.

### **Sample Selection**

In order to gather data to answer the research questions, principals were purposefully selected for participation. “Purposeful sampling is based upon the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The first criterion was that the individual be a current Bennett Public School principal. A second criterion was that the individual be in the first three years of the principalship in Bennett. Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) confirms that “recency of experience is an important factor” in selecting participants (p .531). Beginning principals are closer to the experience to be investigated and understood: the experience of novice principals in the Bennett Public Schools.

According to Maxwell (1992), one of the goals of purposeful sampling is “to make sure one has adequately understood the variation in the phenomena of interest in the setting” (p.293). Therefore, beyond these two criteria, this study included as wide a variety of principals as possible: those who lead traditional schools as well as pilot, in-district charter and turnaround schools; males and females; principals with experience outside the district and those who have been school leaders only in the Bennett Public Schools.

The Office of Human Resources identified the potential pool of participants and provided a spreadsheet with the following data: name of principal, school, grade span of school, gender, length of tenure as principal in the Bennett Public Schools, “type” of school (traditional, pilot, in-district charter), and whether the principal had been a Bennett Principal Fellow.

Once that information had been gathered for all principals in the district, the sample was limited. Anyone with more than three years as a principal in the district was excluded. According to the Bennett Public Schools Office of Human Resources, of the active, non-leave, headmasters or principals, as of June 2010, 49 out of 129 principals were in their first three years in the role. This sample began with the 49 school leaders in their first three years, and then individuals were selected who would bring a diversity of perspectives to the study. The Consensual Qualitative Research Model recommends 8-15 participants, with the ultimate number identified when we believe we have gathered sufficient data to answer our research questions (Hill et al., 1997). We purposefully selected twelve principals from the list provided by the district. Of the twelve interviewed, 7 were female, 5 male; 5 White, 5 Black, 2 Hispanic; 6 from the elementary and 6 from the secondary level. Regarding school governance, 6 are traditional district schools, 4 are pilot schools, 1 is an innovation school and 1 is a Horace Mann charter school. This diversity of perspectives is valuable for the study’s efforts to gather information that is generalizable across the district.

<b>Participant Gender</b>	<b>Number of Principals</b>
Male	7
Female	5

<b>Participant Race</b>	<b>Number of Principals</b>
Black	5
White	5
Hispanic	2

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Number of Principals</b>
Traditional Schools	6
Pilot Schools	4
Charter Schools	1
Innovation School	1

<b>School Level</b>	<b>Number of Principals</b>
Secondary	6
Elementary	6

### **Data Collection**

Before conducting interviews with Bennett Public Schools principals, pilot interviews were conducted with five principals from a different urban district in order to assess and refine the interview protocol. The transcripts of the pilot interviews were reviewed and the researchers revised draft interview questions accordingly, to more clearly focus upon information that would answer our research questions.

Interviews were conducted over a two-month period. Pairs conducted the first three interviews. After team discussion, it was not found to be particularly beneficial to interview in pairs. Value was found in having the person who had conducted the interview share the data with

the team, but it was not evident that a second person had anything additional to contribute. Therefore, remaining interviews were conducted in a one-to-one format, using the same interview protocol. All interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed following Hill's Consensual Research Model (Hill et al., 1997). In brief, "team members first examine the data independently and then come together to present and discuss their ideas until they reach a single unified version that all team members endorse as the best representation of the data" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 523). Although initial coding took place individually, the critical step in Consensual Qualitative Research was group members coming together to discuss the coding of the data and the identification of relevant domains, and distillation of domains into core ideas.

The full group working session to calibrate the process and to outline the codebook was essential. As qualitative research is recursive, these emerging categories of data were held up to new pieces of evidence as they became identified. In this way, categories were modified throughout the analysis process. As additional transcripts were analyzed, the team made further revisions and additions to the codebook until the final codebook guide was identified (see Appendix C). After coding two of the twelve transcripts as a whole group, researchers divided into three smaller groups. Each pair or trio of researchers was responsible for coding four interviews. Coding was completed individually first, and then partners worked together to reach consensus. Additional revisions were made to the codes, and the final codebook was utilized for all twelve interviews.

Four themes emerged from the interviews. First, Leadership data included principals' discussion of the types of leadership they exercise in their roles. Urban Context data described

the challenges of the urban context, and the school leadership strategies the principals employ to meet those demands. Pipeline data described how the principals were recruited, selected and placed into their school leadership positions. Support data included comments about the informal and formal support structures that they accessed in their roles. To make sense of the data and identify findings, we decided that it was appropriate to combine data into three areas: Effective School Leadership, The Urban Context, and Induction Programs.

After all interviews were coded and checked, data were combined and entered into one excel spreadsheet to be reviewed by the team. Once the group was confident in the accurate coding of all data, each team regrouped to review coding for each data section: Leadership, Urban Context, and Induction (see Appendix D). While focusing closely on data coded in each section, themes and preliminary findings emerged. Illustrative quotes were identified, and partners discussed each finding's significance toward the development of an induction program for principals in the Bennett Public Schools.

Ultimately, findings were organized to provide answers to the two research questions. At each stage of the research, emerging categories of data were identified in relation to the research question: *Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?* Additionally, this study was interested in how the data from principals' interviews corresponded with the findings of our literature review regarding skills and supports necessary for urban school principals, and components of effective induction programs. Commonalities between the principals' responses and the literature data were identified. This data provided information for the research question: *What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?* The combination literature and the principals'

perceptions and experiences informed our recommendations to the Bennett Public Schools. The results provide key data for the Bennett Public Schools development and implementation of a comprehensive induction program to meet the needs of beginning principals in the district.

### **Validity and Reliability**

In this study, steps were taken to respond to concerns about reliability and validity. One strategy employed was the triangulation of the data, or using multiple sources of data to inform the conclusions. Through personal interviews and review of the literature, data were gathered from numerous sources, including individuals with different experiences. Also, analysis was triangulated by having multiple group members analyze the same transcript and compare the findings. By including participants who represent a variety of perspectives, this study sought as broad a representation of the data as possible. These strategies helped to calibrate the analytical skills of the researchers and to work toward validity and reliability. Overall, “to demonstrate the coherence of the results, researchers need to develop conclusions that are logical, account for all the data, answer the research questions and make sense to the outside reader” (Hill et al., 1997, p. 559).

Further, researchers were mindful of Maxwell’s (1992) five types of validity in qualitative analysis. Descriptive validity is the maintenance of the accuracy of the participant’s account. Even when audio taping is used, Maxwell (1992) argues, the transcript may not take into account everything said, or not said, such as pauses or emphases. It was important, then, for the group member who had interviewed each principal to present the information to the larger group, as the interviewer had the first-hand experience during the interview and could elaborate for clarity when necessary. Interpretive validity is the extent to which the participants’ accounts are “grounded in the language of the people studied and rely as much as possible on their own

words and concepts” (Maxwell, 1992, p. 298). In other words, as qualitative researchers, we were cautious about bringing our own interpretation into the data. As much as possible, quotes from the principals were taken directly from the transcripts. Any additions were included in brackets, and only made to clarify the original statement. Theoretical validity warns against the researchers’ application of a theoretical construct to the participants’ experience that may not be accurate. The team discussed the significance of valuing each individual’s experience, regardless of the extent to which it differed from other principals. Indeed, the diversity of experiences added to the depth of the data. Fourth, generalizability, or the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times or settings than those directly studied, is important in qualitative research.

In this study, the team focused primarily on internal generalizability, or the question of the extent to which the data gleaned from a sample of principals’ experiences can be generalized to all Bennett Public Schools principals. Therefore, close attention was paid to how many of the principals shared similar experiences or concerns. Specifically in the findings, it was noted whether a few, less than half, more than half, or almost all of the principals shared an opinion. Finally, attention was paid to evaluative validity, the “application of an evaluative framework to the objects of the study, rather than a descriptive, interpretive or explanatory one” (Maxwell, 1992, p. 295). In discussions, researchers refrained from judgment of individuals; their experiences, opinions and beliefs were taken at face value. Each person’s experience was held to be as significant as another’s. As data were analyzed and ultimately the team generated conclusions about the experiences of principals in the Bennett Public Schools, these types of validity were monitored, and worked to address them throughout the process.

Ongoing maintenance of the audit trail was also important, especially as multiple researchers worked on the same data. Notes were kept as to how the data was collected, how transcripts were analyzed, how categories were identified, how themes emerged. Changes to the initial plan were noted as they occurred. The purpose of the audit trail was to document clearly the steps taken throughout the qualitative research process and was another strategy to support reliability and validity.

### **Researcher Bias and Assumptions**

Since two members of the research group are Bennett Public School leaders, one principal and one Assistant Superintendent, and a third member is a consultant to the district, the team recognized that assumptions and potential bias might be brought to this work. According to Hill et al. (1997), “Using several researchers provides a variety of opinions and perspectives, helps to circumvent the biases of any one person, and is helpful in capturing the complexity of the data” (p. 523). By working in small groups and conducting full group verifications of data coding, findings, and recommendations, the structure provided a set of checks and balances serving to mitigate personal bias.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In order to inform the development of the Bennett Public School’s induction program for new principals, the findings from the literature and interviews are organized by two main research questions: *What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal? Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?* The second question is further broken down into three main categories: effective school leadership, the urban context, and induction programs. Overall, the

findings indicate the importance of Bennett Public School's developing and articulating a clear set of competencies, or a leadership competency framework, for all principals, and establishing a comprehensive induction program consisting of the following elements: recruitment and selection strategy, year-long site-based internship, mentoring and coaching, relevant professional development and participant and program evaluation.

### **What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?**

The literature on urban school leadership was reviewed in order to identify competencies exhibited by effective urban principals. These competencies will be incorporated into recommendations for the Bennett Public Schools induction program for new principals.

***Finding: Individual leadership characteristics required to lead an urban school include cultural proficiency, innovativeness, and a belief system that supports urban students. In addition, urban principals must be supported through district-wide leadership development.***

The role of the principal is critical in directly influencing students' academic outcomes. Marzano, Walters, and McNulty (2005) found that the principal's ability to coordinate efforts and resources is at the heart of student achievement, second only to teachers' instruction. This coordination of efforts and resources, however, is more difficult to enact within the urban context, given the many challenges principals face in leading their schools.

The urban environment provides students to those schools with higher numbers of students living in poverty, higher number of second language learners, higher mobility rates (McQuillan, 1998), and a disproportionate number of students in special education tracks (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006). The demographic trends in most large cities, reflected in Bennett, show increasing racial isolation and poverty. Almost 75 percent of students in the Bennett Public

Schools qualify for free and reduced priced meals and 77 percent of them are African American or Latino, the two groups with the highest statistical risk of failing or dropping out. Additionally, urban schools face external pressures in the form of limited financial resources and political pressure to improve student achievement.

When seeking to articulate characteristics of effective leadership of urban schools, findings from the literature distinguish priorities for both the individual leader and the school district. Research has focused on the identification of individual leadership characteristics of principals that are required to lead an urban school, such as commitment to multiculturalism, innovativeness, entrepreneurialism, and a belief system that supports urban students and faculty (Gardiner, 2006; Haberman, 1999; Hite, 2006; Portin, 2009; Thomas, 2008). Another level of research indicates that in order to leverage district-wide improvement for students, individual leadership skills in isolation are not sufficient, and that urban principals must be supported through a district-wide approach that works to systematically provide leadership development (Knapp, 2010; Orr, 2008). Principals must individually demonstrate certain key competencies, and also must be connected to a broader system of district-wide leadership development.

**Based on the literature review and interviews with principals in Bennett Public Schools, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the district?**

According to the literature, a comprehensive system for recruitment, induction, and support for new principals is essential. One report stated that a majority of principals and superintendents felt that principal induction programs were lacking - failing to adequately prepare principals for the challenges of managing a school. The report also concluded that effective induction programs should be designed to address district level challenges and

responsibilities while also developing leadership competencies for principals (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, & Foleno, 2001). A comprehensive system of support for new principals provides leaders with effective training including induction, context specific professional development during their first three years, and effective coaching and mentoring to promote school wide gains (Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010; Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010).

This comprehensive system includes:

- a formal recruitment strategy to ensure that desirable candidates are filling the application pool;
- a comprehensive plan for providing robust, targeted supports; including professional development, internships, coaching, and mentoring; and
- systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the new principal induction program.

**Findings from literature: Induction programs.**

***Finding: Successful induction programs are guided by a clear competency framework.***

Scholars find that effective induction programs include a clear competency framework by which all prospective principals are measured (Cheney et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Wirt et al., 2004). Districts must identify critical skills and competencies that educational leaders will need to master in order to be successful in their new positions.

Researchers have identified skills and dispositions that are important for principals to possess and develop. Successful induction programs must incorporate these leadership characteristics in the development of a competency framework (Cheney et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004). Programs should be adapted to respond to the already demonstrated competencies of the candidates, and focus on areas in which individuals need support for growth. The Rainwater

Leadership Alliance (Cheney et al., 2010) identified several noteworthy proficiencies included in the principal induction competency frameworks from various districts' programs:

- Cultural proficiency
- Innovation and change management
- Instructional leadership
- Organizational leadership
- Facilitation and communication skills
- Using data to improve teaching and learning
- Systems thinking
- High expectations culture
- Operational management
- Human capital management
- Personal leadership

In 2002, Bennett Public Schools created a working document titled “Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes Required of Bennett School Principals and Headmasters” that identified markedly similar competencies, which can be referenced to inform the development of the new competency framework (see Appendix A).

***Finding: Induction programs must include a comprehensive plan for providing robust, targeted supports including development, internships, coaching, and mentoring.*** In order for a comprehensive plan for providing robust and targeted supports to be successful, the curriculum for the training modules must be well designed, relevant, and properly sequenced. Coursework should be designed to increase proficiency in the skills that have been established by the competency framework (Cheney et al., 2010; Peterson, 2002). In order for the training and development to be considered relevant, it must take into account the unique contexts of the schools as well as the individual needs of principals. Individual professional development plans should address each principal's needs around instructional, data-driven, and distributive leadership (Knapp, 2010; Orr, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001). Additionally it is critical that principals receive training in the communication of district and individual core beliefs and values, including cultural proficiency, to ensure equity and access for all students in the district (Grissom and Loeb, 2009; Heifetz 1994; Portin, 2009; Senge, 1990). Principals also need information and

training regarding the navigation of district central office, including contact people to help school leaders resolve issues including transportation, hiring, special education policies and budget processes (Daresh, 2008).

Research suggests that the use of internships is an effective strategy for the development of principals. While placing prospective principals in schools with effective leaders prior to a permanent assignment is costly, as the interns would require a salary and the practicing principal a stipend, the literature suggests that such internships are invaluable (Cheney et al., 2010; Fry, Bottoms & O’Neill, 2005; Orr et al., 2010). “A well-designed internship expands the knowledge and skills of candidates while also gauging their ability to apply new learning in authentic settings as they contend with problems that have real-world consequences” (Fry et al., 2005, p. 3). Research suggests that leadership skills learned and developed through professional development sessions are further enhanced by observing and collaborating intensely with effective school leaders as they confront the challenges of working in schools (Cheney et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2005, Fry et al., 2005).

After a principal has been successfully placed with an effective leader, coaching and mentoring programs provide valuable insights to principals. However, in order for the coaching and mentoring to be effective, the roles of coaches and mentors must be carefully constructed (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003). Once these roles have been established, the principals must be properly matched (in terms of school context and personal attributes) with their coaches and mentors in order to be optimally successful. While the literature is scant regarding the benefits of matching, it does suggest that coaching and mentoring would be most beneficial when trust is present between the principal and the coach or mentor (Bloom, et al., 2003; Daresh, 2004;

Peterson, 2002; Wright et al., 2009). All of these elements are essential for driving comprehensive school improvement (Bloom et al., 2003; Cheney et al., 2010; Daresh, 2004).

**Findings from interviews: Effective school leadership.**

Regardless of the setting, effective principals are necessary to improve schools and increase student achievement. Secretary Duncan (2009) concludes that, “There are no good schools in our country without a great principal... If our 95,000 schools each had a great principal, this thing [the achievement gap] would take care of itself.” Principals play a vital role in student learning. Principal leadership is strongly correlated to student learning, second only to classroom instruction. In the context of Bennett, principals described effective school leadership skills and beliefs to include shared leadership, instructional leadership, and the need to use data to drive instructional improvement.

***Finding: Principals stated that shared leadership is important; however, they expressed a lack of proficiency in executing this leadership strategy.*** A majority of principals believed that decision-making was a shared responsibility. Most importantly, principals asserted that they value shared leadership and understand the benefits of involving other school community members in the decision making process. One principal described how a leader solves problems by including others:

I think you’ve got to be a leader who will see a problem and challenge your staff and challenge your community around that problem, so that as a community we can come with solutions to deal with that problem.

Principals also described how shared decision-making was fundamental to the operation of the school. One principal noted that shared leadership and involving others is vital, stating:

I am willing to lead by example but then let go and empower others to take the reins. Because if it’s always you that’s leading everything, it will always be you that’s leading everything, and that’s not sustainable. And that’s not what this work is about.

Another principal described how shared leadership supported the school:

I do think that I was able to structure things in terms of distributive leadership so the school didn't fall apart.

Principals recognized the difficulties associated with involving others but acknowledged that despite the challenges, "it is an endeavor worth pursuing."

However, several principals also described uncertainty about when and how to share responsibilities for decision-making as well as how to engage others in the process. One principal acknowledged her personal shortcomings related to shared leadership:

[Teachers] still are hesitant to offer their help in some respects. I'm a little surprised by that because last year in the first year they were so good at offering help and really that's the reason we have a much, much better schedule in the second year, because it was their own schedule. But they're still very tentative to step up and take on roles of leadership for the school. But I'm all for it if I can get them [teachers] to participate.

Another principal described his struggle when holding firm with some decisions while trying to engage others in the shared leadership process by stating:

How do you figure out what people are thinking and try to combat that and still get across your agenda in moving things forward? I don't know how to make people see that if I'm asking you to do something, it's because I genuinely think that it will work. I think people feel like you always have an agenda.

A third principal indicated her team functioned more effectively as she became more aware of her leadership style and operating principles: "When is this my decision? What's mine? What's yours? What's ours? And I think that's why I haven't perfected that yet and I think that's always a struggle."

Such uncertainty results in lost opportunities for Bennett's school leaders. The principals acknowledged the value of team decisions but expressed uncertainty about how to proceed with its effective use. It's unclear to the principals how much responsibility they can give to faculty and how to initiate collaborative efforts. Principals value the practice of shared decision-making

but struggle with its implementation as a leadership strategy for sustainable change and school improvement.

Further complicating this struggle is a stated school district expectation that shared decision-making is a routine practice. Promoting the work of teachers in professional learning communities and providing opportunities for teachers to assume informal leadership roles are listed as expected practices and components in performance evaluation standards. Yet, there is lack of clarity among the principals for how and when to engage such work. One principal stated:

But [there are] very few discussions about what is leadership all about and the difference between leadership and authority; and how in this position we have an interplay of the two but really the one that helps transform schools is leadership. What does it mean and what are the things that are implicated when you're a leader? How do you effect change in an institution? What are some of the drawbacks of the process? What are some of the predictable patterns that when an institution is going through change and you're leading that institution through a change, what are some of the things that you can expect?

It's clear the principals understand the value of sharing leadership and benefits to the school community, but there is some personal and professional tension with reference to making this a routine and common practice. An effective professional development program could explicitly teach school leaders strategies for developing shared leadership.

***Finding: Principals stated the importance of acting as an instructional leader to improve classroom instruction and recognized the challenges when serving as an instructional leader.*** Nearly half of the principals described the importance of instructional leadership as key for improving teaching and learning within their schools. Like shared leadership, principals asserted that they valued instructional leadership as a professional practice. One principal stated, "From my perspective in terms of leadership in urban schools, you've got to be an instructional leader." Principals expressed similar sentiments and described the value and benefits of

intentional instructional leadership as practice aimed at improving teaching. Another principal likened her position of an instructional leader to an archeologist:

The best way to know what is going on in a classroom is to play the role of an archeologist; For me, if I go to a classroom and I ask a student “What are you working on? Do you know what you need to do to get to this next step?” if they [students] are not able to tell me that then there is a problem.

The principals acknowledged their responsibilities as instructional leaders. They identified strong practices, aligned professional development, visited classrooms to observe instruction and ensure consistency, and encouraged regular growth and improvement. Comments such as, “[We need to] get people to think around improving the teaching and learning” and “I don't ever expect that when I walk past a classroom to see a teacher sitting at their desk - you need to be on your feet all the time,” indicated that the principals understood their critical roles toward introducing instructional strategies.

More than half of the principals described the challenges of the instructional leadership role. In particular, one principal described his challenges for improving instruction in his school:

Certainly in a school with 30 percent English language learners and the pressure of the MCAS, there's certainly a challenge in providing enough support, enough mainstreaming – the balance of mainstreaming and sheltered instruction. So I certainly see that as a major challenge.

Another principal discussed her frustrations with time. She was the only principal to discuss how the use of teams helped her face challenges of time and instructional leadership:

I don't have enough time. You want me to be an instruction leader – there's nothing I'd like better than be in classes more talking with teachers about bread and butter issues around instruction. I love that work; I'm very good at that work. I don't have time to do enough of it, and so now my strategy is I want to make sure that my administrative team is set up to do that.

Principals valued and readily discussed instructional leadership, including their challenges including focusing the school on teaching and learning. Some expressed interest in the opportunity for structured time together with other principals to discuss common issues.

***Finding: Principals cited instructional rounds as a model for professional development that positively impacted their capacity as an instructional leader.*** Although less than half of the principals described their high regard for instructional leadership as a practice, the majority of principals, without any prompting, characterized a recent district initiative, instructional rounds, as positively impacting their practice as instructional leaders. Instructional Rounds is a professional development opportunity in which networks of school leaders visit one another's schools to gather data in response to the school's identified problem of practice. Principals are then encouraged to implement the strategy in their own schools, among their own faculty. One principal asserted that the work of the initiative has resulted in elevating his capacity to be an instructional leader. In describing the instructional rounds process, another principal explained that he and his teachers benefited from visiting classrooms in other schools:

My teachers will say they were some of the best experiences they had. They'd never even been in each other's classrooms, period. So that was really powerful learning for me but it was really amazing learning for them.

Principals elaborated on the reasons why this initiative was well received by their schools. Specifically, the objectives, process, and schedule were clearly laid out by the district. One principal described why the instructional rounds experience was helpful:

The objectives were very clearly laid out by the district. The process was very clearly laid out. The schedule was posted. We were in small groups which was very effective, so instead of just "You go to this school, that school," there were teams of four. And I think every time we did an instructional round, three out of the four schools were together.

Modeling a professional learning community, teams from different schools were formed and a high level of district support was provided. One principal asserted:

I felt like Bennett took me to another level because they really focus on the instructional rounds, and they did the instructional rounds and they got us into other buildings. It [instructional rounds] was a very rich process.

The principals also noted that the school district isn't regularly consistent with its introduction of instructional improvement practices. The one practice of instructional rounds was identified by several principals as structured, coordinated, and well organized. This initiative enabled principals and headmasters to visit other schools and discuss effective practices. Such an effort for widespread implementation indicates that well-structured initiatives might favorably influence instructional practices district-wide.

***Finding: Principals stated that using data to drive instruction was important; however, they needed training and support for its appropriate use.*** Several principals indicate that the use of data is a valuable tool for improving instructional practice. Principals spoke about using student test data as a basis for informing curricular or instructional changes in classrooms. Only two principals spoke confidently about their capacity to use data effectively. Others expressed limitations in determining the types of useful data, the accessibility of data, and how specific data can inform decision-making. For example, one principal discussed his frustration in understanding the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) data results,

I look at the SAT data and I don't know what it means in terms of instructional practice. Where are the real weaknesses? Where do we need to retool our curriculum? Is it a more fundamental skill? I wish that we would have more district-wide discussion about what the SAT data really tells us.

While the focus in the Bennett Public Schools is on the results of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), there is an expectation that other types of data are used to evaluate program effectiveness, determine instructional practices, and identify student support needs. Interview subjects indicated that school officials must provide greater levels of training and practice in the use of data.

Evaluation standards for Bennett's principals, defined in the "Expectations and Practices for School Leaders" evaluation guide, include an expectation that student work and data is

examined to drive both instruction and professional development. The principals are expected to guide teachers' use of data, but the principals themselves have shortcomings in the practice of data analysis and use. A separate principal described a lack of understanding of test instruments such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test:

I remember one of the high school sessions, the people from the College Board were there, but I don't feel as an administrator that I've ever gotten a lot of support on SAT data and how to analyze it. I wish that we would have more district-wide discussion about what the SAT data really tells us.

One principal expressed her needs:

Now, there are times when I spend hours just looking at data and creating graphs from data and doing comparisons. The work is so utterly unnecessary, so I'd like more support and I'd like more training with how to use data to really inform instruction, and I just don't feel like I've gotten very much in that area.

At times, principals described not only what would be useful support, but also recognized the time needed to effectively use data given the current professional development structure. One principal described network meetings:

Part of it is like a Catch 22 because you don't get enough time in the network but you do not want to be out of your building more - I don't know how to balance that but having somebody who can really say, "This is how you look at this data, and this is what this means, and this is the direction that you should be moving your staff and kind of address what's showing up in your data." I use layman's terms because I'm not into charts and graphs and stuff. I want them to give me a sentence about what that means and give me a sentence about how to address it, and so that's one of the things that I think absolutely imperative that we get some more support around data.

Currently, principals rely solely on MCAS results and their Adequate Yearly Progress status to shape their instructional strategy response.

***Finding: No principal in our study discussed how they shared their personal values and beliefs with their staff, nor did they describe how a professional learning community would help meet the demands of teaching in the urban setting.*** Findings from the literature

indicate that effective principals set the school's direction through identifying and articulating a vision, creating shared meanings, and establishing professional learning communities (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Phillips (2003) further indicated that shared leadership and a collaborative process woven together represent processes and commitments of practitioners in a professional learning community (p. 257). Interestingly, while principals shared what they as leaders valued, principals did not describe how these values were shared or discussed with members of the school community. According to the literature, principals lead others to collaboratively develop and improve the school for students and teachers. Elmore (2004) contends that the practice of improvement is about changing three aspects of a school simultaneously:

- The values and beliefs of people in schools about what is worth doing and what is possible to do;
- The structural conditions under which the work is done; and
- The ways in which people learn to do work (p. 30).

With the exception of shared leadership, no principal in our interviews discussed how they established a culture of collaboration. Principals openly discussed what they valued. However, principals did not articulate how they shared their values with others, or how they developed a process and structure in which teachers could work together in teams towards a common goal.

#### **Findings from interviews: The urban context.**

In order to better explain the challenges faced by the Bennett Public Schools principals and supports needed for new school leaders, principals articulated the demands that the urban context places upon their leadership. In order to inform the competency framework of the

Bennett Public Schools' induction program, principals discussed skills and knowledge they employ in working to respond to these elements of the environment that impact their students and their schools. The responses provided critical information about how to prepare and support principals for effective school leadership in the urban context of Bennett.

Principals in this study enumerated the challenges that the urban context places upon their school leadership. These complicated and persistent demands include student characteristics such as poverty, mental illness, homelessness, and substance abuse. Principals discussed additional challenges in the urban environment including communication hurdles and geographic distance between home and school, as well as parent capacity to support students' learning. In order to respond to these non-academic demands, principals prioritized a fundamental belief in holding high standards for all students, fostering partnerships with families, developing culturally proficient faculties, and the need for consistent support from central office.

***Finding: The complexity of the urban environment diminishes the principals' abilities to focus on instructional leadership; district-based support is critical to mitigate the impact of outside forces on student learning.*** According to the 2011 Bennett Indicators report:

More than half of the nearly 50,000 families with children under 18 living in Bennett are headed by a single parent, and of those in poverty, 85% are headed by a single parent or related guardian. In 2005-2009, 40% of Latino, 35% of African American and 31% of Asian children lived in poverty compared to 10% of white children. (Kahn & Martin, 2011, p. 8)

These demographic realities, illustrative of the complexity of the urban environment, are part of broader social dynamics that are driven by economics, politics and other factors that have a direct influence on Bennett educational policies. Principals working in this environment face demands beyond academic achievement, demands that must be addressed, but that take focus and energy away from the academic improvement agenda.

Principals stated that lack of support beyond the school day can negatively impact student achievement. As one principal explained:

We have a greater percentage of students that don't have either support or supervision at home, either because their parents are working two or three jobs, or because they're being raised by a grandparent who really can't get involved in the day-to-day supervision of them.

Another school leader shared that in her conversations with caregivers:

I hear a lot of "I'm just not able to." In one case it was "I'm physically not able to go downstairs and get him off the computer and get him off whatever site he's on to get him to do his homework, and I'm dealing with my own health issues," or "I'm dealing with my own job and I'm not home till 9:00 or 10:00. And they're at the Boys & Girls Club and I can't control what happens."

Principals designed programs to support students after school, but cited challenges of location and distance between school and home in students' lack of participation.

Principals reported that poverty, mental illness and substance abuse issues impact students' effective participation in school. One principal described these challenges:

Our kids come with lots of needs, and I think whether it's working directly with the students themselves and the various issues that you end up having to support them around – everything from bullying to substance abuse, I mean there's just so many; mental illness – there's just a lot of things that end up coming up.

Principals described being pulled in many different directions and having to react to the daily issues that arise. One principal discussed the fact that every day brings unexpected challenges to be addressed.

You might have a staff member who has a crisis and bails. You have a kid that's in crisis; you have a flood in your building, which I had in the first year, a shooting, so you never know what's coming at you.

They discussed the difficulty of maintaining focus on "the true North" – or academic achievement for all students. Another principal articulated,

I say that the job of principal is tightrope walking while juggling eggs while being shot at by lawn darts, so you have this vision and you have to have this linear focus of where you want to be as a school.

The majority of principals were consistent in feeling that the complexity of the urban environment and the non-academic issues that students bring to school took time and energy away from their instructional leadership focus, and affected their ability to maintain high academic and disciplinary standards. While responding to unexpected emergencies, principals may lose focus on the academic agenda of the day. One principal stated, “I think the variety of issues that young people bring, that their families bring that end up impacting their education at school, is hard to really plan for. Like you just don’t know until it starts happening.”

These non-academic issues present challenges for students as well as faculty. Urban schools that foster strong academic growth are organized and structured around student engagement, teacher and student learning. First and foremost, good instruction is at the heart of this proficiency dynamic (Allington & International Reading Association, 2010). Curriculum alignment is also crucial to support teachers’ efforts as students move from grade to grade in order to support their academic needs. Focused targeted instruction that provides a safety net to all learners is essential. Schools that have managed to succeed with struggling populations of students of color have done so by developing strong wraparound services as well. The coordination of these efforts (focus on effective teaching and learning and securing, managing and integrating complementary services to help families in need) is the purview of the school principal. To orchestrate this balance is a very complex task that requires good managerial abilities, a clear vision, and skills in the area of distributing the responsibility for improvement among all school stakeholders (Bryk, et al., 2010). Most principals interviewed in this study were very clear about the ways in which the urban context negatively influenced their ability to

lead their schools. However, no consensus was evident regarding effective ways to respond to these external pressures.

District policies that support schools in meeting the non-academic needs of students are an essential component of responding to the challenges of the urban context. Some researchers contend that failure of schools to provide adequate education for students of color is not the sole reason for the gaps in educational attainment. Belfield and Levine (2007) argue that living amid concentrated social and economic disadvantage accelerates that contribution. Based on his research on Chicago Public Schools, Bryk et al. (2010) shares a similar concern. He contends that, “Improving schools could be found in all kinds of neighborhoods varying by socioeconomic and racial/ethnic composition. Stagnating schools, in contrast, pile up in very poor, racially isolated African American neighborhoods” (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 28). This correlation between high poverty, racially isolated neighborhoods and stagnated academic growth indicates the need for comprehensive supports at the federal, state, and most importantly at the district level. In such cases where poverty and students’ socio-emotional and basic human needs are so pervasive, a focused district response to provide support to school leaders in working to mitigate the impact of outside forces on student learning is imperative (Krashen, 2011).

***Finding: In response to the demands of the urban context, almost all principals cited a core belief in high expectations for all students as critical to supporting student achievement.***

Almost all of the principals responded that a fundamental belief in and articulation of high expectations for all students is the most important element of school leadership in the urban context. One school leader compared it to a moral purpose, “To really survive, you need a calling and that calling is what roots one and yields conviction to stand for truth and to stand for the betterment of the students in the face of any type of adversity.” Another principal shared the

importance of believing in the potential of each student, and of not giving up on them, regardless of the circumstances.

I think it's really important to have a sincere belief, and not just an articulation, that all kids can learn and that all kids are worthy, because it's so difficult and challenging to work with students who sometimes present as though they don't want to be in school and they don't want to learn, and they bring with them that whole bravado that can be intimidating, that can be frustrating, that can even cause you to be angry with them.

Thomas (2008) identified passion and moral purpose as critical for surviving the urban school principalship. Almost all principals communicated the sentiment that all students can learn and all students are worthy; beyond merely an articulation, principals hold it as a core belief that governs their behavior and daily decision-making. Principals interviewed believe that in order to be an effective urban educator, one's core values must include an unwavering commitment to holding students, regardless of personal circumstances, to the highest levels of academic and behavioral expectations.

It is not sufficient for principals alone to espouse this belief, but it is the role of the school leader to hold faculty to these standards of high expectations for all students as well, and to develop a culture of high expectations throughout the school community. Principals challenged faculty who required too little of the students:

Teachers say "These kids just don't read." Well if you've already determined that kids don't typically read or don't have that kind of enculturation to be readers then you need to do a lot of work to build them up to that place.

Another principal spoke of the need to demonstrate "tough love" as a means to build student independence and responsibility for their learning, essential as students graduate and move on to college. High expectations for all students must be a core belief for school leaders and faculty in urban schools, and must be integrated fundamentally into the school culture.

Principals stated that critical to maintaining high expectations for all students is the idea that principals need to believe it, demand it, and foster it among faculty. High expectations, however, is a complex notion, one that requires deep discussion. School principals have to create a clear picture for how these expectations are to be manifested throughout the school. As stated by one principal, “it goes beyond a mere articulation.” It is a belief, an attitude and a support network that requires an entire faculty commitment in order to work. Part of the complexity of this idea arises from the fact that expectations are “subtle and difficult to change.” They operate at the subconscious level; they are the result of beliefs and biases accumulated over years (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2010).

Principals identified the core belief in high expectations for all students as the most significant element of urban school leadership. The implementation of this expectation throughout the school culture was not evident in the principals’ responses and although their passion to support this idea was clear, their knowledge about how to do it was tenuous. The literature states that individual core beliefs are important but not sufficient to respond to the complex challenges of the urban environment (Knapp et al., 2010). This is another area in which targeted professional development is needed to provide leadership development to principals in developing a culture of high expectations throughout the school.

***Finding: Principals value partnerships with families, despite the challenges of language, distance, and participation.*** When asked about the skills and beliefs that principals in the Bennett Public Schools feel are key to practicing urban school leadership, following high expectations for all students, the second most frequent response was that schools must find new ways to collaborate with families in order to be effective.

The majority of the principals in the study outlined their efforts to explicitly decrease the distance between home and school in order to develop partnerships to support student learning. Principals explained that families may not feel comfortable participating in school life, and so they invest significant time and energy in reaching out.

You have to be able to connect with families, all families, and understand that because of your race or your culture or your language you're going to need help engaging certain families, because everything that you represent to them might make them not want to step in your office.

Principals went on to explain that the experiences of many of the caregivers with their own formal education have led them to be resistant to or fearful of school settings and, thus, the school personnel must be sensitive to these histories.

The leader has to relate to people from all walks of life in urban education, because families come in and they are families that have really been alienated from the public school system, particularly families of color. They have never had a child graduate from high school, and so to be able to talk with that family, and almost convince them of the importance of their child staying in school and going further, and the fact that this could transform their lives, you have to really interact with them in a way that will make them feel comfortable and confident coming inside your building.

Principals understood parents' perspectives on school and anticipated barriers to their participation. They shared examples of outreach strategies to attempt to connect with families despite limitations imposed by language, culture and, for many Bennett Public School students, geographic distance from school.

We raised money and every teacher visited families in the summer at the homes with the kids, and then visited them again in the springtime. So every kid when they went to class on that first day, their teacher had already been to their home and brought them a literacy basket like with books and all kinds of stuff. We raised money - the parents could pick books in Portuguese, Spanish or English, one book for each week of the summer.

School leaders have also created outreach strategies such as holding meetings in neighborhoods where students live (as opposed to where the school is located), conference call meetings, phone call updates and mailings.

Family partnership is an essential component of a students' education, regardless of the hurdles of language, geography or availability. Principals explained that many families are not comfortable in engaging directly with faculty and principals at school, and they need to work to make them feel empowered to do so. This appreciation and outreach demonstrates cultural proficiency on the part of the school leaders, when they take on the perspectives of the families and work to decrease the hurdles to participation in life at school.

Principals understand the challenges faced by many urban families, and have developed outreach strategies to connect with their students' caregivers. Despite the significant investment of time and resources into developing partnerships with caregivers, principals felt the results were far less than optimal. Advances in research and practice point to a broader definition and understanding of the school-parent relationship, one that goes beyond the traditional conceptions of family involvement (e.g., volunteering, chaperoning, parent-teacher conferences). A more authentic and effective partnership can be established when it is intentionally "linked to learning" (Henderson, Johnson, Mapp, & Davies, 2007).

This finding exemplifies one of the major challenges that Bennett Public Schools principals face. School leaders are aware of the importance of developing partnerships with families and are frustrated by the outcome of their efforts to establish a good relationship with parents. A broader definition of the home-school connection is needed in order to assess the impact these efforts have in supporting student learning and in prioritizing which initiatives are worth pursuing at a school and a district level.

***Finding: School leaders believe that a diverse and culturally proficient faculty is important, but the district’s collective bargaining agreement complicates hiring and retention practices.*** In order to support students in meeting their academic goals, principals shared that they prioritize the development of a diverse faculty. While the current collective bargaining agreement limits principals’ hiring practices, a commitment to cultural proficiency, regardless of the racial makeup of the faculty, is essential.

The principals work hard to hire and maintain a culturally proficient and diverse faculty. The students are better supported in their learning in a school with a culturally proficient faculty who value the cultural contributions of the students and focus on strengths rather than deficits. Half of the principals cited district level practices and contract limitations that hinder their efforts to have control over the hiring of their own faculty. One principal shared that her most significant leadership challenge is navigating the constraints of the various collective bargaining agreements:

Oftentimes having to deal with the limitations that are imposed by the unions [is my biggest issue]. And I talk of that broadly, and not only the teachers unions but the secretaries, the clerks union and the custodial unions. I think that, more so than the poverty level of our students, I would say that’s number one.

These contract restrictions include principals being limited to hiring teachers from within the Bennett Public Schools, and, at times, having teachers administratively assigned to their school. Seniority is a critical factor in teacher placement in the Bennett Public Schools, especially during times of school closures, and principals often lose lower-seniority teachers to layoffs, while being assigned teachers with higher seniority who have lost their positions at other schools. As stated in the district’s essential elements of “Expectations and Practices for School Leaders”:

Essential Seven: attracting and maintaining high performing culturally proficient staff - not when you have to take people from excess pool and you have no choice. People get to bid, based on seniority. How are we expected to maintain a

culturally competent staff and high achieving staff when you're saddled with having to take people from other places?

Principals also cited the need for more support from human resources in recruiting faculty of color from preparation programs across the country. As one principal recommended:

If we don't have candidates in our local university who are teachers of color, then I think the district needs to go elsewhere to recruit teachers of color and not put the burden all back on the principals, whose jobs are quite full.

This is one example of a district-level practice that would support principal efforts toward the development of a culturally proficient faculty.

Currently, the population of the Bennett Public Schools is 63 percent students of color. The school leadership reflects the student diversity and consists of 65 percent principals of color. However, analysis of the racial breakdown of the faculty shows that only 38 percent of teachers are individuals of color. While it is encouraging that the school leadership reflects the racial diversity of the students, the faculty population does not. Although it is an important goal for the faculty to more closely represent the backgrounds of the students, it should be noted that a racially diverse faculty does not guarantee a culturally proficient environment for students. Culturally proficient instruction, as stated by most principals, is imperative in the Bennett Public Schools, given the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of the student population.

At the heart of a culturally proficient faculty is the concept that students' race, language, ethnicity and socioeconomics are not perceived as deficits but as strengths. A culturally proficient faculty would be better equipped to address issues of equity and fairness through thoughtful discussions about curriculum decisions, instructional practices, assessment strategies and classroom climate. As Gay (2000) contends, most teachers are not conscious of their biases and they are unaware of what they do while in the act of teaching. School principals, by the nature of their supervisory role, have a critical job in setting expectations for faculty around these

beliefs and values, and especially how they are communicated and sustained within the school context. Principals have to ensure that students are learning in a context and from adults who value their cultural backgrounds and experience.

Principals in Bennett seek a high achieving faculty representative of their students. Principals point to the collective bargaining agreement as a hindrance in their pursuit of these goals. When principals have limited control over hiring their own faculty, their ability to attract and retain teachers whose experience and backgrounds match the needs of a particular school community is constrained. With principals facing increased accountability for student achievement, this lack of control over selection of faculty is a significant frustration.

Principals also need to be supported in developing a culturally proficient school environment, specifically in working with faculty. This work can lead to difficult conversations involving tensions between high expectations for all students and personal biases on the part of some adults. One principal shared how some teachers' personal beliefs may impact their teaching:

I have some trust issues with some of the folk who have worked with the kids. I think that people don't necessarily do their best in urban settings. They make assumptions about kids that I have to bump up every day. It's like an on-going thing to make people understand.

These are complex issues that beginning principals may be hesitant to discuss openly with faculty. District systematic support and guidance on how to develop a culturally proficient school environment can be instrumental in supporting principals in their quest to foster student achievement.

It is clear from both the literature and from the interviews with principals that the role of the principal is important and complex, especially in urban schools. The demands placed on principals in urban contexts are extraordinary and it is essential that districts support principals to

be effective, especially in their first three years. The following section outlines the need for the development of a clear set of leadership competencies for principals in the Bennett Public Schools as well as the essential components of an induction program.

### **Findings from interviews: Induction programs**

The Bennett Public Schools lack a comprehensive principal recruitment, hiring and placement strategy. Principals reported concerns with coaching and mentoring relationships, frequency of the supports offered, and challenges associated with navigating the central office bureaucracy. They reported that the professional development offerings initiated by the district were not aligned specifically to their unique context. Principals also identified the importance of accessing supports outside of the Bennett Public Schools. “The unique context within urban districts (elevated drop-out rates, poverty, higher numbers of ELL students) makes the development of robust induction programs crucial” (Cheney et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004).

***Finding: The Bennett Public Schools lack a consistent, comprehensive approach to hiring school leaders.*** Principals indicated varied experiences with the process of being hired. Some principals indicated that they went through a rigorous interview process in addition to interviews at the school site, while others noted that they were interviewed once, hired and placed in a school. One principal noted,

I mean I applied blankly to the system to be a principal, I really didn't know what the process was. So even if you're interested in a principalship it would be nice to know, before you apply, what the process is and whether or not a principal has choices in what school they're selected for. I grapple with that.

Most of the principals had previous experience in the district before becoming a principal. None of the principals interviewed were part of any formal Bennett Public Schools pipeline. A quarter of principals reported that personal relationships with people in authority positions assisted them with being hired. One principal noted the ease in which he was hired due to his personal

relationship. “I think I had to go down to Court Street for half an hour and kind of talk to someone, and it was done before it was done.”

The literature notes the importance of an induction program beginning with hiring. “Programs must aggressively recruit candidates and be highly selective about which candidates are ready for leadership. They must then carefully train their aspiring leaders, and part of that training must be hands-on experience. Finally, programs have to hold themselves and their alumni accountable for the impact they have on the bottom line: in this case, student achievement” (Cheney, et al., 2010, p. 5). However, our findings indicate that Bennett does not have a consistent formal process for hiring principals. The Bennett Public Schools lack a consistent, comprehensive approach to recruiting, training, selecting and placing leaders. There is a necessity for Bennett Public Schools to develop a formal recruitment strategy, as well as screening and placement processes.

***Finding: Principals stated the importance of appropriate timing, frequency, and relevance of professional development, coaching, and mentoring.*** When asked, half of the principals mentioned that district officials must consider the optimal time of year to offer new principals professional development or induction. Principals need access to important, relevant information prior to engaging in school start-up planning. The following quote encapsulates this theme, “So I think I started on August 18th last year but in the two weeks that we had to prepare for the opening of school I was pulled offsite probably six or seven days to get the training, to get the support.”

Nearly half of the principals interviewed said that professional development should be relevant to their unique context. Given the various school structures (in-district charter, pilot, innovation, traditional, large and small) principals should be provided professional development

designed to meet the needs of leaders in the portfolio of schools in the district. Principals noted the challenges associated with attending meetings designed for principals with considerably different circumstances. The following comment represented a common theme that principals found it necessary to be familiar with the overall district mission, but preferred more context-specific professional development.

So I had to be on two tracks: first of all, understand how things work in BPS; and understand how things work with the pilot school network.... all of my meetings with the pilot school network were much more valuable than the meetings I was having with, the BPS meeting with all the principals....I mean you go to meetings where they talk at you.

Half of the principals believe that coaching and mentoring are important and effective when the mentor and coach are properly matched. Several principals spoke about the positive relationship they enjoyed with their coaches and mentors. “I did have a coach who was really good; she was kind of like a sounding board.” Several principals said that the coaching they received helped them navigate the daily operational challenges. “But to tell you the truth, I found my relationship with other principals and my mentor principal to be more helpful than going to the workshop, because what was important [was] I was working with my mentor principal.”

The Bennett Public Schools employs coaches and mentors as part of the supports provided to new principals. Principals suggested that this individual support would be more beneficial if there were more explicit matching of coaches and school leaders. Half of the principals indicated that their coaching or mentoring was infrequent or non-existent, “So I had a mentor. To the person’s credit they had a big school, they had a lot to do – I didn’t meet with the mentor one time in two years.” Principals expressed concerns about the availability and

accessibility of some of the mentors or coaches that led to infrequent support. The following quote represents a common theme amongst the principals who commented on this matter,

And you aren't telling me that he's going to take a plane [from Nantucket] to come talk to me about [my school in Bennett] once a month. Was there nobody, an assistant principal in Melrose that I could talk to or something? So naturally he said 'oh no I'm very committed to this work'. It sounds good ... but my coach never came but one time.

When the mentor or coach was not properly matched, principals did not find the support valuable. Several principals suggested that having a voice in the selection of mentors and coaches might have improved relationships. The frustration in the selection of coaches and mentors is reflected by this principal's comment, "I don't know how they chose mentors, I met with her once, and I met with her out of obligation. I felt like I was trying to make her feel useful in a sense." Another principal who was not assigned a coach or mentor noted,

The other thing that would be nice is that the principal would have some voice on choice of who the mentor is. I know they don't have that. But that relationship can be a positive experience - so in some respect I was ok not having a mentor because I didn't want a mentor that didn't gel with me.

These comments suggest that principals view the proper matching of principals with mentors and coaches as necessary for this support to be optimally useful.

***Finding: Principals cited significant challenges navigating central office.*** Nearly half of the principals said that they need timely technical information in order to successfully navigate the daily operational challenges associated with being a principal in the district. One principal represented the group's sentiment in the following comment,

What I wanted from BPS was that very technical support, and whether they sent another principal or they sent someone from the district, I needed someone to sit behind my desk with me instead of me going somewhere else and say "This is your [LIZA] system. This is how you look at your master schedule. This is how you see what teachers are free this hour. This is how you look at your MCAS data on the data warehouse. This is how you get attendance data. This is how we do attendance.

Considering the size of the Bennett Public School system, principals were challenged by the intricacies required to successfully navigate the central offices. It is important for the central office to provide supports to new principals, particularly regarding district policies, procedures and practices. Half of the principals said that they need streamlined and timely access to central office operational guidelines and protocols, more specifically: scheduling, accessing data, human resources, special education, facility maintenance, and purchasing. Half of the principals said they experienced difficulties with the navigation of the central office protocols and procedures. Principals expressed their confusion that led to frustration when they did not know with whom to communicate for particular operational questions. Principal comments that captured these sentiments follow:

Accessing things from the district, even something as simple as getting a person hired and when you're a new principal, not necessarily knowing how to navigate the system down there and not having had any sort of orientation to this is the person that you speak to when... Or, not an orientation where there was actually a friendly face giving it, because that's important, especially in your first year, to say, 'Here's a human being that you can contact if you are having a hard time and they can help you navigate through that.'

Of things that principals need support with, one is in the operational realm. You know, in terms of understanding the systems, transportation and all that, I think that the type of training that I got when I was first appointed principal was not nearly enough.

If there was a manual around operations, and here's who you call, something that was simple and easy at your fingertips, because you just don't have time to go back and weed through every piece of paper that you may have received at the institute.

A proposal submitted by Bennett Public Schools to the Broad Foundation seeking funding for the creation of a School Leadership Institute suggested that new principals be provided training modules that revolve around successful mastery of the technical aspects of the principal's role including budgeting, scheduling and accessing data (BPS Proposal,

2002). Studying this proposal leads one to conclude that Bennett was aware that new principals would find it difficult to utilize central office as a resource without guidance or direction.

***Finding: Principals access non-Bennett Public School initiated supports.*** Most principals indicated that one method of managing their day-to-day tasks was to access information through a variety of channels that were not formally provided by the district. The majority of principals established informal networks that allowed them to collaborate with colleagues to improve their problem-solving capacity. One testimonial that represents this finding follows:

I think one of the smartest things that I did when I started to realize that inclusion was something that we wanted to talk about as a school, was I reached out to people that had done the work, people who were doing it and living it and breathing it; and go to their communities with a team and talk to their teachers and get into their classrooms, and learn kind of how they embarked on this journey.

Principals contacted individuals whom they knew could provide them with timely non-judgmental feedback about their leadership. Principals sought advice from other experienced principals with particular expertise. In addition to networking with colleagues, the majority of principals sought out helpful training that wasn't being provided by the district in order for them to be effective in their jobs. For example, one principal participated in training offered by Research for Better Teaching and another principal commented, "So I went to Courage to Lead dinner meetings. I think I went to three of them, I just loved it." Principals were resourceful in finding supports outside of those offered by the Bennett Public Schools. However, over-reliance on non-district supports by principals can lead to disjointed district initiated professional development (Peterson, 2002).

## **Summary of Findings**

### **What does the literature say about skills that are required to be an effective urban principal?**

- The role of the principal has become increasingly complex, especially in the urban setting.
- Individual leadership characteristics required to lead an urban school include cultural proficiency, innovativeness, and a belief system that supports urban students. In addition, urban principals must be supported through district-wide leadership development.

### **Based on the literature review and interviews with BPS principals, what should be the components of an induction program to support principals in their first three years in the Bennett Public Schools?**

#### **Findings from literature: Induction programs.**

- A comprehensive system of support for new principals is essential to actuate school-wide gains.
- Successful induction programs are guided by a clear competency framework.
- Induction program must include a comprehensive plan for providing robust, targeted supports including recruitment, internships, professional development, coaching, mentoring and program evaluation.

#### **Findings from interviews: Effective school leadership.**

- Principals stated that shared leadership is important; however, they expressed a lack of proficiency in executing this leadership strategy.
- Principals stated the importance of acting as an instructional leader to improve classroom instruction and recognized the challenges when serving as an instructional leader.

- Principals cited instructional rounds as a model for professional development that positively impacted their capacity to act as an instructional leader.
- Principals stated that using data to drive instruction was important; however they needed training and support for its appropriate use.
- Contrary to the literature, no principal in our study discussed the need to set the direction for their school or described how a professional learning community would be essential in meeting the demands of the urban setting.

**Findings from interviews: The urban context.**

- The complexity of the urban environment diminishes the principals' ability to focus on instructional leadership; district based support is critical to mitigate the impact of outside forces on student learning.
- In response to the demands of the urban context, almost all principals cited a core belief in high expectations for all students as critical to supporting student achievement.
- Principals value partnerships with families, despite the challenges of language, distance, and participation.
- School leaders believe that a diverse and culturally proficient faculty is important, but the district's collective bargaining agreement complicates hiring and retention practices.

**Findings from interviews: Induction programs.**

- There is a lack of a cohesive support system for Bennett Public Schools principals in their first three years.
- The Bennett Public Schools lack a consistent, comprehensive approach to hiring school leaders.

- Principals stated the importance of appropriate timing, frequency, and relevance of professional development, coaching, and mentoring.
- Principals cited challenges navigating central office
- Principals access non-Bennett Public School initiated supports.

### **Recommendations**

In order to support the Bennett Public Schools' development of an induction program for beginning principals, the team reviewed relevant literature and interviewed twelve current principals. Ultimately, recommendations are based upon a synthesis of the literature about effective urban principals, interviews with principals, and the current state regulations regarding standards for effective leadership for educators. Together, these findings inform both the leadership competency framework and the components of the induction program for principals. It is recommended that the district should first explicitly develop and implement a district-wide competency framework for school leadership, based upon the state regulations and informed by research and interviews with principals. Second, the district should systematically support new school leaders in meeting the standards of the competency framework through a five-part induction program.

A synthesis of literature and interviews reinforces the importance of Bennett Public Schools establishing a clear set of competencies, or a competency framework, that guides content and goals for leadership development throughout the district. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight the importance for the Bennett Public Schools to develop a comprehensive induction program which includes five necessary components: recruitment and selection strategy, year-long site-based internship, mentoring and coaching, relevant professional development and participant and program evaluation. These components were common to

programs deemed successful by the Rainwater Leadership Alliance report (Cheney et al., 2010) and a Wallace Foundation funded report (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007) after examining principal induction programs of all types, nation-wide.

The recommendations section is organized into two segments. The first section contains the essential elements of a leadership competency framework for the Bennett Public Schools based on findings from the literature and interviews with principals. The second section outlines the five components of a comprehensive induction program for principals and how the competency framework shapes each component.

### **Bennett Public Schools Leadership Competency Framework**

A competency framework is the set of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that a principal must have, in his or her context, in order to lead a school effectively to drive high levels of student achievement. This set of standards uses the school as the lens to prioritize what high-performing principals must know and be able to do (Cheney et al., 2010, p. 16).

It is essential that the Bennett Public Schools develop a competency framework incorporating the regulations on evaluation of educators adopted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on June 28, 2011. The regulations require districts in Massachusetts to evaluate school leaders according to four standards of professional practice:

- **Instructional Leadership:** The Instructional Leadership standard promotes growth for all students and success of staff members through a shared vision with teaching and learning as a lens. This standard includes indicators for curriculum, instruction, assessment, evaluation and data-informed decision-making.

- **Management and Operations:** The Management and Operations standard promotes growth for all students and success of staff members by ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, effective curriculum, staffing, and scheduling. This standard includes indicators for environment, human resources, scheduling and management systems, law, ethics and policies, and fiscal systems.
- **Family and Community Engagement:** The Family and Community engagement standard promotes growth for all students and success of staff members through effective partnerships with families, community organizations, and other stakeholders. This standard includes indicators for engagement, sharing responsibility, communication and family concerns.
- **Professional Culture.** The Professional Culture standard indicator promotes success for all students by nurturing and sustaining a school culture of reflective practice, high expectations, and continuous learning for staff. This standard includes indicators for professional culture, commitment to high standards, cultural proficiency, communications, continuous learning, shared vision and managing conflict.

After review of the literature and the data from principal interviews, common themes, connected to the DESE standards, emerged as essential for principals to be effective school leaders in the urban setting. Principals stated that instructional, shared and data driven leadership were critical for improving teaching and learning. Further, the urban context presents challenges for school leaders as outlined in the literature and principal experience in the district. In order to respond to these challenges, principals avowed several competencies, including a core belief in high expectations for all students, cultural proficiency, and a commitment to family engagement.

It is recommended that Bennett Public Schools:

- Develop and implement a district-wide leadership competency framework, based upon the state regulations and informed by research and interviews with principals.
- Systematically support new school leaders in meeting the standards of the competency framework through a five-part induction program.

Principals declared that these values must be fostered throughout the school community, and that they required support in how to do this well. Thus, it is recommended that Bennett Public Schools develop a competency framework, based on a set of standards, informed by the principal interviews and based on the Massachusetts DESE standards.

***The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should develop principals' capacities to share leadership within the school.***

Principals stated that shared leadership is important and that decision-making should involve others. In order to provide principals with the ability to exercise shared leadership, the district should establish norms and models of shared leadership that principals can adapt to their school's unique context. The ability of the principal to effectively share leadership within the school may improve the school's capacity to increase student achievement, develop a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to the school's goals, and establish approaches to achieve those goals. Inherent to establishing a culture of shared leadership, the district must help principals understand their own core values, how these values are then reflected in the decisions they make, and how to articulate these core values to others within their individual contexts.

***The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should provide training and support for school leaders to build capacity to serve as instructional leaders.***

The Bennett Public Schools should clearly articulate the expectations for instructional practices and define the principal's role as the instructional leader in the school building. Principals discussed the challenges of serving as an instructional leader given the complexities of daily life in their schools. Therefore, principals must learn and practice effective strategies for managing their time and methods for remaining focused on improving instructional practices in their building. In order to emphasize the district's expectation for a team approach to

instructional improvement, training should include how to establish, develop, and manage high functioning Instructional Leadership Teams. A principal's capacity to serve as an effective instructional leader will improve teaching practices and result in increased student achievement. The principal's ability to establish a high-functioning Instructional Leadership Team provides both a structure for sharing leadership and the opportunity to focus the school's attention on improved teaching and learning.

***The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should provide training and support in the process of accessing appropriate student achievement data, analyzing data, and using data to drive instructional improvement.***

The Bennett Public Schools should inform principals of current assessment instruments and the purpose each instrument serves. Principals should understand the procedural administration of assessment and mechanisms for obtaining student, classroom, and school level results. Principals should develop their own capacity as well as the capacity of teachers, through a data team, to analyze the data and how to effectively use data to improve instruction, curriculum, and programs. Furthermore, principals need to develop a better understanding of the purposes for various assessment instruments and how the data from those instruments should be used to inform instruction. Based on interviews with principals, the limited data available is difficult to utilize due to a lack of understanding of how to access databases as well as the timeliness of the availability of the data. Therefore, principals need support in how to access student data, how to develop a data team and how to access district resources that support data use. In this age of accountability, accurate information about student learning is necessary for school teams, within their own context, to make informed decisions about progress towards student achievement goals. Expert data use allows principals and leadership teams to continually

monitor overall school improvement. With support to develop more skilled data use and guidance to build strong and proficient school-based data teams, continual monitoring and regular improvement is more likely to become routine practice.

***The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should provide school leaders with skills to maintain focus on academic achievement, despite challenges of the urban environment.***

The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should support principals in mitigating the impact of external factors upon student learning. Principals explained that responding to the complexities of student issues in the urban environment, including mental health, poverty, physical health, and transiency, diminishes their ability to focus on instructional leadership. In order to support principals in this context, the district should establish clear routines and expectations for school leaders in response to student crises, and decrease the administrative burden of new principals so more attention can be devoted to instructional and relational dynamics at the school level. In addition to supporting school leaders in responding to the non-academic demands, support around “maintaining the true north,” as termed by one principal, or academic achievement for all students, is vital. The district should allocate human resources and capital based on individual school needs and student demographics. Partnerships with community-based organizations are critical for providing the surround care that many urban students require, such as medical care, mental health counseling, and other basic needs, including food and shelter.

***The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should support principals in developing a culture of high expectations throughout the school.***

Principals identified the core belief in high expectations for all students as the most significant element of urban school leadership. The district, then, must explicitly support school leaders in the development of leadership capacities focused on high expectations. At minimum, principals should be able to articulate this commitment and to organize the school to support a culture of high expectations. School leaders need to be aware that teachers' expectations and sense of professional efficacy are interrelated and impact student achievement. Thus, clear ways to communicate these dynamics, and to confront biases and assumptions about the intellectual capability, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomics of students is imperative. School leaders must be supported in aligning the district's core belief of high expectation for all students with the individual school culture, by securing community support for the beliefs, and integrating them into daily practice.

Effective urban schools are led by principals who can build consensus around effective effort practices and who are clear and current about academic standards in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Exemplars of effective practice at the classroom level are a priority in order to achieve full alignment within and across grade levels at each school and across the district. A curriculum grounded in high expectations includes ways for principals to deepen their content knowledge of language arts and mathematics and the best practices for effective lesson delivery, ways to understand, manage and accelerate adult learning, and best practices to build high-performing teams.

***The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should support principals in developing relationships with families in order to support student learning.***

Interviews showed that principals value partnerships with families, despite the challenges of language, distance, and participation. The Bennett Public Schools' efforts should

include work on why family engagement is important, how it can support student achievement, and specific strategies for bridging the gaps between home and school. Schools striving to involve families in their children's education can improve this process by taking a team approach to organize the parent home partnership, redefining the role of parents and the community in the school governance, linking involvement activities to student academic outcomes and by reaching out in meaningful ways that account for the socioeconomic and cultural needs of the parents and their children. Principals have a unique and critical responsibility in supporting and maintaining family and community engagement and involvement for student academic success. A clear framework to support principals in this process needs to be put in place for the Bennett Public Schools.

***The Bennett Public Schools leadership competency framework should support principals in developing a culturally proficient faculty that represents the backgrounds of students.***

In urban systems, a diverse and culturally proficient faculty is essential for validating race, language, ethnicity and socioeconomic backgrounds of students. School leaders in the Bennett Public Schools seek to build diverse and culturally proficient faculties, but the collective bargaining agreement complicates hiring and retention practices. While the collective bargaining agreement is beyond the purview of the leadership competency framework, the district is encouraged to provide school leaders with autonomy and flexibility in hiring faculty whom they believe will best meet the needs of the students in their particular school. The Bennett Public Schools leadership development efforts should support principals in their own journey toward cultural proficiency, and support faculty in this endeavor as well. Developing and sustaining a culturally proficient climate requires articulating core beliefs that support all students regardless of personal circumstances. Principals must share this commitment across all members of the

school community: students, faculty, parents, and partners. Supporting faculty in implementing culturally proficient school culture, including relevant curriculum choices, instructional strategies and assessment practices, is also necessary.

This recommended competency framework, based on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Standards of Effective Leadership, interviews with principals and the review of literature, should be used to inform each of the components of support for principals in their first three years in the Bennett Public Schools.

### **The Bennett Public Schools Principal Induction Program**

The structure for providing principals with leadership development in their first three years must be systematic and organized. As such, the second section of recommendations for Bennett outlines the components of a comprehensive induction program. The Bennett Public Schools Induction Program should include the following components:

#### **A clear and intentional recruitment and selection strategy.**

There is a necessity for Bennett Public Schools to develop a formal recruitment strategy, screening and placement processes. The literature notes the importance of an induction program beginning with hiring. Principals are critical agents in the school reform process. Thus it is imperative that the Bennett Public Schools invest in a process that seeks to identify leaders who match the district's criteria. Interviews with principals indicated that current practice is reliant on self-selection by future leaders. BPS must aggressively recruit candidates and be highly selective and work to cultivate desirable candidates into school leaders. Therefore the district should:

- Convene a team of district leaders, community partners, teachers and parents to develop a leadership rubric based on the competency framework to assess possible leadership candidates. This rubric should address the four standards for school leaders (Instructional

Leadership, Management and Operations, Family and Community Engagement and Professional Culture) as designated by state standards as well as cultural proficiency, high expectations and building strong school based teams.

- Develop a robust screening and hiring process based on the competency framework and including multiple screening processes including interviews, performance measures and writing samples to accurately assess the skills of each candidate. This day long process may have multiple teams of interviewers consisting of district stakeholders and rotations of performance based assessments.
- Develop opportunities for teacher leaders, assistant principals and other central office employees to continue to develop their skills and knowledge towards the school principalship. These opportunities may include attending professional development on being a principal, engaging in site visits, serving on leadership committees and forming networks for those interested in becoming a principal.

**A yearlong site-based internship.**

Research suggests that the use of internships is an effective strategy for the development of principals, especially in an urban setting. While placing prospective principals in schools with effective leaders prior to a permanent assignment is costly, the literature suggests that such internships are invaluable since skills are enhanced by observing and collaborating intensely with effective school leaders as they confront the challenges of working in schools. The district should train aspiring leader through hands on experiences. Therefore the district should:

- Develop a clear strategy for pathways to the role of principal in the Bennett Public Schools including identification and recruitment from within the current workforce of leaders as well as outside of the school system. Consider balancing the hiring of interns,

hiring assistant principals, and outside candidates for the position of principal with the needs of the district. The yearlong internship is most powerful for those entering from outside the school district or internal non-licensed candidates.

- Develop a rubric based on the district's competency framework, to outline what skills, values, and knowledge prospective interns need to have and develop during the internship. This rubric should address the four standards for school leaders (Instructional Leadership, Management and Operations, Family and Community Engagement and Professional Culture) as designated by state standards as well as cultural proficiency, high expectations and building strong school based teams.
- Identify current principals who exemplify the competency framework to serve as site supervisors. This identification should be supported by the Academic Superintendents' evaluations of school leaders.
- Assess the needs of the district regarding principal placement, taking into consideration the various models and diversity of school settings when placing candidates. The district's varied school contexts (turnaround schools, pilot schools, innovation schools, in-district charter schools, discovery schools) demand different knowledge and skills. Placements should be intentional to ensure preparation for potential openings.
- Establish monthly network meetings with all interns and school leaders to promote sharing of best practice and problem solving.
- Identify resources to sustain the principal internship program. Many district principal preparation programs are funded with grant money and therefore, may be difficult to sustain. Look to New York City Leadership Academy for an example of sustainability.

NYCLA has created a self-sustaining model by offering consulting and training services to other districts that do not have the internal capacity to develop their own model.

### **Mentoring and coaching.**

The critical components of mentoring and coaching must be thoughtfully planned and implemented. In order for the coaching and mentoring to be effective, the roles of coaches and mentors must be carefully constructed. Mentors are typically current principals who support mentees with operational issues as well as the navigation of the school system. Coaches are typically not part of the school system. They provide support with adaptive leadership, problem solving and individualized leadership development. Once these roles have been established, the principals must be properly matched (in terms of school context and personal attributes) with their coaches and mentors. While the literature is scant regarding the benefits of matching, it did suggest that coaching and mentoring would be most beneficial when trust develops between the principal and the coach or mentor. The majority of principals interviewed welcomed the help of coaches and mentors, however many revealed problems with role definition, frequency, and matching. Therefore the district should:

- Employ and assign coaches and mentors as part of the supports provided to new principals in their first three years with explicit matching of coaching and school leaders. Mentors should be current principals who demonstrate proficiency in all elements of the competency framework. Coaches must be educational leadership experts outside of the district who exhibit clear understanding of how to support principals in their leadership development.
- Establish clear role definitions and expectations for coaches and mentors including their availability and accessibility for support. Mentors typically serve as a support for day-to-

day operations and functions of the school, while coaches support principals with adaptive problem solving and long-term planning.

- Establish a network for new principals to meet together on a monthly basis to share successes, challenges and problem solve. Principals are often isolated and research is clear that collaboration and teamwork are essential to professional growth.

### **Relevant professional development.**

The district must provide well designed, relevant, and properly sequenced professional development for school leaders. Many principals who were interviewed expressed concern that the professional development offered them was not relevant to their personal needs or school context. Some principals noted that the timing of some professional development programs offered by the district was less than optimal. All professional development should align to the competency standards and address the development of school improvement plans, the use of available data to improve school achievement, and curriculum and instructional initiatives.

Professional development should be designed to increase principals' proficiency in the skills that have been established by the competency framework. Therefore the district should:

- Take into account the unique contexts of the schools as well as the individual needs of principals in order to develop relevant differentiated support. Address each principal's needs around instructional, data-driven, and distributive leadership through individual professional development plans.
- Provide training in the communication of district and individual core beliefs and values, including cultural proficiency, to ensure equity and access for all students in the district.
- Provide training regarding the navigation of district central office and district policies, procedures and practices. This operational support should take place during an intensive

summer leadership academy before a principal begins the year as well as during seminars before major decision points in the year such as budget allocation and hiring decisions.

### **Participant and program evaluation.**

The principal is the driving force for improving student achievement. It is the responsibility of the district to develop and implement systems to track the progress of principals. With the implementation of a robust induction program, new principals will be positioned to improve their practice. The Bennett Public Schools must hold new principals accountable by following the Massachusetts DESE performance evaluation cycle for school leaders. In addition, all aspects of the principal induction program must be continually evaluated by tracking the success of its graduates and reviewing the program. Therefore, the district must:

- Develop tools and provide resources to guide the evaluation of each part of the induction program and evaluate all school leaders against the competency framework and student outcome data following performance evaluation regulations.
- Train supervisors of principals in the new Massachusetts DESE Standards and should also be evaluated using the same framework. Supervisors of principals should be in schools working with principals 60 percent of their time or three days per week. This may require re-prioritizing their time or hiring additional supervisors of principals. Each Academic Superintendent should receive intensive training to establish inter-rater reliability across a competency framework rubric and to assure that principals are evaluated and rated equitably. Academic

Superintendents should be trained to understand the rubric; to use evaluation tools such as evidence collection forms and the design, implementation and monitoring of improvement plans; and to collect, save and document evidence. Academic Superintendents should also receive independent coaching on how to have productive conversations with principals and how to develop a high functioning teams

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the Bennett Public Schools needs to support new principals in two distinct ways. First, the district must be clear about the leadership competencies that are expected for principals. These competencies should be articulated through a framework that supports the overall goals of the district and embodies the leadership expectations for principals. This district-wide leadership competency framework should be aligned through supervision, evaluation, and serve as a guidepost for principals as they continually improve their leadership practices. Further, the leadership competency framework will guide the induction program for new principals. Benefits to establishing a competency framework include the development of a common language for all leaders and the opportunity to link the district's core values to leadership expectations across the district. Given the district's portfolio of schools, common expectations for leadership are essential.

Second, the establishment of an organized system for delivering support to new principals through a comprehensive induction program will ensure that the district is focused and deliberate in developing new principals. The need for a comprehensive induction program is prevalent in the literature and was a common theme outlined by new principals interviewed for this study. As established in the literature review, the role of the principal in the age of

accountability has changed. Ensuring equity in education and academic success for all students requires a highly skilled principal that engages others in continually improving the instructional program that meets the needs of students. New principals need support and guidance from the district as they develop as leaders who will improve educational outcomes for all students.

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**Appendix A**

*Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes Required of Boston Public  
Schools Principals and Headmasters*

*Must Have Coming into the Program*

- Demonstrated instructional leadership
- Current on educational issues/research
- Belief in effort-based education
- Deep belief that all students can learn at high levels
- Balanced thoughtful view on racial issues
- Belief in the importance of community
- Facilitative Leadership - ability to mobilize people around important ideas and issues
- Personal commitment to adult/life-long learning
- Perseverance, tenacity
- Capacity to work long and hard
- Resourcefulness
- Compassion-"Love your fellow man."
- Experience as a teacher
- Basic computer skills

*Best Learned in the Practicum Placement*

- Primary focus on instruction
- Observing classroom instructional practices
- BPS curriculum - CLS, Key ?s, Course Guides
- Prioritizing and multi-tasking
- Conflict resolution
- Understanding who are key central resource people in the BPS
- Operations - cafeteria and bus duty, substitutes, moving students
- Emergency Procedures
- Presentation of an important issue to the school community/public
- Art of creative insubordination
- Communication - understanding the flow of information w/in and outside school building and developing tools to manage information flow

*Curriculum of the Course*

- Unwavering focus on instruction
- Understanding of what good instruction looks like
- Data - how to read it and use it to drive instructional improvement
- How to identify best practices in the school and spread them throughout the school
- The role of core values in driving a school's work
- theory and practice of change
- Schools as Learning Communities for staff
- How and why of mentoring new teachers
- Value of parental involvement and how to cultivate it
- School mission and SMART goals
- Supervision and delegation
- Conflict resolution
- Legal issues
- Scheduling
- Time management



## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol

#### Interview introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today for our research at Bennett College. This interview will inform the Bennett Public Schools' development of an effective induction program for new principals. What we have is a protocol of about eight questions and it is a semi-structured interview, so if I ask you a question and if I feel as though I need to ask additional information I may ask. If you want to stop at any time, you may.

With your permission, I will be tape recording our conversation. Do you have any questions?

#### Demographic Questions:

1. Please introduce yourself and tell us how you ended up in your current leadership position?

If this does information does not surface:

Is this your first principalship and if no, where were you a principal before, and for how long?

Describe the process by which you were hired as a Bennett Principal.

#### Content Questions:

2. After you were appointed to your position as principal, what supports were offered by BPS to help you in your role as principal? To what extent were they helpful or not?
3. After you were appointed to your position as principal, did you access supports not officially offered through the Bennett Public School System? What were they? To what extent were they helpful or not?
4. Please describe the contextual demands that arise from being a principal in an urban environment. Do these factors impact your ability to be effective as a principal? If so, how?

5. What skills and/or beliefs do you believe are necessary to effectively lead an urban public school
6. What supports would you have liked Bennett Public School System to have provided to you as a new principal? What would be the best ways to deliver that support?
7. What is your level of understanding of the seven essential elements of “Expectations and Practices for School Leaders”?

“Here are the seven dimensions of effective school leadership that the Bennett Public Schools uses to evaluate principals. Can you take a minute to familiarize yourself with these?”

What, if any, of the dimensions would you have liked to have a better understanding of to support you in your leadership position?

8. Is there anything further that you would like to share with us that we did not ask you about?

## Appendix C

### Codebook Definitions

<b>Code</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Definition</b>
P	Pipeline	Process by which a principal is recruited, selected, and placed
PRF	Recruitment: Formal	District initiated; open and public
PRI	Recruitment: Informal	Individual solicitation based on personal relationships
PS	Selection	The process by which a candidate is hired as a principal
PP	Placement	The process by which a principal is assigned to a particular school
S	Support	
SF	Support: Formal	District sponsored systemic structures aimed at supporting principals
SFPD	Professional Development	Activity geared toward improving principals' knowledge, skills and beliefs
SFC	Coaching	Individualized support on the development of leadership skills
SFM	Mentoring	Individualized support on problem solving day to day challenges
SFCO	Central Office	support provided by CO dep't (HR, trans, budget)
SFS	Supervision/Evaluation	formal s/e process, standards, relationship
SN	Support: Non-BPS Directed	supports accessed outside of BPS formal structure. Examples include Professional organizations, relationships, or network
E	Effective Principals Urban Setting	Comments specific to the urban context that principals attend to regularly

EB	Attitudes/Beliefs Values	Comments from principal that state an attitudes/beliefs/values including expectations about student ability and achievement
EC	Cultural Proficiency and Sensitivity to SES	Comments about the impact of race, ethnicity, gender, and SES
EFC	Student/Family/Community Engagement	Comments about partnerships with family and community, including student relationships
L	Leadership	
LD	Leadership: Data	Utilizing data to lead instructional improvement
LP	Leadership: Political	Comments about understanding and navigating organizational and city politics in and outside the district
LI	Leadership: Instructional	Comments made about leading instructional practice
LDI	Leadership: Distributive	Comments made about sharing leadership and responsibilities with those in the school community
LS	Leadership: Strategic	Comments about long and short-term planning and use of resources

## Appendix D

### Interview Codebook

Leadership		
<b><i>Finding: Principals stated that shared leadership is important; however, they expressed a lack of proficiency in executing this leadership strategy.</i></b>		
	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Quote</b>
	LDI	That was my leadership lesson, to be rigorous around the things we say we're going to do and to not... Particularly, I mean the adults do the same things as the kids, we all do, but for the staff to be really clear and really consistent around that because I think that's what shapes our culture. So that was my leadership lesson.
	LDI	And that is why I said the primary rule is to get everybody around a problem so that everybody resolves, solves that problem .
	LDI	They themselves volunteered to pick up the slack, so we kind of created a new structure where teacher leaders were taking some of the responsibilities and doing some of the stuff, the scheduling and doing some of the discipline that I asked them to do. I mean the principal of a small school does not necessarily have an assistant, and thinking that you will be able to do everything by yourself is crazy
	LDI	And I think the faculty needs to be clear, and I think this is where the skill comes in in leadership. The faculty needs to be clear of what decisions they own and what decisions you own, what decisions are collective because we have a leadership team, we have governing Board, we have different – like any school – different committees and things set up. And I think it's very important to, as a leader to make it clear who's making the decision and how that decision's being made, and make sure that people are comfortable with that process. And so that's one skill
	LDI	Share leadership and stay in instructional improvement – I think that's really important. I think I try to do that all the time, and I think there's always a dilemma around “When is this my decision? What's mine? What's yours? What's ours? What do you give me some information on?” And I think that's why I haven't perfected that yet and I think that's always a struggle
	LDI	And I think communication, what I learned in my first principalship is that as long as people understand the decision making process before it begins and understand who's making the decisions...

LDI	You have to build the trust with the faculty, so there's certain decisions as an administrator that I'm going to make and everyone's going to live by. And I think where you can get into trouble is if you make it seem like "This is going to be a group decision" and then you come in and you make the decision, and then people are resentful of that. So if you say "I'm going to ask for input and this is the timeline for the decision but ultimately I'm going to make the decision," or "Ultimately the faculty's going to vote," or "Ultimately the faculty council's going to decide," you have to be clear I think about your decision.
LDI	I think you've got to be a leader who will see a problem and challenge your staff and challenge your community around that problem, so that as a community we can come with solutions to deal with that problem.
LDI	Sure – it's just the way in which your interactions play out with others. When things get tense in a meeting, do you shut down? Do you start talking? Do you take over? Do you get angry and upset? What sort of happens? And I did a lot of work around trying to become more aware of my operating principles so that I could allow the group to function more effectively. And I think that I was able to create a situation by putting my own operating principles in check by... It resulted in having more shared leadership
LDI	but very few discussions about what is leadership all about and the difference between leadership and authority; and how in this position we have an interplay of the two but really the one that helps transform schools is leadership; and what does it mean and what are the things that are implicated when you're a leader? How do you effect change in an institution? What are some of the drawbacks of the process? What are some of the predictable patterns that when an institution is going through change and you're leading that institution through a change, what are some of the things that you can expect?
LDI	I already talked a little bit about shared leadership, and I'd love to share more of my leadership, and I feel like in this building that the young ones who step forward to work late and stay with me to do interviews are sometimes looked at like brown nosers, overachievers, or are just not treated respectfully. When, in fact, we all have to work together in order to make this building run. You can't put everything on my back. And I did feel like that the staff, the first year, there was a greater sense of urgency than the second year so I have to figure out how to get that urgency back up
LDI	I found that in that role and in this role I think I'm pretty good at bringing people to the table, and I would call this like a grass roots organization where even if I have something that I would like to see happen I will always try to pool the audience so that not all ideas are mine. But even if I do have an idea, I try to point and see where it grows and then try to spread it that way.

	LDI	So, I don't know how to describe that as a particular leadership strategy but I also called it kind of a grass roots organization where I try and share leadership whenever possible when given the opportunity
	LDI	You have to be really savvy with budget and resources and be innovative and be creative, and be collaborative, and be willing to lead by example but then let go and empower others to take the reins. Because if it's always you that's leading everything it will always be you that's leading everything, and that's not sustainable. And that's not what this work is about.
	LDI	Everybody in this school except for three people came through an interview process, sat at a table, there were six or seven people around them, and we had conversations after they left like "what did you think about this." Just little things. As a team of people we were able to say that this person would be alright in our school, and that's how we've been hiring this year. So these are the people that are coming to this school and you should introduce yourself and you want me to do the same thing that we've been doing
	LDI	I do think that I was able to structure things in terms of distributive leadership so the school didn't fall apart. I established certain expectations and certain processes in the beginning of the year with the help of my colleagues that made the school year successful, and everybody said it was better than it had been in previous years.
	LDI	I listened to the staff and any changes that were made from my first year to my second year weren't my idea. They had the solutions, they just never had the chance to implement them and I'm not the keeper or solver of all the problems but I will sit down at the table and hash it out to see if we can come up with another solution
	LDI	They still are hesitant to offer their help in some respects. I'm a little surprised by that because last year in the first year they were so good at offering help and really that's the reason we have a much, much better schedule in the second year, because it was their own schedule. But they're still very tentative to step up and take on roles of leadership for the school. But I'm all for it

***Finding: Principals stated the importance of acting as an instructional leader to improve classroom instruction and recognized the challenges when serving as an instructional leader.***

	Finding	Quote
	LI	And bringing a team with you, even in my first year, and my teachers will say they were some of the best experiences they had – just they'd never left the <school>. They'd never even been in each other's classrooms, period. So that was really powerful learning for me but it was really amazing learning for them.

	LI	Well, I think from my perspective in terms of leadership in urban schools, it's true – you've got to be an instructional leader but not just that.
	LI	The best way to know what is going on in a classroom is to play the role of an archeologist; is to go to the classroom in any school when there's nobody.” The question is what artifacts can you find from this classroom and what does this tell you about what goes on in that classroom and what would be the next step? So I do not require my teachers to give me their lesson plan. I mean anybody can give you a lesson plan but is that what they are really doing? For me, if I go to a classroom and I ask a student “What are you working on? Do you know what you need to do to get to this next step?” if they are not able to tell me that then there is a problem.
	LI	Certainly in a school with 30% English language learners and the pressure of the MCAS, there's certainly a challenge in providing enough support, enough mainstreaming – the balance of mainstreaming and sheltered instruction. So I certainly see that as a major challenge.
	LI	We do have an instructional leadership team and I think that there was a good foundation put in place in this building by the previous headmaster so that was a relatively easy thing.
	LI	I've got a really good sense of how other headmasters utilize their leadership team and I think I've learned a lot. Ours needs to be more data driven, more instructionally-focused.
6	LI	You have to work so much harder as an urban teacher, there's no excuse for any of that kind of ... I can remember our first year here we had a math teacher who was in that room in the corner and I'll never forget this cause I think we almost got into a fist fight. He's a math teacher saying to kids, "math is kind of stupid but...". Excuse me, who says that to kids. You are the math teacher, your job is to impart your love of the subject and just that kind of off the cuff stuff you see happen a lot. I talk to teachers who say 'these kids just don't read' -- yes they do, make them, scaffold for them. Teachers will go 'well they're in high school now - give them a book, read chapters one through five and come back. Well if you've already determined that kids don't typically read or have that kind of enculturation to be readers then you need to do a lot of work to build them up to that place. People's mind set is that these kids should be able to do this. I'm giving them Charles Dickens - this is high school reading. OK it is but when kids have gone from not reading much to having to read books that are not interesting to them at all - you have to do that kind of work.

	LI	I don't have enough time. You want me to be an instruction leader – there's nothing I'd like better than be in classes more talking with teachers about bread and butter issues around instruction. I love that work; I'm very good at that work. I don't have time to do enough of it, and so now my strategy is I want to make sure that my administrative team is set up to do that in a way that I can abide, and that, especially with the nascent stage of the school's opening, we've hired this bang-up staff, so don't come to this great teacher with very weak feedback, because you could compromise your own credibility and you're going to shape the way the whole faculty thinks about the relationship between the teaching staff and the administration, so a lot's on the line.
	LI	I think really encompasses the whole AAF model of the system – the academic achievement network - where you're looking for instruction improvement to support student learning and see student gains in the data. Again, I push back on the system (and tell them) that it's up to the school in many cases - they're calling on us - on what we found to be what are good instructional strategies
	LI	Although I came onboard with a strong background in literacy, with a strong background in teaching English Language Learners, so for me I have not found that to be so much of a challenge. Because I have that background I've been able to lead the building in that area so I don't see that as a hindrance in any way
	LI	So for me it's about offering teachers support so that they can support kids in a rigorous way, so they know what rigorous pedagogy looks like
	LI	Effective instructional practices – I think I'm working on that, I want to get better at that. We're trying to put some things in place this year which sort of help with that as far as teachers observing teachers and getting their own ideas and stuff like that
<b><i>Finding: Principals cited instructional rounds as a model for professional development that impacted their capacity as an instructional leader.</i></b>		
	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Quote</b>
	LI	I think in terms of instructional practice, there has been some district support at the high school headmaster meetings – actually a lot I would say – on instructional rounds and walkthroughs. I think that's been really strong. And then I feel like in terms of observations and evaluations there's a lot of people that you can contact.
	LI	I felt like Bennett took me to another level because they really focus on the instructional rounds, and they did the instructional rounds and they got us into other buildings. I felt it was a very rich process

	LI	The objectives were very clearly laid out by the district. The process was very clearly laid out. The schedule was posted. We were in small groups which was very effective, so instead of just “You go to this school, that school,” there were teams of four. And I think every time we did an instructional round, three out of the four schools were together
	LI	Who was a success and who wasn't a success? Really get people to think around improving the teaching and learning. I don't care what it looked like before, people automatically would say "this is like when we did blah blah blah". Did you really do x, y and z or did you have to do it --- this is going to take some wholehearted investment kind of thing. So it makes it difficult to get people to invest because they might have had a bad experience.
	LI	It's going to be hard work, I don't ever expect that when I walk past a classroom I very rarely expect to see a teacher sitting at their desk - you need to be on your feet all the time. If you're sitting at a desk it should be because you're sitting next to a kid helping them and that kind of mentality to show people that I'm not trying to make you do something for the sake of doing it as much as I think that it's really going to make a difference in these kids lives.
	LI	that the other skill you need is knowing how to go into a classroom, see what's happening and be able to give people feedback – instructional leadership, it kind of goes without saying
<b><i>Finding: Principals stated that using data to drive instruction was important; however they needed training and support for its appropriate use.</i></b>		
	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Quote</b>
	LD	So we use a lot of data to track our instructors and I can just give you an example, two examples. When I was in the K-8 program what we find out was this, that at the K-8 program in math the students were using the [Connective] Math Program, the CMP program. However, when you look at the sequence of CMP, the algebra component in 6th grade does not exist. When you look at the curriculum frameworks there is algebra that has to be taught in grade 6, but the curriculum material that BPS preaches for everybody, it was not. So what I decided to do was to put the data together and say “This is what our issues are. This is what the curriculum framework says; this is what BPS is telling us that we need to do. There is a misalignment. We need to do something.” The only way we could do it was to bring some of the units from 7th grade down to 6th grade, so once we did that all of our results started to show.
	LD	I remember one of the high school sessions, the people from the College Board were there, but I don't feel as an administrator that I've ever gotten a lot of support on SAT data and how to analyze it.

LD	<p>... I wish that we would have more district-wide discussion about what the SAT data really tells us. I mean I know my SAT scores for my kids are low; what is that a function of? Is it literacy skills, is it computational? Where are the weaknesses?</p>
LD	<p>I look at the SAT data and I don't know what it means in terms of instructional practice. Where are the real weaknesses? Where do we need to retool our curriculum? Is it more fundamental skills? I mean I'm just, I'm sort of wowed by pretty high-functioning kids, because we do a lot of performance-based assessments. They do a wonderful job on that and their SAT scores aren't where they need to be, and how are they going to be judged in the college admission process by the SAT scores? So I'd like to see the district as we get better at the MCAST give us some more tools collectively about the SATs</p>
LD	<p>I've got a really good sense of how other headmasters utilize their leadership team and I think I've learned a lot. Ours needs to be more data driven, more instructionally-focused.</p>
LD	<p>Exactly, so right now what I'm trying to do is construct my own graphs and it's a lot of time. I don't know who has that time and I don't have the money to fund that. We used to actually fund that in-house and we stipended a teacher to do our data. We lost so much of our money that we can no longer do that. Now, there are times when I spend hours just looking at data and creating graphs from data and doing comparisons. It's so utterly unnecessary, so I'd like more support and I'd like more training with how to use data to really inform, or instruction, and I just don't feel like I've gotten very much in that area. In fact, even when [Administrator] presents, it's almost always cut short. It's almost always something that I want more of. I leave wondering, "What?"</p>
LD	<p>The piece that I look at consistently is data, how to use it, how to analyze it. I just don't have that piece down and that would be hugely important, we talked about that as part of the headmaster's network. Part of it is like a Catch 22 cause you don't get enough time in the network but you want to be out of your building more - I don't know how to balance that but having somebody who can really say, "This is how you look at this data, and this is what this means, and this is the direction that you should be moving your staff and kind of address what's showing up in your data." I've done my best to try to give - and I use layman's terms cause I'm not into charts and graphs and stuff. I want them to give me a sentence about what that means and give me a sentence about how to address it, and so that's one of the things that I thinks absolutely imperative that we get some more support around data. I don't who, I don't know if there are headmasters out there who do that really well, but I feel like I need an individual session just on my data.</p>

	LD	I know (not understandable), who's in Research and Assessment I think, he every year will come out with data and you look at it and you can see the leading and lagging indicators and all that kind of stuff, and now what pieces are still missing, so I know that like they show my 9th grade class was 100% at risk for low performance and you name it. This kid in particular you know, for him to take the MCAS you need seven more kids to be as proficient to balance out the fact that he's underperforming - how do you do that, what does that mean
	LD	Last year we were <a program> school and this year we'll be <a program> school and they used the data to track progress towards the MCAS and have a really good method - I'm a data person so data data data, and I'm teaching teachers how to use data to improve instruction even though they think all I care about is data - data's useless if you don't use it to drive instruction or change instruction or support students who are at risk. I'm pretty familiar with data and support
	LD	... I wish that we would have more district-wide discussion about what the SAT data really tells us. I mean I know my SAT scores for my kids are low; what is that a function of? Is it literacy skills, is it computational? Where are the weaknesses?
	LD	I look at the SAT data and I don't know what it means in terms of instructional practice. Where are the real weaknesses? Where do we need to retool our curriculum? Is it more fundamental skills? I mean I'm just, I'm sort of wowed by pretty high-functioning kids, because we do a lot of performance-based assessments. They do a wonderful job on that and their SAT scores aren't where they need to be, and how are they going to be judged in the college admission process by the SAT scores? So I'd like to see the district as we get better at the MCAS give us some more tools collectively about the SATs
Urban Context		
<b><i>Finding: The complexity of the urban environment diminishes the principals' abilities to focus on instructional leadership; district-based support is critical to mitigate the impact of outside forces on student learning.</i></b>		
	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Quote</b>
	E	I say that the job of principal is tightrope walking while juggling eggs while being shot at by lawn darts, so it's just like you have this vision and you have to have this linear focus of where you want to be as a school

E		<p>You might have a staff member that has a crisis and bails. You have a kid that's in crisis; you have a flood in your building, which I had in the first year, a shooting, so you kind of never know what's coming at you. So if you get sidetracked by all those individual things you're spinning in circles, and the one thing that you have to do as a leader is be the person that says "This is North. We collectively identify that this is our true north and we're never going to lose sight of that north." I think that that's really important.</p>
E		<p>It is tremendous the amount of work that is asked of a principal to do, especially when you do not have an assistant, because not only have you got to resolve issues of curriculum, issues of staff, parental issues, lunch, and all this, and you have to be there and do all of it.</p>
E		<p>You can look at it and see the schools that are being really good boys and girls, and doing everything they're supposed to do and not getting the results, and then the schools that are getting results were schools that really had found their own way, created their own collective sense of mission, and ran with that mission.</p>
E		<p>There's layers of bureaucracy that kind of get in the way and prevent innovation and being creative.</p>
E		<p>Also, we have a really hard time with tardiness. Our location is tough for kids. Kids come from all across the city to &lt;school&gt; and the parents can't drive them. Some of the parents are off to work before they ever even get up, so they can't drive them and drop them off. Some of our kids travel for an hour, and hour and a half to get to school every morning and then back.</p>
E		<p>On the opposite side of that, many of our students won't stay for an after school program because traveling from Brighton to their homes when it's dark is dangerous for them. So, although they need the skill support, we find it very, very difficult to get some of them to stay without having transportation to get them home. That's hard</p>
E		<p>I mean our kids come with lots of needs, and I think whether it's working directly with the students themselves and the various issues that you end up having to kind of support them around – everything from bullying to substance abuse, I mean there's just so many; mental illness – there's just a lot of things that end up coming up. And I'm not saying that those things don't happen in suburban schools</p>
E		<p>So I think they impact your ability to maintain your high academic and disciplinary standards. I never felt a lack of support from parents or guardians, but I felt that we have a greater percentage of students that don't have a lot of either support or supervision at home, either because their parents are working two or three jobs, or because they're being raised by a grandparent who really can't get involved in the day-to-day supervision of them. I don't mean supervision in terms of no one's home at night, but being able to</p>

E		Support the curriculum, support their academic work. I heard a lot of “I’m just not able to.” In one case it was “I’m physically not able to go downstairs and get him off the computer and get him off whatever site he’s on to get him to do his homework, and I’m dealing with my own health issues,” or “...dealing with my own job and I’m not home till 9:00 or 10:00. And they’re at the Boys & Girls Club and I can’t control what happens.” So I think those are challenges.
E		oftentimes having to deal with the limitations that are imposed by the unions. And I talk of that broadly, and not only the teachers unions but the secretaries, the clerks union and the custodial unions. I think that more so than the poverty level of our students, I think that- I would say that’s number one.
<b><i>Finding: In response to the demands of the urban context, all but two principals cited a core belief in high expectations for all students as critical to supporting student achievement.</i></b>		
EB		By junior and senior year in high school you have to have the belief that tough love is important. So you have to start putting students in the environment that they will be in in college, because if you are always believing that “Well, they’re not really comfortable being in a mainstream classroom; they’re not really comfortable being in a class where the demands are higher than they’re used to – they’re going to be uncomfortable,” that’s okay for me. And I believe that’s what our job is, is to start that tough love and foster that independence
EB		I think it’s really important to have a sincere belief, and not just an articulation, that all kids can learn and that all kids are worthy, because I think it’s so difficult and challenging to work with students who sometimes present as though they don’t want to be in school and they don’t want to learn, and they bring with them that whole bravado that can be intimidating, that can be frustrating, that can even cause you to be angry with them.

	EB	<p>You have to work so much harder as an urban teacher, there's no excuse for any of that kind of ... I can remember our first year here we had a math teacher who was in that room in the corner and I'll never forget this cause I think we almost got into a fist fight. He's a math teacher saying to kids, "math is kind of stupid but...".</p> <p>Excuse me, who says that to kids. You are the math teacher, your job is to impart your love of the subject and just that kind of off the cuff stuff you see happen a lot. I talk to teachers who say 'these kids just don't read' -- yes they do, make them, scaffold for them. Teachers will go 'well they're in high school now - give them a book, read chapters one through five and come back. Well if you've already determined that kids don't typically read or have that kind of enculturation to be readers then you need to do a lot of work to build them up to that place. People's mind set is that these kids should be able to do this. I'm giving them Charles Dickens - this is high school reading. OK it is but when kids have gone from not reading much to having to read books that are not interesting to them at all - you have to do that kind of work.</p>
	EB	<p>To really survive and transfer from survival to thriving you need a calling and that calling is what roots one and yields conviction to stand for truth and to stand for the betterment of the students in the face of any type of adversity; whether that be internal district or external political powers, or other things that be.</p>
	EB	<p>You have to believe that they can learn. I believe personally that you need to offer kids rigorous content. You don't speed kids up by slowing them down, and all of our kids are behind.</p>
<p><b><i>Finding: Principals value partnerships with families, despite the challenges of language, distance, and participation.</i></b></p>		
	EFC	<p>One I think is always just making sure that we're able to communicate with our families, you know? And if you have kids from several different backgrounds you feel like you're kind of doing them and their families a disservice because if you have ten to twelve different languages that are spoken it becomes very difficult if you're trying to... If you want to get a letter out that's very specific in a timely way, how do you go about doing that in a way that really allows access for everyone</p>
	EFC	<p>You have to be able to connect with families, all families, and understand that because of your race or your culture or your language you're going to need help engaging certain families, because everything that you represent to them might make them not want to step in your office; and then the opposite end, that there are families that will think that they're entitled to step in your office because of who you are and what you look like.</p>

	EFC	When we organize the back to school or parents night we recognize that it is far, so we can't reach parents as much as we would like to reach them. So one of the things that I decided to do is, myself, going to their houses – just driving around on Saturdays and call a parent and say “Hey, I was in the neighborhood. Do you mind if I stop by to see you?” So one of the first things I decided to do myself is after the first year was once we receive the list of the students during the summer, is to make the effort to go to every kids’ house to see where they live, where they come from, so I can really understand who are our kids because the majority of them are not from the neighborhood.
	EFC	I also think that there has to be a way for the leader to relate to people from all walks of life in urban education, because families come in and they are families that have really been alienated from the public school system, particularly families of color. There are families that have come in that have never had a child graduate from high school, even, never mind college. They have never had a child graduate from high school, and so to be able to talk with that family, and almost convince them of the importance of their child staying in school and going further, and the fact that this could transform their lives, I think you have to have a comfort level with people from all walks of life and be able to really interact with them in a way that will make them feel comfortable and confident coming inside your building
	EFC	We raised money and every teacher visited families in the summer at the homes with the kids, and then visited them again in the Spring time. So every kid when they went to class on that first day, their teacher had already been to their home and brought them a literacy basket like with books and all kinds of stuff. We raised money - the parents could pick books in Portuguese, Spanish or English, one book for each week of the summer. We sent the family books every week of the summer.
	EFC	I wish that the district would say ok for your parent night, especially since you're in the middle of nowhere, we'll pay for a bus so parents can get here. There's a lot of outreach, a lot of mailings, postcards, automated phone calls. We try as much as possible to get parents to come out but we're not above having meetings where parents are on speaker of phone on the middle of the table. Like "I have your son here and this is what's going on

***Finding: School leaders believe that a diverse and culturally proficient faculty is important, but the district’s collective bargaining agreement complicates hiring and retention practices.***

	EC	But our school premise is built on, in many regards what we call the Five C's and this is for this school. It's culture, compassion, consistency, commitment and care, and that's what we look for in educators; and I do believe that those are five c's that are necessary to work in urban education along with a sixth that I would add, and that is competence.
	EC	I have some trust issues with some of the folk who have worked with the kids. I think that people don't necessarily do their best in urban settings. They make assumptions about kids that I have to bump up every day. It's like an on-going thing to make people understand.
	EC	Then Essential Seven I always laugh at, like attracting and maintaining high performing culturally proficient staff - not when you have to take people from excess pool and you have no choice. Knowing that I don't know if you know how the excess pools work but people get to bid, based on seniority. How does that stuff work and how do you expect it to maintain a culturally competent staff and high achieving staff when you're saddled with having to take people from other places
	EC	If we don't have candidates in our local university who are teachers of color, then I think the district needs to go elsewhere to recruit teachers of color and not put the burden all back on the principals, whose jobs are quite full. I mean how do they expect us to go to New York, Florida or in some cases, I know they go to Puerto Rico to recruit - they go but we can't.
Principal Induction		
<b><i>Finding: The Bennett Public Schools lack a consistent, comprehensive approach to hiring school leaders.</i></b>		
	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Quote</b>
	PRF	Well, in reality that person is the reason why I became an educator. She really did see something in me. As I stated earlier, I was doing a <program> and what I was doing was remote sensing and environmental science, which has nothing to do with education. So as I was working with an after-school staff, you know, sometimes I was teaching some science class with the K-8. So she really saw something in me and asked me if I wanted to be in education, and kind of helped me along to get my licenses. And so when the position came, and again, she's the one who advised me to go back to school and get all my licenses; and I went to the <program>, which is the principal residency program. She is the one who knew of it and she was actually my mentor as a principal resident. So when it all came to be in this position she knew well what I needed to do, so she said "[Administrator], we need to do a mock interview
	PRF	And so I had not... I mean I had gone to the principal interview orientation. In the winter I'd gotten an email to come, just to kind of check it out and see

PRF		<p>And so then when &lt;She&gt; called me it was like at 8:00 on a Monday night and I was caught really off-guard, and I was just like “I’m getting married this summer, no, that’s not something that I want.” But then as I hung up I kind of felt immediate regret, like you know, I wasn’t sure that I didn’t want it but it was a gut reactive “No.” And then I called, then another superintendent called me and said “You might want to think about interviewing. It doesn’t mean you have to commit and we’ll be very clear with whoever interviews you that you are not fully sure this is a commitment you can make at this time.” And so &lt;Administrator&gt; reached out to me a few weeks later, invited me to interview for the &lt;School&gt; position. I went and interviewed with a committee of parents and teachers and &lt;Administrator&gt; was the only one in the room that knew my kind of back story that I had initially been reticent. And I interviewed, prepared as if it was the job of my dreams even though in the back of my mind it wasn’t sure that this was what I wanted at that point in time; and then got a call on Monday that I had been offered the position.</p>
PRF		<p>And after three years in &lt;Town&gt; I was getting a little bit restless with the small town thing and I was looking for more of an urban environment, and I was really pleased almost a year ago today to see this job posted; and I was hired in late August last year.</p>
PRF		<p>I was called and told to take the school. I went to the governing board of the school and I was hired that same day</p>
PRF		<p>And I think communication, what I learned in my first principalship is that as long as people understand the decision making process before it begins and understand who’s making the decisions...</p>
PRF		<p>That call did come eventually. &lt;she&gt; called, we had just moved, I hadn’t at all contemplated taking a headmaster position. My &lt;spouse&gt;, I think, was very happy that I hadn’t, and we didn’t know what I was going to do. But, it was probably not lead a school last year, and then &lt;she&gt; called and said, “I need you to throw your hat in the ring because we have a lot of schools open and I think that you could be effective in some of these roles.”</p>
PRF		<p>Ultimately, I applied, and the way that you apply nowadays for a leadership job, it’s not the first specific job, you allow yourself to be sort of deployed or vetted first in the schools that you’re eligible for by the committee’s judgment.</p>
PRF		<p>The following year they did the fishbowl type thing again. I did not apply. I did not feel that the process was very clear. I think the first time that I did the fishbowl was the first time they had done that, where they put us all together, ran us all through the ropes for lack of a better way to express it. So the second year I didn’t do that, but then I did go ahead and apply on-line for positions.</p>

	PRF	I already talked a little bit about shared leadership, and I'd love to share more of my leadership, and I feel like in this building that the young ones who step forward to work late and stay with me to do interviews are sometimes looked at like brown nosers, overachievers, or are just not treated respectfully. When, in fact, we all have to work together in order to make this building run. You can't put everything on my back. And I did feel like that the staff, the first year, there was a greater sense of urgency than the second year so I have to figure out how to get that urgency back up
	PRF	Again, I knew then what I didn't know the year before, that I couldn't apply to any particular school, but rather I was applying to wherever they chose to place me which wasn't clear the first year. So I met with who was then the Chief Academic Officer (I think that was the title) and she interviewed me for awhile, and then I met with the Superintendent who I had met before, and who I was familiar with, for a few minutes as well and then didn't really hear back for awhile
	PRF	It was a team of people. [Administrator] spent the day with me there and I met with <administrator> at the beginning of the day and I think one other staff person, and then I met with their <XXX>. And I met with students. I didn't meet with any parents. And actually to be honest with you, my initial interview was with the <School>.
	PRF	It starts at 7:00 in the morning; you go straight through till 2:00. And then I also interviewed at the <school> so those were the two schools I interviewed with. And it was never like I gave them a list of schools I was interested in. You know, in the interview with <Administrators> I think they asked me what kind of school I was interested in and I did say I was interested in a smaller school, and but then I interviewed at wherever there were openings, basically.
	PRI	I was friends with <Administrator> for the Bennett Public Schools, and <administrator> asked if I wanted to be a Bennett public school principal, and then I became a Bennett Public School principal.
	PRI	Yes, and so I had been a person whose name had been floated in different circles and I actually had not put my name forward as a candidate for any positions. I hadn't indicated any interest in the headmaster position last year, partly, I don't want to overstate it, but I felt like I didn't want to take a job and then not be able to grow roots, particularly if I'm new.
<b><i>Finding: Principals stated the importance of appropriate timing, frequency, and relevance of professional development, coaching, and mentoring.</i></b>		
	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Quote</b>

SF		<p>That July period I made it work, but if I didn't know who to call I don't know what I would have done. And by the time August came, I wasn't interested in talking about that stuff anymore. I wanted to be in my school getting my welcome packets together for my families and planning my ILT retreat, and planning my whole school PD. August is a really tense time. You come back in the middle of August and boom! And I don't know if other [ladies] would feel that way but I felt like the sooner you can get that stuff to me and then I can mull it over and process it, as opposed to-</p>
SF		<p>I think the second year is much more critical than the first. I mean you're just trying to survive your first year. You don't have time to do that kind of stuff ,but your second year, I found that to be the hardest in my first principalship. The second year, your honeymoon's over with your parents, with your students, with your staff, and you're still gasping for air. And I think that's where you really need to put a lot more support in.</p>
SF		<p>So I think if they could come up with a program where the support is more in your building, because as a new principal, one of the things that I really struggled with was visibility in my building because I think I was pulled out...I think I counted like 19 or 20 times this year for District meetings, high school meetings, trainings and all. That's a lot, and so when you come back you've got a stack of paper.</p>
SF		<p>So I think I started on August 18<sup>th</sup> last year but in the two weeks that we had to prepare for the opening of school I was pulled offsite probably six or seven days to get the training, to get the support.</p>
SF		<p>And so &lt;Administrator&gt; doing this skill thing making us do a teaching, learning and connecting thing, honestly, where we were drawing a tree and have all these leaves be the different parts of learning - curriculum is one part - how close is curriculum - what colors things are. It was fun, it was kind of a cute thing, and I am working with these two other people and we sort of didn't do exactly what we were supposed to do; we did something very much like it and we were talking about teaching and learning, and being principals and taking over buildings and transition plans and things like that and we did something very different.</p> <p>And &lt;Administrator&gt;, I had never met this man before so we each presented and he said "that's fucking bullshit" that you didn't do that activity. This was the first time I'd met this man -, you can say you didn't do what I asked of you. I just walked out and I didn't come back for the next two days.</p>
SF		<p>There really weren't any supports that were offered. I'm</p>

SF	. I think because I was interim and I took the position on so late, I think that part of the issue was that I had just slipped off the radar, because in the second year there were some activities for new principals that I was invited to attend
SF	I think a lot of stuff happened out of context, and add on the fact that this is my first year with the district, you know - people are leaving and coming and going and it's been very choppy so just thinking about how like going through that first year in such turmoil, so when we learned about probable org it didn't happen for another three months. So by the time I was sitting down at my computer screen trying to figure out you know - how many teachers do you think, does this make sense, and I'm doubling in size so it's not the same school that I had planned for in the past.
SF	I was not given a mentor principal, I missed PD opportunities for all the new principals that year and I didn't have access to some of my financials and things like that for the school. I still feel like I'm behind in understanding how that all works.
SF	In Bennett we do have sessions every month with either the whole, the big session which is with the superintendent; we have professional development meeting with the superintendent every month. And then we have another meeting a month which is whatever level you're assigned to – I go to elementary. And these happen regularly throughout the year. That's when this type of support and training ought to be happening and it's really not.
SF	... I mean put it in place in some of the models that we have with teachers. With teachers we have learning cycles and professional rounds where a group of principals gets together and they go to each other's schools, and they observe classrooms together and have an opportunity to talk about instruction with other colleagues.
SF	And because BPS has so many different schools there isn't a standard where it would be applicable to everybody else. I mean you have small schools, you have bigger schools, you have pilot schools, you have <School> schools; now you have turnaround schools. I mean every school has their own autonomy, their own ways of functioning and it becomes much more complicated where things aren't working. So what I decided to do this year, what I was doing is going into different schools and sitting down with different principal and trying to see "Okay, you guys are a small school – how do you do it? How do you work to make sure that you don't stay at work until 9:00 at night? How do you staff your building when by law you have to provide ESL services to kids, and you have a small amount of ESL students and you don't have a staff to provide that ESL stuff? So what is it that you do?" Because we tried to work it out and it wasn't working.

	SF	. I just felt, I think for better or for worse I just felt like I needed to get through it on my own. I didn't, I mean I'd talked with <administrator> and all of that but I didn't... I just felt like it didn't need the same kind of handholding. I kind of just found it within myself to just push through
<b><i>Finding: Principals cited significant challenges navigating central office.</i></b>		
	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Quote</b>
	SFCO	And I immediately had an <supervisor> specifically, who I just personally reached out to on my own. I was sitting in the <school> and there was not a lot of... The transition was complex, as it often is with leadership, and so I kind of came in and was sitting alone in an office; but had been in a school for so long and had had such great collaborative relationships that I was a little bit overwhelmed. And so I just was like "I don't know him, I had a great relationship with <administrator> – I don't know him." I emailed him and said kind of "I'm sitting here and don't know where to find my evaluations, how to get my student roster,"
	SFCO	The second part is in terms of our first year, because we were a pilot school and we were approved as a <XXX> school, we'd been given a grant for \$100,000 which helped. And then during our second year as I told you, the first thing that they did the first year is that they renovated one side of the building and they said "Well, we're going to renovate the next side." I called them – they told me "There's no plan for them to renovate the next side," knowing that students are coming in next school year. So here we are with the whole side of the building that is not renovated and had to walk around with staff and contact some different companies to come and help us out so that we can renovate this building ourselves. So that is something that is challenging for me and I don't want to say I became a bit disenchanted but I lost a little bit of my hope that I had for the district, especially those who are in charge of building renovations
	SFCO	I think my greatest frustration was we were trained on the financial software, payroll; we heard from the CFO, we heard from the head of Special Ed, but never given any good orientation to the data system. So I was not a new principal; I'd been the principal of a high school for three years and in an administrative role for seven, but I didn't know how to get a student roster, I didn't know how to get a schedule
	SFCO	I was invited to the Principal Institute, which I believe was three days. I was given laptop training, I was given financial training; I was invited to two or three half-day sessions with Central Office folks for all new principals. So I would say between those last two weeks in August there were... And there was also some ESL report that was due so they offered some support in writing that report. So there was a fair amount of support offered; it was just a lot.

	SFCO	What I wanted from BPS was that very technical support, and whether they sent another principal or they sent someone from District, I needed someone to sit behind my desk with me instead of me going somewhere else and say “This is your [LIZA] system. This is how you look at your master schedule. This is how you see what teachers are free this hour. This is how you look at your MCAS data on the data warehouse. This is how you get attendance data. This is how we do attendance,”
	SFCO	The district certainly filled us with all the big picture where’s ELL going, where’s special ed going, what’s the mission – all that was very filled in. I just needed to function in my job and I had very few days to learn that
	SFCO	Well, definitely around the data, that’s an area I’m growing in, but it’s not an area I feel I’m particularly strong in, quite frankly, and I think that the way that we have to access data is unnecessarily complicated, so a streamlining of the data, or perhaps someone to give you the data. I would think that there would be an office that could provide you with the data for your school -
	SFCO	Exactly, so right now what I’m trying to do is construct my own graphs and it’s a lot of time. I don’t know who has that time and I don’t have the money to fund that. We used to actually fund that in-house and we stipended a teacher to do our data. We lost so much of our money that we can no longer do that. Now, there are times when I spend hours just looking at data and creating graphs from data and doing comparisons. It’s so utterly unnecessary, so I’d like more support and I’d like more training with how to use data to really inform, or instruction, and I just don’t feel like I’ve gotten very much in that area. In fact, even when [Camal] presents, it’s almost always cut short. It’s almost always something that I want more of. I leave wondering, “What?”
	SFCO	. Accessing things from the district, even something as simple as getting a person hired and when you’re a new principal, not necessarily knowing how to navigate the system down there and not having had any sort of orientation to “this is the person that you speak to when.” Or, not an orientation where there was actually a friendly face giving it, because that’s important, especially in your first year, to say, “Here’s a human being that you can contact if you are having a hard time and they can help you navigate through that.” There just wasn’t that
	SFCO	If there was a manual around operations, and here’s who you call, something that was simple and easy at your fingertips, because you just don’t have time to go back and weed through every piece of paper that you may have received at the institute –

	SFCO	<p>I also think there should be, we get these circulars around all these different mandates to do before the start of the school year, and for me, especially when I was first starting, I don't know that I ever had that document, because it was in a superintendent's circular, but I didn't even know the superintendent's circular section existed on the website until probably halfway through the year, and these are all things that I'm responsible for. No one ever told me that at any point until midway through the year. I called downtown for something and they said, "Well, it's in the superintendent's circular." "What's that?" I said, "I looked through all the ones I got online." "Oh, no, no, there's a whole, like 50 documents and you're responsible..." "I am?" So, I went back midway through and I read through all these things that I was responsible for, but honestly, no one ever shared that with me ever</p>
	SFCO	<p>A lot of it is probably that people are overworked, jobs have been cut and so you try to put things in perspective, but there are a lot of questions that I felt like weren't answered because nobody knew the answer so nobody really wanted to make the decision, so you were kind of dangling out here. As an example, yesterday I went down to Court Street and I try to take Mondays and Fridays off - and so I went down to Court Street and stopped in to HR just to find out what was going on with some of the positions that have yet to be filled and that's when I found out - you can open a posting for your Spanish positions cause all the Spanish teachers in the excess pool have been placed so I can now advertise and hire whoever I want for a Spanish position. But I'm like, would they have told me that if I didn't go down there. Does that even make sense that nobody relayed the information? I get e-mail all the time in my computer and my phone - I mean somebody say something. And how I ended up there is I was coming from a doctor's appointment. The Green Line stopped at Government Center instead of going all the way to the North Station so I was like I better get off. Let me go upstairs and check in, otherwise I wouldn't know right now I don't think. A lot of that stuff I feel has happened. You don't know and the people that you have to depend on have never worked in schools and just don't have a clue about the in's and out's and what might be important.</p>
	SFCO	<p>You know, just a whole bunch of other things that when I think back to the Just in Time seminar, I don't even remember what we talked about. I know that there was a directive for first year Headmasters. We were told that anybody on 4<sup>th</sup> floor at Court Street has been directed to return first year Headmaster's phone calls within 24 hours, so if you don't get that kind of response then you can contact your Academic Superintendent and she'll follow up for you - that kind of thing</p>
	SFCO	<p>I think if we could have some support around you know the Court Street process and getting things done that are operational like budget and supplies and all that stuff, and we could have some support around areas that we feel we need work in such as curriculum or special education or ELLs specifically for principals</p>

SFCO	; I mean of things that principals need support with. One is in the operational realm. You know, in terms of understanding the systems, Transportation and all that, I think that the type of training that I got when I was first appointed principal was not nearly enough
SFCO	So I had a two day training where literally the tech guy comes for half an hour, it was all the new principals. The problem was that there were maybe 27 brand new principals and then people who were 45 and who had been principals before and they were all saying the same thing. You met with the tech guy for a half an hour, the HR guy for half an hour, the budget guy for half an hour and then we had <Administrator> who was supposed to do something on teaching and learning.

***Finding: Principals require access to non-Bennett Public School initiated supports.***

Findings	Quote
SN	I also got, and I would say in terms of tangible, like really great nitty-gritty help, someone to support my supervision evaluation, and that's <Administrator> who I'd worked with before. And instructionally I think her vision and my vision are very much aligned; her expectations and my expectations are very much aligned, and she would come in with me and observe with me and we would debrief observations. She'd read my evaluations, give me feedback – that was the most invaluable help that I got all year long. And I ended up starting to reach out to <Administrator> about other things as a result of that because she intimately knew my situation. I mean I would reach out to my principal mentor but I wasn't like forwarding my evaluations to him. I started forwarding my (inaudible 0:12:15) up to <Administrator> because I just figured out really quickly that instructionally she and I were on the same page, and so she kind of became a coach around supervision evaluation and then some
SN	I mean certainly through the <program> work, and I guess that is tied in with BPS, but I reached out to <Administrator> outside of that for my work at the <school> around RTI. She and I met over the summer and talked, and met offline and talked even though she wasn't my <program> person.
SN	Yes, a consultant outside that I worked with. I reached out to Dr. Blumer who was my professor at Bennett College who has also been a big influence in my life in terms of leadership, who is someone who I trust that I could say anything to and he would be very straight with me. And he came over a handful of times last year to meet with me and just kind of be another sounding board. I certainly reached out to a previous principal and colleague of mine; <Administrator>, retired principal. She and I talk regularly. And other colleagues in the district that I kind of got to know who were newer and you just feel comfortable asking those questions to or having those conversations with.

SN	I think I forgot to mention this when you said “other resources,” but I think one of the smartest things that I did when I started to realize that inclusion was something that we wanted to talk about as a school, was I reached out to people that had done the work like you, people who were doing it and living it and breathing it; and go to their communities with a team and talk to their teachers and get into their classrooms, and learn kind of how they embarked on this journey
SN	I’m a pilot school so I used the pilot school network to ask questions of “What are my autonomies as a pilot school?” and asking questions of that nature; but certainly questions about “I’ve got a direct conflict this afternoon – I’m supposed to be at a pilot school meeting and a district meeting. Which one do I go to?” I would reach out and ask questions like that, so things like that.
SN	. I think the other thing that being new to the district, hearing how people resolve HR issues and budget issues has been really helpful. So just the way I’ve learned that you navigate those processes in the district has been great, and most of that has been the opportunity to hear colleagues talk about unique challenges.
SN	So I think one of the reasons I wanted to come to the District is because I love having colleagues that are in the same job as mine; not sitting in meetings where everyone else is K-8, because the challenges are so different.
SN	And the old Headmaster, I should mention her. She gave me a flash drive with some documents, she’s still on the system. So if I had a question about a person and what their status was or whatever, or where a document was I could certainly contact her. She was very available
SN	Again, having been a principal before I felt like I’d been through a lot of RBT training – I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of that.
SN	So I think more in-building support from people that share your job, and it’s less intimidating because it’s not someone who’s supervising you – not that that would be an issue, but I think you want to look when you’re a new principal like you know what you’re doing
SN	I was unabashed at asking veterans about how to do this and that to me was a very rich learning experience about cultivating my own kitchen cabinet of people who were a lot smarter than I was and a lot more veteran who I could ask about what to do and how to do it.
SN	Right, for that I’ve taken OJT 1 and 2 from Research for Better Teaching, and that I think was the gold standard for preparation for teacher evaluations. So when I’ve had to do them, the ones that I’ve done really is done from that practice.

SN		It's very informal but if you can figure out a way to do it I think it was highly effective for me. I called people I did not know, I just knew that this person had a reputation for being very good at this. I'm a brand new principal, I don't know what I'm doing, can I come over and talk to you about it? And the answer was always yes.
SN		Yes, in my first year I connected with <administrator> from the <School> during our XXX process, which is a school quality review, sort of a mini accreditation for pilot schools. She was on our XXX team and she had an opportunity to come in to see the school to see where we were having challenges and successes. She offered to support me and she gave her home phone number and encouraged me to use it and to contact her if there was ever anything she could do to be supportive. She was very supportive during my first year.
SN		The resources piece - like we have some people who really like the <School> and have been supportive of us, but some schools just have tons and tons of money. Most of them are pilot, most are Horace Mann charters, whatever - I feel like people want to invest in those schools a little more than they want to invest in traditional schools cause they feel like they can do so many more things. But, I'd love to figure out how to do that piece - how do I get people to really invest in this school - come and look. We have some decent friends, but we need more. We're working on creating our own little friends group USA network kind of thing but it hasn't met as much. I feel like I'm meeting with people and saying "look are you gonna give us money or not." If not, I've got other things to do.
SN		So I would have much rather been in my school than meeting outside of the school a couple times a week across town. So for me it was more the informal interactions with other principals and other colleagues that informed more of my work; and actually being in the building and having people come in and mentor me and work with me in the building and not outside of the building

	SN	<p>Many of them. Most of it comes from books and I'm trying to apply it, which started obviously before I became a principal having been afforded opportunities to lead in other areas and in society. So it was for a natural fit because you know, whether you're the captain of your Pop Warner team or you're a principal of a school I mean leadership is leadership at the fundamental core. And so some of that learning was happening before assuming the role of a principal, but as a principal you know, we have so much to do as you mentioned in an urban environment I guess I would add to that question probably the volume of needs. I mean, you know, to everyone's credit, do you really have time to teach leadership? I, I have participated in a principal residency network with Northeastern and I often serve as a mentor. I did it last year based upon as I said the relationship with the individual but I'm not doing it this year because the individuals that applied within the school, I don't have the level of relationship with; and more honestly I'm choosing not to invest that amount of time because of the other things that need to be done that to me are more important based upon me not having a relationship with individuals</p>
	SN	<p>I'm fortunate on my board now, Larry Myatt is the chair. He's been a longtime friend and mentor to me and somebody that I can always go to with schoolhouse issues that are just bread and butter like leadership issues, and just questions about education in general in an urban context. Now Casella Walker has recently joined the board as well.</p>
	SN	<p>Yeah, so this is, for me, a very deliberate strategy to surround myself with people that I can go to and that know me and have come to know about the school, and will defend it and protect and help grow it. They're two people that I go to. I continue, though not as much recently because of the general workload, to connect to my colleagues in the fellowship program.</p>