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A New Group of Leaders; The Assistant Principal Academy For Instructional Leadership and Development

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A New Group of Leaders; The Assistant Principal Academy

For Instructional Leadership and Development

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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Preface

During the 2010-2011 school year, Riverwoods Public Schools (RPS) lost forty-two veteran principals from its ranks due to retirements, relocations, and other work opportunities. The district conducted local, state and national searches to fill these vacant positions. Individuals, mostly assistant principals and teachers, who had aspirations to serve as leaders, were provided the opportunity to serve as principals. For many, this would be the first time serving as the lead administrator or leader in a school. This new crop of talent showed promise, but also a need for extensive professional development in the areas of operational and instructional leadership.

In order to develop the skills needed for the role of today's school leader, providing quality professional development and learning opportunities to administrators is essential. The district created systems of administrative support to provide multiple learning experiences to adequately prepare leaders to serve at the school level. RPS invested in professional development that provided instructional leadership support. Professional development sessions provided new assistant principals with opportunities to network and engage in dialogue that provided examples of best practice in instruction.

The leadership had opportunities to engage in "hands-on" experiences in conducting observations of teacher practice and provided feedback for instructional improvement. This work assisted in providing experiences that created trusting, collaborative relationships for both administration and staff; thus creating environments conducive to learning for all students.

NLU Digital Commons Document Origination Statement

This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The "program" can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

During the 2010-2011 school year, Riverwoods Public Schools (RPS) lost forty-two

veteran principals from its ranks due to retirements, relocations, or other work opportunities

outside of the district. With that many departures, the district conducted both local and

nationwide searches to fill these vacant positions. Individuals, mostly assistant principals and

teachers, who had aspirations to serve as leaders in the district, were finally being provided the

opportunity to serve in buildings in any of the three grade bands. For many of the new hires, this

would be the first time they would serve as the lead administrator or leader in the building.

During the 2011-2012 school year approximately twenty additional veteran principals left

the district. As a result of this huge turnover of staff over the course of two years, the district

implemented several different programs to assist in the development of its building leadership.

This new crop of talent showed some promise but also showed the need for extensive

professional development in various areas.

As a regional superintendent, one of my responsibilities is the selection, hiring and

evaluation of school leaders. Recruiting, retaining and developing talent falls within the scope of

my work. I am responsible for ensuring that there is a highly qualified, strong, effective

principal or leader in each school of my region.

The former Superintendent of Schools stated that in order to create the change so

desperately needed in schools; the building must be staffed with a competent leader. This

message was conveyed monthly during principal meetings, in district-wide communications, as

well as his blog. Harvey, Cambon-McCabe, Cunningham and Koff (2013), listed the

development of school principals as one of seven issues facing today's superintendent. The success or failure of a school is based on the quality of the leader put in place at the building level.

Systems of Administrative Support

In order to help develop the skill sets needed for the role of today's principal, providing quality professional development and learning opportunities to school leaders is a must. The district has created systems of administrative support to provide multiple learning experiences to adequately prepare leaders to serve at the school level.

RPS's system of administrative support is designed to prepare leaders and build the capacity of existing leaders through a focus on mentoring services, district and external support and professional development. Aspects of each of these services are described in full detail below.

Regional System of Support

RPS is divided into five Regional Systems of Support which includes four geographic regions: Central, East, Northwest, Southwest and two specialty regions; Innovation Region and Contracted Schools. All regions are a conglomerate of the schools in the system that range from Significantly Exceeding Expectations to Fails to Meet Expectations as determined by the state. Each of the geographical regions is made up of 29 schools from grades K3 through 12th grade.

The Innovation Region consists of 14 "commitment" schools; six are K-8 schools and eight are comprehensive high schools. Each school has been recognized as the recipient of the Board approved Commitment School Grant; a three year grant that provides school leaders the

opportunity to implement a variety of research-based school models such as General Electric (GE) Schools, Community School models, or the Systems Thinking Process, focused staff professional development in reading and mathematics, and increased parental and community engagement to improve academic achievement.

Contracted Schools serve 23 instrumentality, and non-instrumentality charter schools in the district and 15 partnership schools. Instrumentality schools are schools with district employees and non-instrumentality are schools that do not employee district personnel. This division is committed to educating and serving diverse student populations while aligning with the vision, goals, core beliefs and capacity builders of the Riverwoods Public Schools District.

Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has produced report cards for every district and school in Wisconsin. These report cards provide data for four priority areas:

- **Student Achievement** – performance on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Examination and Wisconsin Alternative Assessment –Students with Disabilities in reading and mathematics

- **Student Growth** – improvement over time on the WKCE in reading and mathematics

- **Closing Gaps** – progress of student subgroups in closing gaps in reading and mathematics performance and/or graduation rates

- **On-track and Postsecondary Readiness** – performance on key indicators of readiness for graduation and postsecondary pursuits, whether college or career

Three Student Engagement Indicators that provide information regarding a student's success and the school's overall effectiveness are included on the report card. These indicators include:

- **Test Participation Rate** - 95 percent test participation for all students and each subgroup.

- **Absenteeism Rate** - 13 percent or less.

- **Dropout Rate** - six percent or less.

A district's or school's Overall Accountability Rating falls within one of five categories:

- **Significantly Exceeds Expectations**

- **Exceeds Expectations**

- **Meets Expectations**

- **Meets Few Expectations**

- **Fails to Meet Expectations**

Schools receiving the Fails to Meet Expectations and Meets Few Expectations rating by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) have produced results that show the school is underperforming in the key indicator areas. As a result, these schools have been identified by their RPS Regional System of Support team as in need of additional supports and services to improve student outcomes.

Regional teams reviewed multiple sources of data for each school in their region to determine what tier the school would be placed in; Tier One, Tier Two or Tier Three. This data included the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) Assessment, four year trends in attendance and suspension rates, district walk-throughs and the team's anecdotal knowledge of the school. The number of years the principal had been in place in the school as well as knowledge of the teaching staff was also used as determining factors regarding a school's placement into a tier.

The district outlined a menu of supports and services that each school will receive from their support team, depending on their tiered ranking.

All Schools will receive:	In addition to what All Schools receive, Tier 2 Schools will receive:	In addition to what All Schools receive, Tier 3 Schools will receive:
Quarterly review of School Improvement Plans with timely feedback	Selected school are assigned coaches in math and literacy	Priority given to the placement of coaches in math, literacy and PBIS
Monthly Principal/School Leader Meetings		Targeted support from the Regional Team based on MStat selection process
	Targeted support from the Regional Team based on Milwaukee Strategy (MStat) selection process	
Annual Principal/School Leader Institute	Student Assessment Supervisor meeting with school leader and learning team once a quarter to review and document progress made on SIP Action Plans	Student Assessment Supervisor meeting with school leader and learning team once a quarter to review and document progress made on School Improvement Plan (SIP) Action Plans
	Learning Team Training (optional)	Learning Team Training (required)
Monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings with Principals in Regions		Principal peer observations
	Additional monthly professional development	
Monthly Assistant Principal Meetings		
Comprehensive Response to Intervention (RtI) support around math, literacy and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	Instructional Coaches	Monthly instructional walk-throughs from regional team members to observe instruction and provide specific and targeted feedback based on classroom visits
Regional System of Support Team		
Parent Engagement Activities		
	Monthly PLC meetings with	

Educator Effectiveness Training	Principal in region	
Weekly PLC and Professional Development		
Mentoring opportunities for 1st and 2nd year principals		
Instructional Walk-throughs		
District wide professional development opportunities around the Comprehensive Literacy Plan, Comprehensive Math and Science Plan, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and district wide intervention programs		

Figure 1. **Continuum of School Support Services. This figure illustrates the level of district support provided to schools in RPS.**

Members of Regional System of Supports

Table 1 reflects the desire to provide a continuum of services to schools consistent with a case management approach using the Regional System of Support. The Regional teams are comprised of the following individuals and additional team members may be added on an as needed basis:

- Regional Superintendent - Directs, monitors, motivates, supports, evaluates and holds school level leaders and self, accountable for a strong, safe, effective and efficient educational program in the assigned region

- Regional Director of School Support - Supports, monitors, coordinates, supervises and oversees regional RPS K-12 schools for effective school operations and improved results

- Regional Coordinator of Specialized Services - Supports, monitors, coordinates, supervises and oversees regional RPS K-12 schools for the delivery of services to students with special needs

- Regional Student Achievement Supervisors - Provides support and ensures compliance with the Riverwoods Public Schools District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans in assigned schools

- Response to Intervention Specialists

- Literacy Leader - Provides support and professional development in the area of reading and writing

- Math Leader - Provides support and professional development in the area of mathematics

- Science Leader - Provides support and professional development in the area of science

- Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Coach – Provides support and professional development in the area of school culture and climate

- Curriculum Specialist - Oversees and directs the work of the curriculum leaders

- Budget Analyst - Reviews, monitors and reallocates all funding sources of the school

- Research Analyst - Provides data information to schools upon request

Regional Support Team Site Visits and Professional Development

The regional team visits on Thursday mornings are efforts to have each school in the Region receive an on-site visit during the course of the school year. The focus of the visit consists of data analysis, walkthroughs, feedback and discussions around supports needed. The schedule is determined by the Regional Superintendent and communicated to the System of Support team

members. The team will also use the time to conduct a team meeting to discuss other schools in that region.

Regional Support Team Thursday Agenda Site Visits and Professional Development
Regional Team Assembled – Calibration of watches and pick up school schedules and map of school
School Leader's Address – School leader presents in mode of choice (verbal, PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) current data relative to mathematics, literacy and climate. School leaders may include any other data/information as they see fit
School Walkthrough – Regional team conducts walk of building. Feedback and data collected from school walk is placed in Teachscape
Leadership Dialogue – Team members are divided to discuss information with various school stakeholders in the areas of academics, climate, Student Focus Group and Staff Focus Group
Leadership Debrief and Supporting Dialogue –Regional Team discusses and provides feedback to include no more than four recommendations to school community
Completion of Recommendation Form – Principal joins Regional Team for supporting dialogue and recommendations. Principal is provided date for return visit and date progress on recommendations is due
Regional Meeting Time/Share triad visit results

Alverno Mentors

The district has contracted with and enlisted the assistance of an external partner to provide coaching and mentoring services to new principals in the district. This service is provided by Alverno College. Principals in their first or second year of leadership or in a unique situation, receive a maximum of 100 hours of mentoring in a school year. The mentoring services are provided at no cost to the individual or to the school. All information discussed between the leader and mentor is confidential and is not discussed with the Regional Superintendent. These non-evaluative mentors are recently retired principals and district level leaders who provide support in the six competency areas listed for RPS administrators. These areas include:

- Shared Vision for Learning

- Instructional Leadership

- Academic Achievement

- Positive School Learning Environment

- Building Management

- Community Relations

These competency areas allow the mentors to educate their leaders around all items from the day-to-day operations of the building to budgetary matters. Mentors also assist the new principal with navigating the RPS organization; serving as a go-to person for frequently asked questions regarding the district. The mentor's main objective is to listen, reflect, react and respond to the leadership needs of the new administrator.

In order to assist new administrators to become the transformational leaders needed for today's schools, the Alverno Mentors focus their work on four domains directly related to the competency areas mentioned above. The domains are:

- Instructional Leadership and Instructional Guidance: Provide information through direct observations regarding effective classroom practices, teacher observations, and pre-post conferences

- Student-Centered Learning Climate: Help identify school practices that impede student learning and provide information for improved student engagement within classes

- Professional Capacity: Assist administrators with putting practice beliefs, skills, understandings, and dispositions in place for increased student achievement. Provide technical assistance to ensure that schools operate effectively and efficiently

- Parent-Community Ties: Provide feedback to leaders regarding interactions with the various key stakeholders instrumental to the school's success.

New Principal Meetings

New principals are offered the opportunity to meet with one another during New Principal Induction Meetings that provide support for leaders in their first year of principalship. Here newly retired district principals lead sessions with new leaders and discuss concerns experienced in the position, read professional articles and books, and are provided information from various RPS departments to assist in leadership development and operational support. These meetings are held monthly at different host schools, allowing the leaders to see another building in action during the school day. Learning walks are conducted at the host school and a debriefing session is held to discuss the observations made regarding academic and building operations.

National Institute for School Leadership

The district has also contracted with a national consulting firm; National Institute for School Leadership (NISL). This organization provides support in the development of leaders in the area of curriculum and instruction, creating a living vision and mission statement and assists in the development of leadership skills aimed at improving student achievement. Intervention systems put in place to assist students and adults, data driven decision making and creating living mission and vision statements are a few of the topics discussed with these leaders.

These programs are designed to assist in developing and strengthening the building leader's ability to lead effectively.

Principal Institute

Approximately two weeks before the official meeting date, a group of principals are brought in from the various regions, to review the agenda and offer suggestions regarding the topics that principals need. The agendas are modified based off of the information received from this focus group.

Every first Wednesday of the month, principals are provided professional development from the Office of Curriculum and Instruction in conjunction with the Office of School Administration. Each meeting begins with a school performance and remarks made by the Superintendent of Schools. After a brief travel break, principals move into their morning session that provides extensive development in two of the district's major initiatives; Educator Effectiveness and Instructional Leadership through Common Core. These sessions are usually three hours in length and led by members of the Office of Organizational Development. The afternoon sessions focus on one of the following tenets from the district's Framework for Teaching, Leading and Learning:

- Effective and efficient operations

- Data-wise Decision making

- Research and Development

- Student Safety nets

- Aligned curriculum, instruction and Assessment Framework

The last session of the day culminates with principals attending a meeting with their Regional Superintendent to debrief regarding the instructional learning acquired that day and specific business related to the region. Information regarding the day-to-day operations of a building is

provided in a half-day session with the Regional Superintendent on another day. The meeting ends with an evaluation of the activities presented for the day.

School Networks

The school networks provide school leaders monthly opportunities to meet with principals who have "like" programming at their sites. The sessions provide a venue for principals to meet and discuss problems of practice and create solutions for these issues that can be used in the school setting. Guest speakers and experts in the area attend these meetings and provide useful information regarding best practices. Principals were able to select the network that best met their individual need. The School Networks offered at the Principal's Institute are:

- Language Immersion - Strong language immersion program that is central to the school's mission

- K-5 Schools - Serving students in grades Kindergarten through fifth

- K-8 Schools - Serving students in grades Kindergarten through eighth

- Arts – Strong arts or arts integration program that is central to the school's mission

- Montessori –Embrace the Montessori philosophy of teaching and learning

- Bilingual – Developmental Bilingual or Dual Language program focus

- High School – Serving students in grades nine through twelve

- STEM/STEAM – Science Technology Engineering and Math or Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math focus

- GE – Schools that are a part of the GE Foundation Initiative

- Advanced Academic Studies – Schools that have at least one of the following: International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, Gifted and Talented or Springboard

Leadership Cohort

Monthly sessions, selected by principals based on survey results, address each of the five key components of the Wisconsin Framework for Principal Leadership. The five components are: Human Resource Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Personal Behavior, Intentional and Collaborative School Culture and School Management. Principals engage in professional learning around the elements of the components they selected for support.

Leadership Development Courses

Voluntary workshops and courses that address other areas of leadership development such as building relationships and leading change are offered to school or district administrators by the Office of School Administration.

With the departure of veteran leadership over the course of two years, novice leaders were being placed in the lead administrative position of principal. Many good intended but less experienced individuals were leading building and lacked proper training in building relationships with staff, students and community. These new administrators were often one dimensional serving solely in the capacity as a school disciplinarian who had limited connection to observing teacher practices and instruction occurring in the classroom.

The district identified a need to ensure that these new administrators were instructional leaders that would be able to provide descriptive and timely feedback to the teaching core. The district recognized that in order to create the type of leaders needed for the 21st century schools; it must be willing to invest and provide professional development opportunities for all of its leaders. This investment must be extended to all members of the leadership team including and

that especially of the assistant principal. The district wants the assistant principal to be as administratively and instructionally savvy as the principal.

All of the support mentioned previously was given directly to the principal, not the assistant principal. The current state of professional development provided to the assistant principal in the district indicates this group of leaders is underserved regarding their professional needs. Drastic improvements need to be administered in order to ensure this group of leaders will be ready to assume the lead position of principal when the opportunity presents itself.

CHAPTER TWO

Assessing the Four Cs

Wagner (2006) provides "the 4Cs"; Context, Culture, Conditions, and Competencies as areas that lead to organizational renewal when implemented in a school building.

Context is described as the skills all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens. Context additionally addresses the particular aspirations, needs and concerns of families and community that a school or district must serve. The shared beliefs, values, assumptions, expectations and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership and quality of relations within and beyond the school is described as culture. Conditions are described as the external surrounding of time, space and resources on student learning. Competency is a representation of skills and knowledge that influence student learning. Skillful competent adults are the foundation of this work. Professional development that is focused, job-embedded, continuous, constructed and collaborative is a must in order to affect change.

These four elements are critical to making any changes occur in the school setting. In order for the change to occur, the leader must understand the problem and be knowledgeable about the current skill set of various stakeholders including teachers, students, administrators, and parents. The leader must create an environment conducive to learning that assists in providing the conditions that are desirable for student growth. Wagner (2006) states the people in the organization are the ones who are tasked with bringing forth the change needed in order to maximize the school's success. In addition, these individuals need to possess technical, social, knowledge and leadership skills necessary for institutional change.

Wagner's 4Cs framework will be used to explain the professional development of assistant principals for the district.

Assistant Principal Development As Is

Little thought and effort goes into the planning and delivery of the assistant principal meetings. Assistant principals receive a condensed version of the information shared with principals during their meetings.

On the second Wednesday of each month, two sessions are held for the assistant principals; morning and evening. Each session is four hours in length. Instead of a school performance or remarks made by the superintendent of schools, assistant principals are welcomed by a Regional Superintendent or Regional Director of School Support depending on availability. After a brief welcome, the two hour morning content session begins. At the conclusion of the first session, assistant principals move directly into their last session. Upon finishing, assistant principals fill out a survey regarding the sessions and are free to return to their respective school or travel home, depending on the session attended. Differentiation of

activities through content, product, process or knowledge base of the attendee does not occur. Regardless of entry, all members receive the information in the same manner, usually "sit and get." There is no face-to-face with the regional superintendent, no debriefing to see what extra learning needs to occur. At the conclusion of the session, assistant principals are given an opportunity to complete an evaluation survey.

Assistant principals in their first or second year of leadership also receive Alverno College mentors for coaching and mentoring purposes. The time allotment is shorter than the time given to the principal. Assistant principals only receive 50 hours of mentoring where principals receive 100. The scope of the work is the same; focusing on the six competency areas outlined by the district but a bulk of the work centers around instructional leadership, teacher evaluation and professional development.

Additionally, there is no consulting firm that works with assistant principals to help them acquire additional skills needed to be effective leaders. These leaders do not participate in the school networks and are not provided a choice for the leadership cohort.

Wagner (2006) provides "the four C's"; context, culture, conditions, and competencies as tenets all schools must address in order for their efforts to lead to organizational renewal. The As Is of the development of assistant principals is described below using this framework and is referenced in the attached figure 2.

- Context: For the 2014-2015 school year all Wisconsin administrators who evaluate classroom teachers in the K-12 setting, will need to be Teachscape certified. Currently 100% of RPS principals are certified. At the time of this study, this percentage drops to

70% when reviewing data for district assistant principals. Failure to obtain certification could result in the loss of employment.

- Culture: Assistant principals' focus group sessions do not occur to assess what additional learning and professional development is needed for their position. No debriefing meeting is held to assess what learning took place or the necessary next steps. Assistant principals are not provided with an opportunity to meet with the regional superintendent; the person who will ultimately provide an opportunity for promotion.

- Conditions: Assistant principals often deal with the discipline in their buildings. Far too often conducting classroom observations are held late in the school year. Assistant principals are not afforded the opportunity to participate in professional development sessions that are offered by outside consultants. This limits their ability to acquire new knowledge that can be used daily.

- Competencies: In many instances the assistant principal is not provided with the intensive training needed in order to carry out district initiatives or strengthen their effectiveness as a school leader.

The assistant principal meetings do not take into account the professional development needs of this group. Limited effort is placed in the planning and the meetings do not have the assistant principal voice regarding their professional development needs. Changes to the district's current practices need to be developed in order to make this a worthwhile learning opportunity for the learner as well as develop the type of leaders needed for the district in the future.

Assistant Principal Development As Is

Context
- Novice Leadership

Culture
- Meetings are ½ day and lack focus
- Professional development needs not a priority
- Formal interactions with Regional Superintendent is limited

Conditions
- Perceived as disciplinarians not instructional leaders
- External professional development opportunities are limited

Improve Professional Development Opportunities for Assistant Principals

Competencies
- Lack knowledge and training of district initiatives
- Lack Danielson Framework for Teaching knowledge

Figure 2. As Is. This figure illustrates the current state of professional development opportunities for assistant principals in RPS.

CHAPTER THREE

Personal Immunities To Change

The current building leadership structure commonly found in schools within the district includes a principal and a number of assistant principals assigned to the site based on enrollment numbers. The principal assumes the oversight of both instructional and operational aspects of school administration. While there is an expectation that assistant principals focus on both

aspects of school administration, the current reality demonstrates that assistant principals spend a high percentage of their time addressing operational matters that includes a major focus on the discipline of students.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) states there are three broad action areas that show considerable promise for helping principals meet new expectations: **clarify** the principal's role as an instructional leader by specifying the high impact practices for which principals will be accountable; **develop** principals' instructional leadership practices through job-embedded supports that build expertise; and **enable** principals to succeed as instructional leaders by providing sufficient time and strategic supports to perform the job well.

The district's current practice of providing professional development to assistant principals will not lead to building leaders that are instructionally sound. Assistant principals need the same type of development that is used for the principals. Serving as the second in command allows these individuals to rely on the expertise of the building principal to solve student and staff crises as well as student and parent conflicts. Assistant principals are not directly responsible for the academic outcomes of students in the same manner that principals are. The focus as a district should be ensuring a succession plan for the future leaders at the school level.

In order to have the type of administrators needed to lead buildings in today's schools, quality professional development that is aligned to the district's and school's Improvement Plan and initiatives must be a priority. Moving to a design that is more focused on Educator Effectiveness will increase the chances of having high quality instruction taking place in every classroom, every minute, every day for every child. The Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness

System is a performance-based evaluation that is designed to improve student learning by supporting the educator's practice.

Administrators that can only handle matters of discipline make themselves one dimensional. This type of administrator will be able to perform in challenging situations that require someone who can put systems and procedures in place to make the building warm and inviting. Research indicates that administrators must be able to continuously provide constructive feedback to the instructional staff regarding their practices in the classroom. Involvement in disciplining students for a full eight hours leaves the administrator with little to no time to focus on instruction.

It is for these reasons that the current class of new assistant principals will participate in professional development activities designed to create opportunities to observe and evaluate teacher practices in the classroom setting, network, discuss challenges of the position in a confidential setting with colleagues, read and discuss professional materials aimed at providing a different context for job satisfaction and performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

Participants for the change leadership aspect of the program will include assistant principals in their first or second year of leadership who participate in the New Assistant Principal Academy of RPS. Both male and female administrators will be asked to participate in this study.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative information will be used. The researcher will use questionnaires of building leaders. Quantitatively, survey information will be used to demonstrate effectiveness or pre and post attributes of the change leadership model.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this change leadership plan is to provide a forum for administrators at the assistant principal level, in their first or second year of leadership, to gain information and experience regarding effective leadership and its impact on instruction.

Research Questions: How effective is the current Assistant Principal Institute Professional Development session as related to being an instructional leader in the school setting?

    a. Does the current Assistant Principal Institute Professional Development session meet the leader's needs as related to being an instructional leader in their current school setting?

    b. What barriers impede the leader's ability to serve as an instructional leader in their current school setting?

    c. How is the information gained at the Assistant Principal Institute manifested in the current school setting?

Hypotheses: It is my belief that administrators will indicate that the forum provided, New Assistant Principal Academy, provides additional experience and structures that will increase their knowledgebase and confidence regarding classroom observations and instructional leadership.

Methodology: Qualitative Research – The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenological Approach - A narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning of several individuals, of their lived experience. This is the identification of a shared experience in an attempt to locate a universal nature of an experience that is shared among various individuals. There is an experience and how he/she experienced it. (Ballard and Bawalan, 2012)

Data collection: Surveys - The RPS administrators will be contacted via email in order for me to request completion of a survey. I will explain the purpose of the research study to the participants and share the letter of consent with them. Appendix A is the consent letter for participants. Each participant will then receive a copy of the signed consent letter. A follow-up interview will be arranged at a later time with the administrators as needed. This will allow me to address questions from the first interview that were not asked due to time constraints, provide participants an opportunity to elaborate more on questions that they provided a brief response to during the first interview, and/or to ask participants additional questions based on their responses from the initial survey. If needed, each interview will last for approximately 1 hour.

Appendix B is the administrator survey protocol that will be used. Each participant will be asked to answer a ten question survey that seeks information regarding their level of readiness to assess teacher instructional practices. Each survey will be administered

through and results will be collected using the online services of Survey Monkey. After

receiving the results from the survey, I will analyze and transcribe the results.

Interview Protocol- As follows, I describe the interview protocol and data sources for

the research study. The interview protocol outlines the protocol that I will use for

interviewing administrators for the research study. The data source describes the data

collection methods for organizing and reporting textual information from the participants

of the research study. An interview protocol will be incorporated within my research

study in order to use as a procedural guide while conducting an interview with

administrators.

Data Sources- Data will be collected from one source; the assistant principals that

complete the survey.

Sampling: Administrator Selection- The unit of analysis for the research study will be

administrators who are participants of the New Assistant Principal Academy. Since the

research study focuses on the actual experiences of administrators regarding instructional

leadership, students will not be part of this research study. The selection criteria

includes: an assistant principal in his/her first or second year, currently responsible for

evaluating teacher practices using the Educator Effective system, and working in a school

in the district. I will select the administrators who can best shed light on the phenomenon

under investigation. The participation number will be based on the willing number of

participants who currently meet the described criteria.

Procedures: Administrative Recruitment- Through the process of purposeful

sampling, administrators will be selected that are currently participating in the New

Assistant Principal Academy, will evaluate teachers using the Educator Effectiveness system and work in the selected school district.

Procedures for obtaining informed consent: Participants of the research study will be given a Consent Letter to sign before participating in the study. The Consent Letter will encompass the following components: 1.) a description of the research study; 2.) participants' level of involvement in the research; 3.) explanation of no risk to participants; 4.) participation is not mandatory; 5.) protection of confidentiality; 6.) rights to withdraw participation in the study at any time; 7.) completion of the Instructional Leadership Readiness survey; and 8.) contact information for the participants.

Study Timeline:

February 2015	March 2015
Create Survey **Email participants survey** **Gather results** **Interview participants (if needed)**	**Analyze data and write results**

Implications or benefits to RPS: Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to participants beyond that of everyday life. While participants are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, their taking part in this study may contribute to a better understanding of administrators' beliefs regarding their readiness to assess the teaching practices of their instructional practices.

Anticipated ages, gender, and number of participants:

Age	Gender	Number of participants
30-55	Female	7
30-55	Male	7

CHAPTER FIVE

Relevant Literature

Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to establish a context on the role and responsibilities of the assistant principal regarding day to day operations within a school building and as an instructional leader of staff. The Researcher will examine the design of professional development for adult learning and its impact on retention of knowledge that can be later used to improve teacher instructional practices.

The Assistant Principal

In school buildings across the country, the assistant principal position is used as a co-manager of the facility. The assistant principal serves a wide variety of functions for numerous people, as their responsibilities vary from building to building. The role they play in the function of the school setting is integral to the fluid operation of the school. Common assignments given to the assistant principal include discipline of students, transportation schedules, athletic events,

dances, before and after school clubs, field trips and assistance with the day to day operation of the school building.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2009) described the assistant principal as a:

- Contributor to Positive School Climate and Culture - Share leadership within school administrative teams, collaborating with others to translate the school vision and mission into initiatives and daily practice. Responsible for work with the community, foster trusting relations and resolve conflicts when they occur.

- Vanguard of School Safety and Security – Shoulder much of the responsibility for maintaining a safe, secure, and orderly school environment.

- School Operations Expert – Monitor and address the operation and management of the school facility, student and staff attendance, transportation, parking, scheduling, supervision of co-curricular events.

- Jacks-of-all-Trades – Share with others the accomplishment of all the essential tasks associated with the complexity of successfully operating a school.

- School Leaders of the Future – The primary source of candidates to fill the growing number of principal vacancies. The role provides the experience and training to build leadership capacity for effective service in the principalship.

- Frontline Instructional Leaders – Serve as coaches and mentors to teachers and students. Collaborate with teachers to help ensure the sharing and implementation of their best practices, data collection and analysis to inform decision-making, guide curriculum development, and align assessments with teaching and student needs.

Leadership Changes

From 2010-2012, Riverwoods Public Schools (RPS) lost 63 veteran principals out of 168 schools from its ranks due to retirements, relocations, or other work opportunities outside of the district. Due to the significant number of departures, the district conducted both local and nationwide searches to fill these vacant positions. Individuals, mostly assistant principals and teachers, who desired to become a building leader, received an opportunity to lead in buildings servicing elementary, middle or high school students. For many of the new hires, this would be the first time they would serve as the lead administrator or leader of a building.
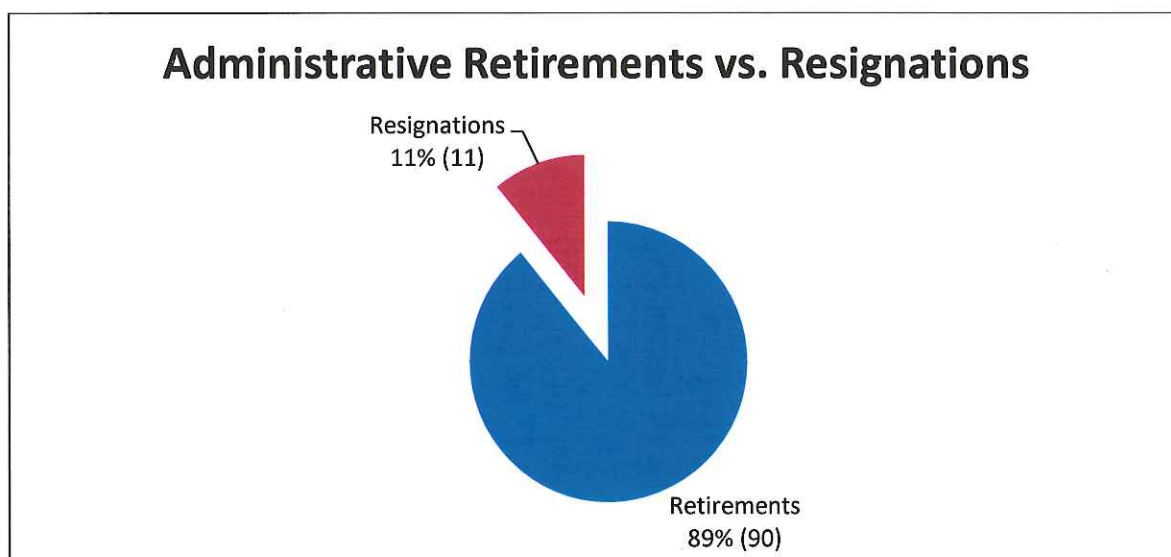
Figure 3. Administrative Retirements and Resignations. This figure illustrates the number of administrators who have retired or resigned from the district from 2010 to 2014.

This chart reflects administrative retirements and resignations of the veteran sixty-two leaders who departed the district over the span of two years. As a result, novice and less experienced administrators were placed in these vacant positions.

Researchers have called for a restructuring of the principalship to address the increased complexity, onerous time demands, and lack of qualified applicants for the position (Boris-Schacter & Langer, 2002; Eckman, 2006; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Kennedy,

2002; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Naso, 2005; Pierce & Fenwick, 2002). Pounder and Merrill

(2001) argue, "No one person should be expected to provide direct oversight for all school

dimensions and activities" (p. 19). They suggest that a way to minimize the unattractive aspects

of the principal's position is to unbundle and repackage the job responsibilities with an

administrative team that shares the leadership of the school.
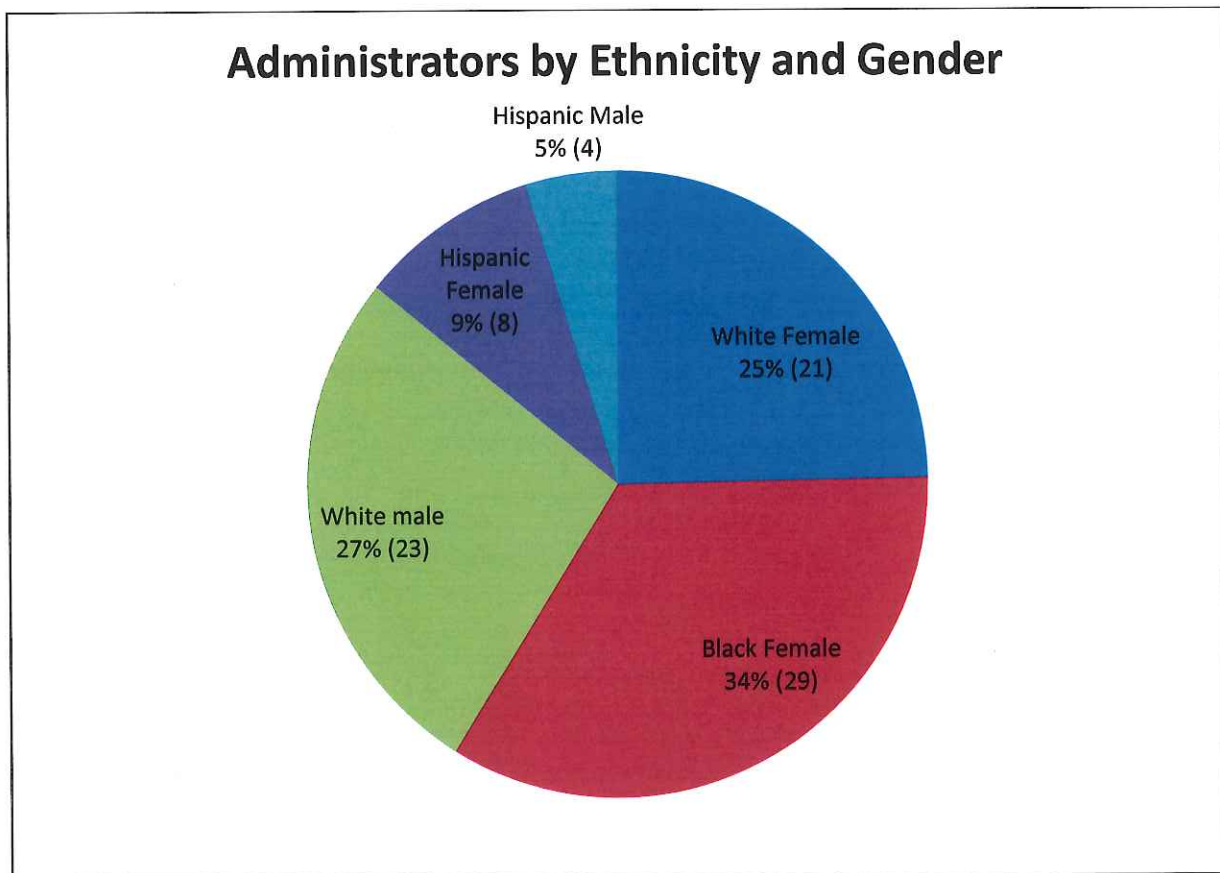

Figure 4. Administrators by Gender. This figure illustrates the breakdown of district administrators by ethnicity and gender.

This chart reflects administrators by gender of the veteran sixty-two leaders who departed the

district over the span of two years. As a result, novice and less experienced administrators were

placed in these vacant positions.

Tenure Length in Position

According to a 2012 Rand Corporation report, 20 percent of school administrators leave their districts within the first two years of being placed in an assignment. The School Leadership Network claims this number to be higher citing twenty five thousand or one fourth of the nation's principals leave their school each year and fifty percent quit during their third year in office. This mass exodus or turnover of school leaders is referred to as "churn." Churn can be described as the loss of experienced leaders each year which requires a school district to find replacements that are less effective, novice principals. Reasons cited for early departures include:

- Pressures of the job

- Isolation

- Little professional networking or development opportunities

- High accountability with limited authority to affect change

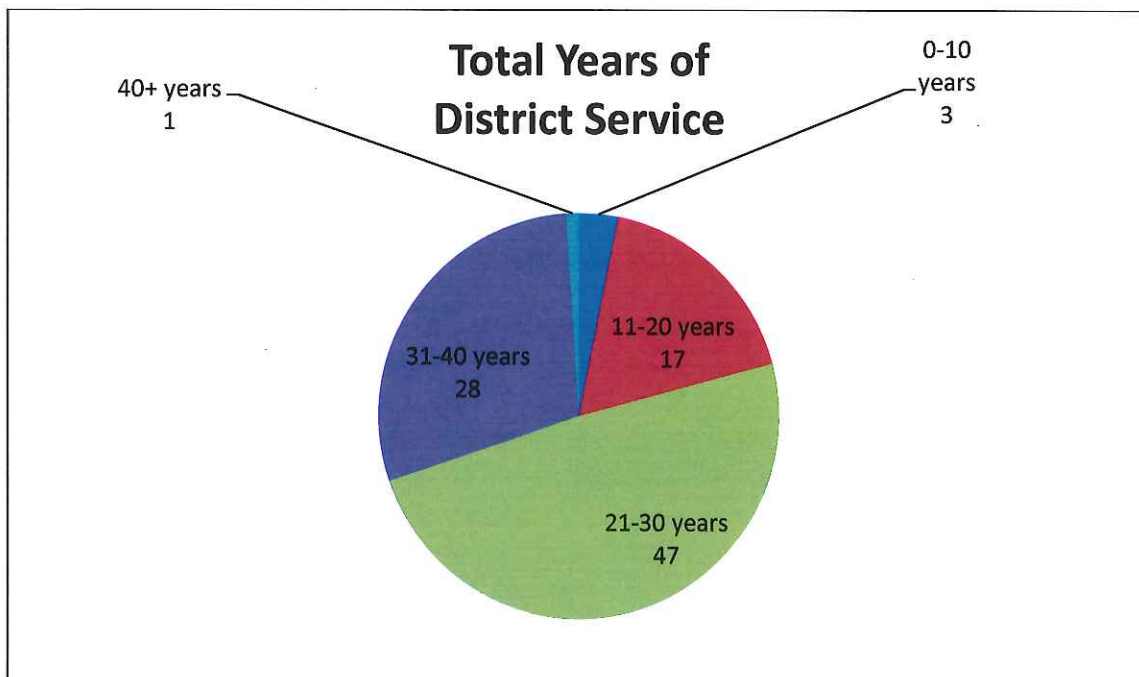- Limited support for job success (2012)

Total Years of District Service

- 40+ years: 1
- 0-10 years: 3
- 11-20 years: 17
- 21-30 years: 47
- 31-40 years: 28

This chart reflects district administrative years of service for the veteran sixty-two leaders who departed the district over the span of two years. As a result, novice and less experienced administrators were placed in these vacant positions.

Administrative Years of Service

40+ years
0

31-40 years
18

0-10 years
28

21-30 years
31

11-20 years
16

This chart reflects overall administrative years of service for the veteran sixty-two leaders who departed the district over the span of two years. As a result, novice and less experienced administrators were placed in these vacant positions.

Beteille, Kalogrides and Loeb (2011) and Miller (2009), stated principal turnover has a negative impact on schools. This was typically found with new principals who worked in the most challenging schools. New principals at challenging schools are more likely to have less experience and be less effective than a new principal at a less challenging school. When this occurs, the school, teachers, and students suffer and the results produced indicate pronounced

lags in academic achievement in both reading and mathematics, increases in classroom

disruptions and dysfunctions, lower graduation rates and increased cost by districts to recruit,

retain, and support new leaders.

Loeb, Kalogrides, Horng, (2010) agreed stating the most challenging students are more

likely to be led by less experienced principals than more economically advantaged schools.

Their research also looked at the impact stable leadership had on a school's overall

performance. According to their findings, lower performing economically disadvantaged

schools have the least stable leadership and are schools that are typically led by less

experienced, less qualified leaders.

Effective versus Ineffective Leadership

Replacing principals in failing schools can do damage to the academic outcomes of

students. In order to affect change, the replaced principal must be considered an effective leader.

An "effective" principal is described as a leader whose student population makes larger than

average gains, using value-added growth, from one academic year to the next, when compared to

students in schools with similar demographics and prior achievement (Beteille, Kalogrides &

Loeb, 2011).

Research by Beteille, Kalogrides and Loeb (2011), Clark, Matorell, Rockoff (2009), and

Loeb, Kalogrides, Horng (2010), indicate ineffective leaders stay shorter periods of time in all

types of schools but their tenure is especially shortened in those schools considered challenging.

If an ineffective leader transfers out of a challenging school to a school that is considered less

challenging, due to higher socio-economics, higher achieving students and fewer minorities and

special education students, the ineffective leader has the ability to hide their incompetence

because the second school is usually higher performing than the school of origin. Branch, Hasnusheck, and Rivkin (2013) reported a study in Texas found that twelve percent of ineffective leaders were shuffled among challenging schools each year.

The constant turnover of leaders has a negative impact on student achievement and to the climate of the school building. It can take up to three years for the next leader to make progress in a school that has experienced a principal vacancy the year prior.

A major reason cited by ineffective leaders regarding their departure from a challenging school was to be the leader of a school with higher achieving students, economically advantaged students and areas that may have reduced amounts of minority and special education students. Loeb, Kalogrides, Horng, (2010) see the ineffective leader using the challenging school experience as a "stepping stone" to something better.

The average length of a principal's tenure is three to four years for the average school (Seashore-Louis, 2010). In low performing schools, the average principal tenure is no more than 2.5 years. Research indicates one of the keys to improving a school's performance is to have an effective leader at the helm. Coellic, Green Forthcoming, Portin (2003) and Seashore-Louis (2010), state an effective leader can make significant improvements in their first year. One study found an average school led by a highly effective principal performed ten percentage points higher than a school that was led by an average principal (Waters, Marzano and McNulty 2003). Having an effective leader not only impacts student achievement but other aspects of the school such as:

- Student attendance – Researchers indicate student absences are lower in schools led by an effective principal.

- Increased graduation rates – The rate is nearly three percent higher in schools lead by an effective principal.

Ineffective principals leave administration at a higher rate than effective leaders if test scores drop in their first year as the leader. The negative impact of an ineffective leader can be felt in the teaching core. Many experienced teachers state the ineffective leader was the cause of them leaving their building. This makes turning around a school, especially a struggling school more difficult. Building rapport with families, students and community can also become strained under an ineffective leader's tenure. In schools that refer to having an effective leader at the helm, higher levels of staff cohesion and respect for the prior practices and culture of the school are reported.

Principals need to be able to build and sustain relationships with various stakeholders over time in order to build a strong, positive culture focused on learning. This researcher feels today's leader must possess character traits that make them endearing to the public. The traits the researcher finds most effective include intelligence, trustworthiness, responsibility and charisma. A leader must create an environment of credibility through their words and actions.

Reverse "Churn"

In order to improve the turnover rate of less experienced, novice leaders, The School Leadership Network provides recommendations to retain current leadership in school buildings:

- Ongoing Professional Development – Districts must invest in new policies, priorities, and programs that provide strong support for principals in fostering partnerships, leadership skills and team building

- Meaningful Networking Opportunities – Provide principals with learning opportunities, peer professional networks to improve retention, increase school improvement progress, and raise student achievement

- One-to-One Support – Mentoring opportunities designed to improve instructional skills and leadership abilities of novice principal

- Restructure Central Office Roles and Policies – Break down barriers that impede a principal's success and put in place structures that support, develop and sustain principals through professional development activities, the evaluation process, access to community resources and specific school improvement targets

- Autonomy - Increase compensation for leaders and give them the resources to effectively get the job done

- Distributed leadership – Allow principals to develop a team of teachers in the school that assume various responsibilities of leadership and work as whole unit

Roles of Leadership

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2005) state school leadership is only second to classroom instruction as having the greatest influence on student achievement, we recognize that school leaders play an important role in promoting high levels of academic success. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for leaders serve as a vehicle to maximize our use of human resources and promote effective and efficient operations that result in higher levels of student achievement.

Importance of Being an Instructional Leader

What is often neglected is the role that assistant principals play in the area of an instructional leader. Today's assistant principal must be savvy and well versed in this area. With many

schools across the nation underperforming, feedback provided to the classroom teacher regarding instructional practices is paramount. Accountability for student achievement is critical to school reform and school-based leadership is essential to achieving this goal.

The University Of Scranton School Of Education (2014) stated "assistant principals must often share the duties of evaluating and documenting staff performance with the principal. Annual evaluations of proficiency and goal accomplishment are common, with the assistant principal charting progress and offering feedback to staff members."

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) states there are three broad action areas that show considerable promise for helping principals meet new expectations: **clarify** the principal's role as an instructional leader by specifying the high impact practices for which principals will be accountable; **develop** principals' instructional leadership practices through job-embedded supports that build expertise; and **enable** principals to succeed as instructional leaders by providing sufficient time and strategic supports to perform the job well.

Use of the Effective Educator System

Teacher professional practices are evaluated using the 2013 Danielson Framework for Teaching in RPS. The evaluation of teacher practice accounts for 50% of the overall evaluation of a teacher. The remaining 50% of the evaluation is comprised of measures of student outcomes.

Teacher professional practice is evaluated according to four levels of performance: minimal, basic, proficient and distinguished. Teacher evaluation is supported using the Teachscape System. Teachscape is an online observation and evaluation management tool that is

used by the state. Teachscape is aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and is comprised of three different systems:

Learn - This system includes the professional learning system that features a professional development content video library and training modules. Teacher training modules on the Danielson Framework domains and components are located here.

Focus - Observation training and assessment system for teacher evaluators are located here.

Reflect – In this system, teacher classroom observations and the evaluation Management System are housed here.

Student outcomes make up 50% of the evaluation of teachers under the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness System. The remaining 50% of the evaluation is comprised of the evaluation of teacher practice. The Educator Effectiveness System takes multiple measures into account in order to improve the fairness and accuracy of evaluations.

In RPS, the evaluation of assistant principals uses an evaluation system developed by members of the Department of Administrative Accountability in conjunction with the principals, assistant principals, and district supervisors' union representative body called Administrator and Supervisor Council (ASC). The evaluation tool rated the effectiveness of assistant principals based off of six competencies shared previously for building principals (see page 12).

CHAPTER SIX

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Instructional Leadership Readiness Survey

A survey was sent to the fourteen New Assistant Principal Academy participants. Each was asked to complete an online survey regarding their readiness to assess the instructional practices of teachers they are currently responsible for evaluating in the current school year. Twelve members or 80% of the academy responded, one respondent or 7% of the survey participants was incomplete and two members or 13% of the respondents failed to respond to the survey by the desired date of completion.

Participants

The fourteen participants are members of the New Assistant Principal Academy. They serve as assistant principals across all grade bands in the district. Six members serve in K8 buildings. Two are in middle school and four are at the high school level. One member is in a 6-12 setting and one member serves in both a K5 and K8 building where she is part-time in each.

School demographics for these settings include:

- Eight schools are located on the north side of the city, five are on the south side and two are located on the east side.
- Enrollment numbers span from schools as low as 245 high school students to 1,650 high school students. Average size of K8 settings is 477 students, 603 students in middle school and 1,261 for high school. The 6-12 setting has 245 students and the K5 building has 567 students.

- Some of the schools attract students due to their programs of arts, bilingualism, charter, sciences or technology.

- There are fifteen different principals these members work with. Ten members work with female leaders and five work under the leadership of a male principal.

Questions on Survey

The questions on the survey were created by the researcher and asked participants to rate the impact, likelihood, and/or agreement certain criteria had on their ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers. The questions asked included the following:

1. Indicate the impact you feel each item below has had on your ability to be an instructional leader.
   - University Coursework
   - Professional Development provided by the district
   - Professional books, articles, magazines
   - Self-Motivation and Confidence
   - New Assistant Principal Academy
   - Work with building leader

2. How much time do you spend on the following? :
   - School Operational Duties
   - Email, Phone Calls
   - Student concerns/discipline
   - Instructional Observations
   - Parent, Constituent, Staff Concerns
   - Assignments given by the principal

3. Do you feel prepared to meet the demands required to assess the instructional practices of teachers?

4. I feel confident in my ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

5. I believe the professional development I am receiving from the district will allow me to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

6. I feel my years of experience are strong enough to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

7. How many teachers will you complete an evaluation cycle (pre, observation, post) on by the end of the month?

8. Are you male or female?

9. Years of experience as an administrator within Riverwoods Public Schools.

Data Results

Q1. Indicate the impact you feel each item below has had on your ability to be an instructional leader.

Table 1
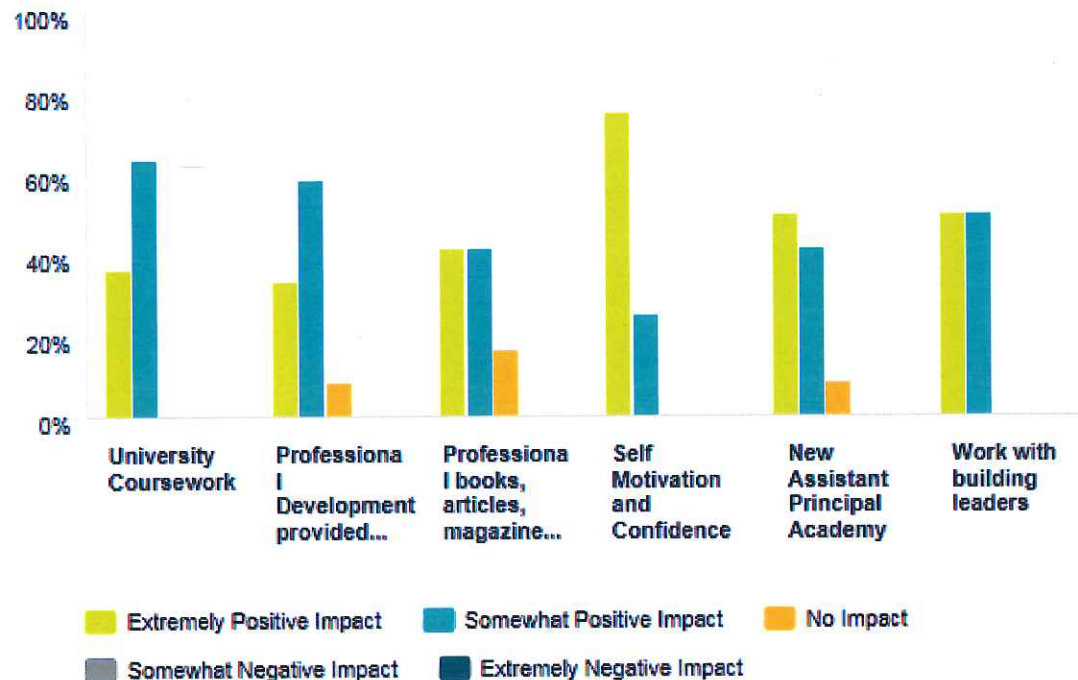
Eleven of the twelve respondents felt their university coursework had a positive impact on their ability to be an instructional leader. Only one respondent failed to answer the question.

Eleven of the twelve respondents felt the professional development offered by the district had a positive impact on their ability to be an instructional leader. One respondent stated the professional development had no impact.

Of the twelve respondents, ten or 83% stated professional books, articles and magazines had an extreme or somewhat positive impact on their ability to be an instructional leader in the district. Two respondents or 17% felt these items did not impact their ability.

Self-motivation and confidence was seen as providing a positive impact on all respondents. 75% stated this area had an extremely positive impact and 25% stated somewhat positive impact on their ability to be an instructional leader.

Only one respondent stated the New Assistant Principal Academy had no impact on their ability to be an instructional leader while eleven respondents answered favorably stating the academy had a positive impact.

All twelve respondents stated working with the building leader as a positive impact on their ability to be an instructional leader.

Q2. How much time do you spend on the following: School Operational Duties, Email, Phone Calls, Student Concerns/Discipline, Instructional Observations, Parent, Constituent, Staff Concerns, and Assignments given by the Principal?

Table 2
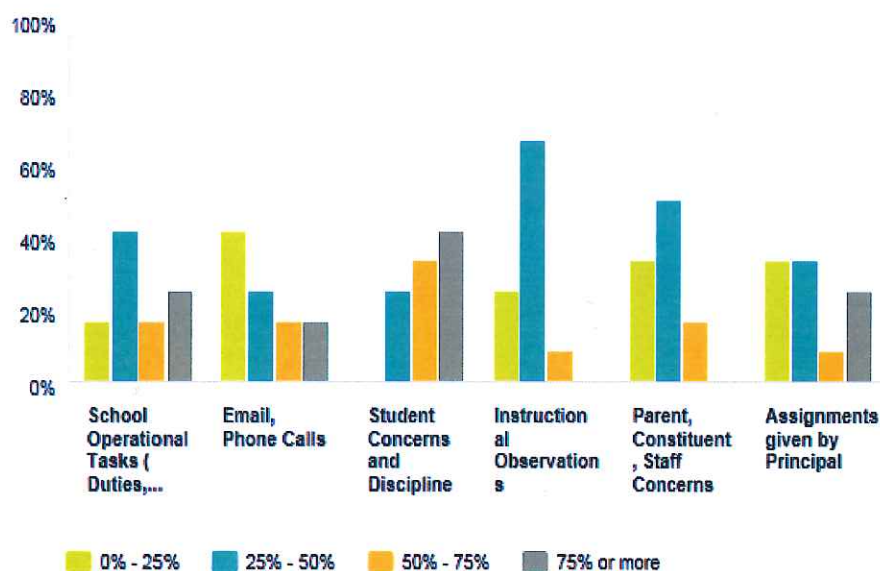
Five respondents stated 25% to 50% of their time was spent on school operational duties. Three respondents stated they spent 75% or more of their time on school operational duties. Two respondents answered zero to 25% and two respondents stated 50% to 75% of their time was spent on school operational duties.

Five respondents stated zero to 25% of their time was spent answering emails and phone calls. Four respondents were evenly divided across two categories; either 50% to 75% and 75% or more, as to the time spent answering emails and phone calls. Three respondents answered this form of communication accounted for 25% to 50% of their day.

Three respondents answered 25% to 50% of their time being occupied by student concerns and discipline. Five respondents stated 75% or more of their time was used to address student concerns and discipline. Four stated 50% to 75% of their time was devoted to student concerns and discipline.

Sixty-seven percent or eight respondents stated they spent 25% to 50% of their day conducting instructional observations. Three respondents answered zero to 25% of their day was dedicated to instructional observations and one respondent stated they were in classrooms 50% to 75% of their day.

Fifty percent or six respondents stated they spent 25% to 50% of their day responding to parent, constituent and staff concerns. Four respondents rated zero to 25% and two respondents rated 50% to 75% of their day was spent answering stakeholder concerns.

Lastly, four respondents stated zero to 25% of their day was used to complete assignments given by the principal. This number remains the same as four respondents answered 25% to 50% of the day was used to complete work given by the principal. 50% to 75% was answered by one respondent and three respondents answered the amount of time used on assignments given by the principal consumed 75% or more of their day.

Q3. Do you feel prepared to meet the demands required to assess the instructional practices of teachers?

Table 3
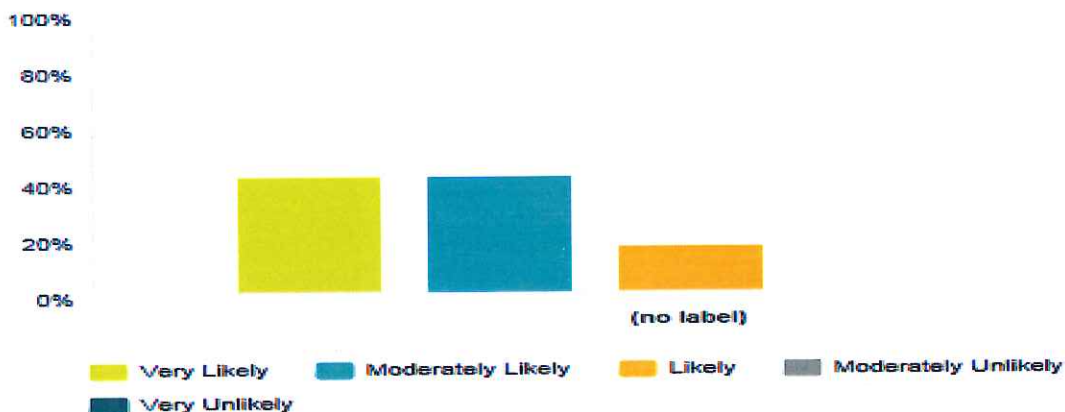
Overall all twelve respondents answered favorably stating they felt prepared to
meet the demands of assessing teacher practices. Five stated they were very likely, five
stated moderately likely and two stated likely.

Q4. I feel confident in my ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

Table 4
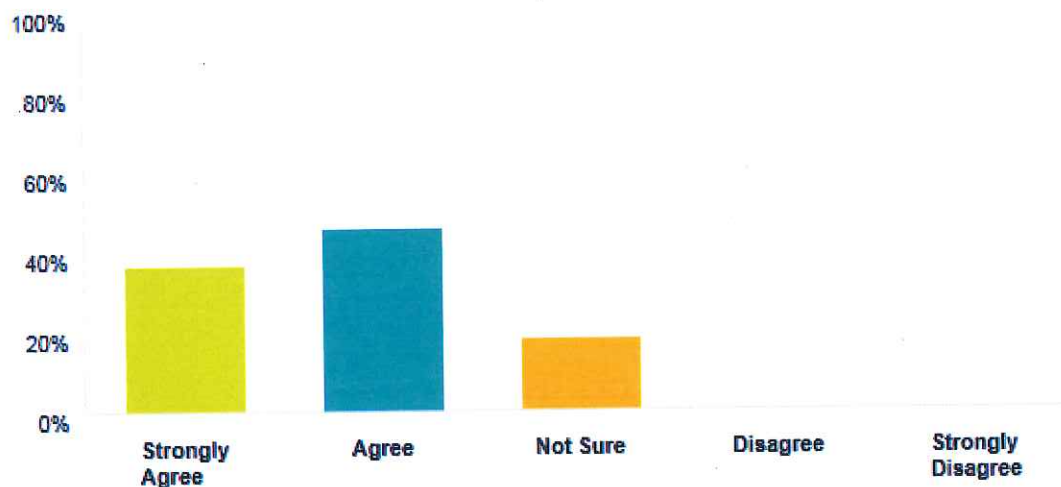
Four respondents each answered strongly agree, five respondents agree regarding feeling
confident to assess the instructional practices of teachers. Only two respondents stated they were
not sure regarding feeling confident in their ability to assess the instructional practices of
teachers. One respondent failed to answer this question.

Q5. I believe the professional development I am receiving from the district will allow me to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

Table 5
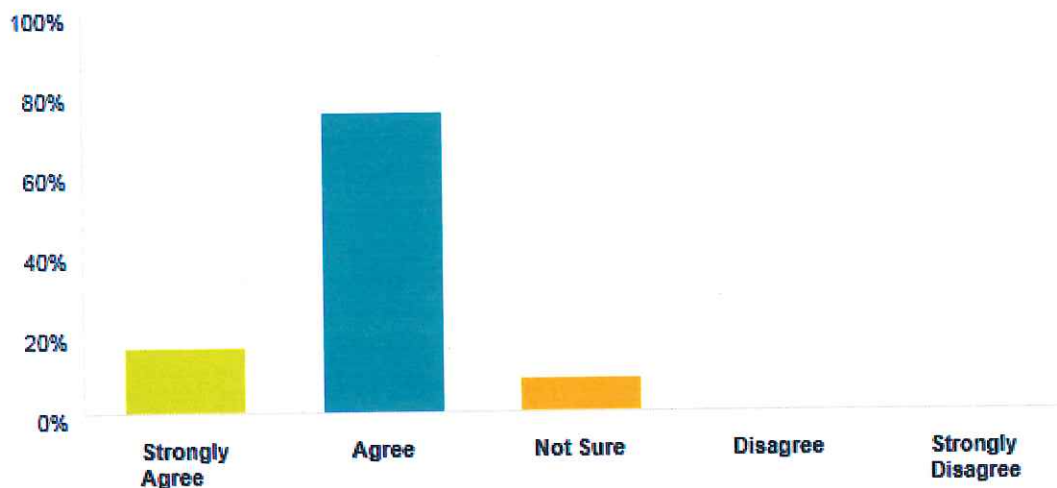
Most respondents, two strongly agree and nine agreed that the professional development offered by the district is assisting with their assessment of teacher's instructional practices. One respondent answered they were not sure regarding this question.

Q6. I feel my years of experience are strong enough to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

Table 6
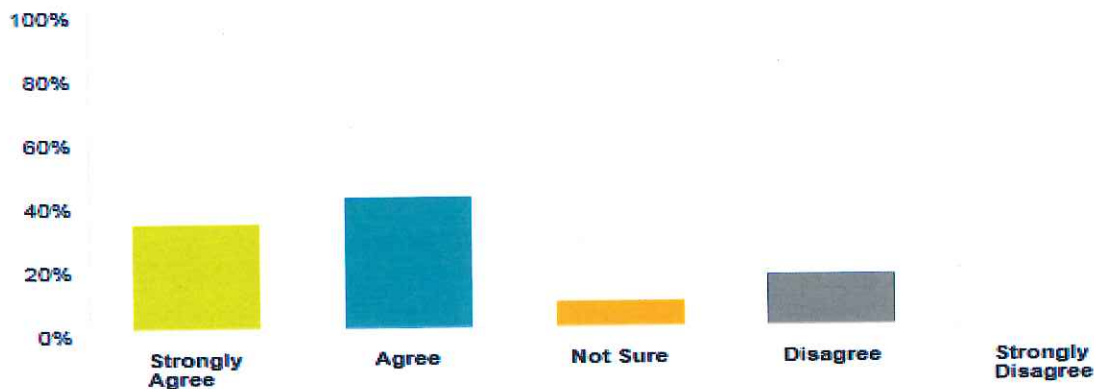
Overwhelmingly respondents answered favorably to this question. Four stated strongly

agree and five agreed that their years of experience were strong enough to assess the instructional practices of teachers. Two respondents disagreed and one respondent answered not sure to this question.

Q7. How many teachers will you complete an evaluation cycle (pre, observation, post conference) on by the end of the month?

Table 7
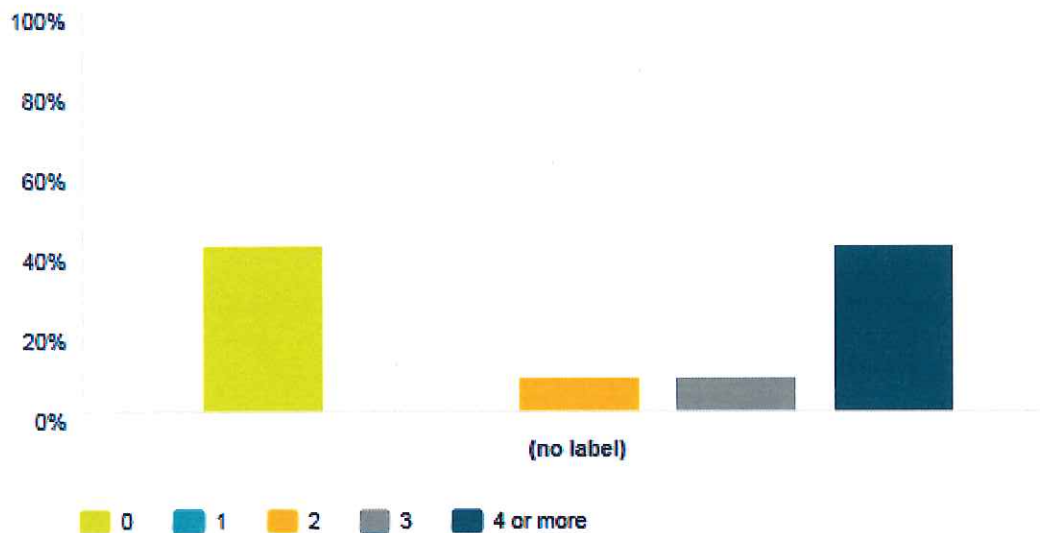
The largest response to this question was four or more teachers would receive a complete evaluation cycle by five respondents. Five respondents stated they would complete zero evaluation cycles on teachers assigned to them. One respondent answered they would complete two while the last respondent stated they would complete three.

Q8. Are you male or female?

Table 8
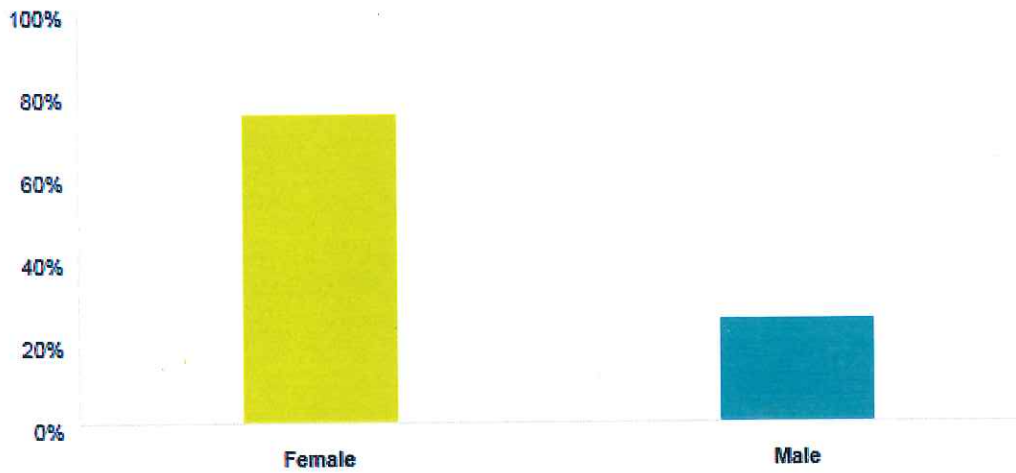
Seventy-five percent or nine of the respondents are female and 25% or three are males.

Q9. Number of years of experience as an administrator?

Table 9
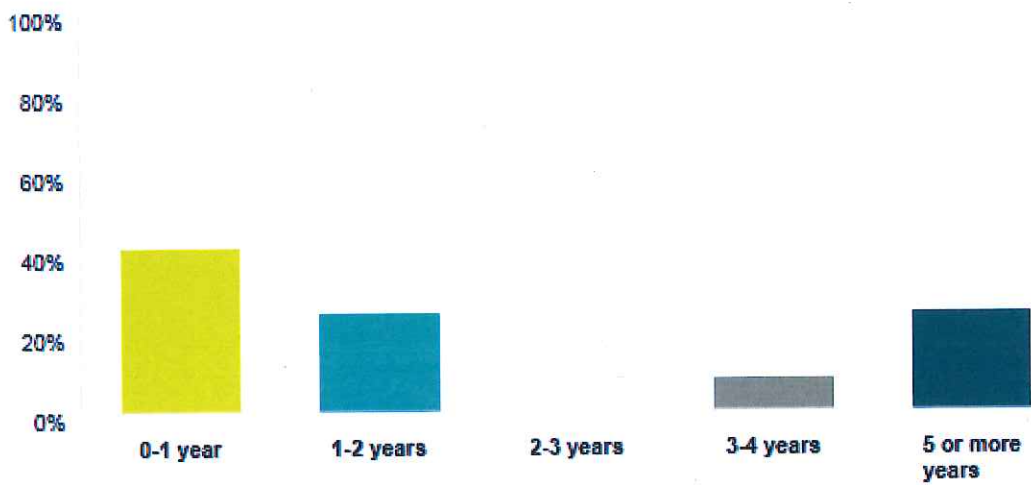
Five respondents stated this was their first year as an administrator, three responded with one to two years as well as another three that responded five or more years. One person answered they had been an administrator for three to four years.

Q10. What is your ethnicity?

Table 10
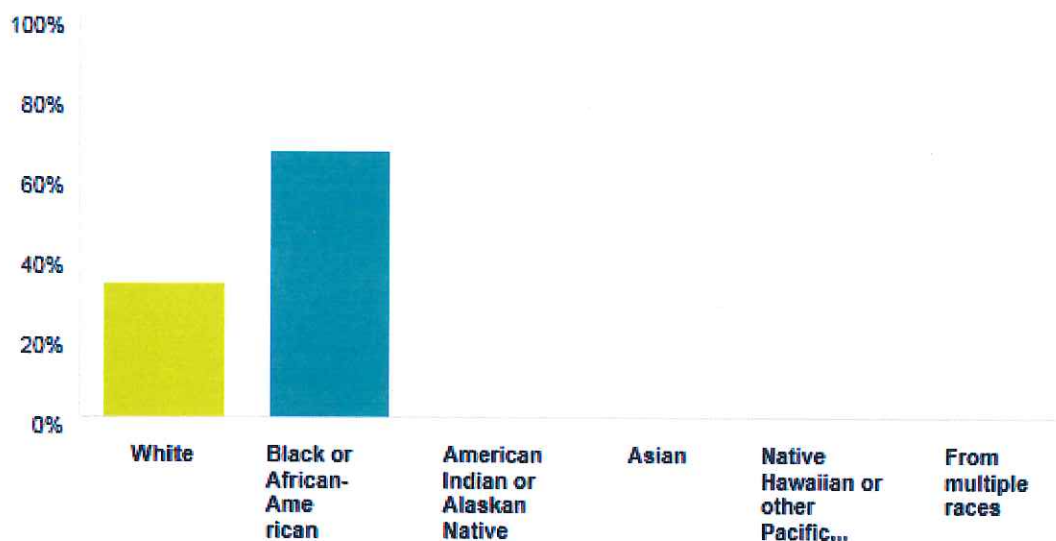
Of the twelve respondents, eight stated they are African American and four indicated they were white.

Data Analysis

Results of the survey administered indicated that respondents feel confident in their ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers. This is substantiated in the results provided. Respondents feel the professional opportunities such as district professional development, materials, university coursework, and the New Assistant Principal Academy have prepared them for this work.

Members of the New Assistant Principal Academy responded that they were confident as well as self-motivated in their ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers. This is evidenced by 81% of responded providing this answer as seen in Table 1. The respondents may be former teachers that were viewed to be high achievers and they were recognized for their work in the classroom early in their career. Their advice may have been sought out by fellow and former staff members when dealing with matters associated with curriculum, students, and other building concerns. As a result, a level of confidence was built and these leaders see themselves as possessing a knowledgebase that is different from other teachers in the field.

Fifty-six percent of respondents answered that the New Assistant Principal Academy and the work done with building leaders has assisted them in their ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers. It is the opinion that respondents rated these items high due to a level of respect for the building principal they work with each day. The building principal may also be responsible for their promotion to the assistant principal ranks and there may be feelings of admiration and loyalty to their immediate supervisor. As for the facilitators of the New Assistant Principal Academy, these individuals currently work at the district office which may in and of itself lend to a level of expertise the respondents recognize they do not currently possess. The respondents may also recognize the facilitators have worked as building administrators in the past and are currently serving as the supervisors to building practitioners.

Forty-five percent of respondents indicated student concerns/discipline consumed 75% or more of their day when asked what percentage of time was devoted to a particular item. This may be the result of the respondents working in buildings that do not have school wide procedures in place to address student misbehaviors or an inconsistent response to discipline concerns. This response rate may be the direct result of classroom teachers using the

administrator as their own personal discipline plan; never redirecting or becoming easily frustrated when students fail to follow directives given. The management of student behavior may result in the administrator being the first point of contact with parents instead of the classroom teacher.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents stated instructional observations could be attributed to 50% of their day. It is the opinion that these responders work in buildings where poor school climate and student discipline are not an issue. This response rate may be the result of responders conducting mini-observations of classroom instruction which are fifteen minutes in length. Due to the amount of time associated with the mini observations, the respondents may be able to conduct multiple classroom visits in an eight hour period.

Emails, phone calls and responding to student, parent and staff concerns attributed to 36% of respondents answering that these activities consumed less than 25% of their day. It appears the responsibility of these activities may rest with the building principal. It is also the opinion of this researcher that these activities may go unanswered by assistant principals because they spend much of their day addressing student concerns and discipline.

One hundred percent of the respondents felt prepared to meet the demands required to assess the instructional practices of teachers. This data shows a correlation to how respondents answered question one regarding the impact they felt university coursework, professional reading materials, professional development offered by the district, and their own self-motivation and confidence influence their readiness. Factors contributing to a favorable response in meeting the demands may also be related to the number of teachers assigned to the administrator. The

workload associated with the evaluation of teachers may be shared with the principal or other administrators in the building.

Regarding their confidence in the ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers, 70% responded affirmatively. This data shows a correlation to how respondents feel a loyalty and admiration about the building principal who may be responsible for their promotion to the assistant principal ranks. University coursework, professional reading materials, professional development offered by the district, and their own self-motivation and confidence were items that the respondents stated influenced their readiness to assess teacher practice. Factors contributing to a favorable response in meeting the demands may also be related to the number of teachers assigned to the administrator. The workload associated with the evaluation of teachers may be shared with the principal or other administrators in the building.

Ninety percent of respondents answered the professional development provided by the district has assisted in their ability to assess teacher practice. District professional development has been tailored to assist leaders in meeting the demands associated with the teacher evaluation system. Leaders are provided opportunities to observe teacher practice using Teachscape videos, problem solving activities with colleagues, and bringing in work samples to discuss with others. Frequent opportunities exist where leaders are able to attend work sessions that are facilitated by a certified Teachscape instructor.

When asked if their years of experience as an administrator were strong enough to assess the instructional practices of teachers, 80% agreed favorably. This can be attributed to the positive influence of self-motivation and confidence expressed by the respondents. If these

administrators were promoted early in their career, they may feel they have acquired a certain knowledgebase that separates them from others.

Successfully completing an evaluation cycle of a pre-observation, observation and post-observation on four or more teachers was the response of 45% of those who answered the question. This could be the result of administrators who work in buildings with little to no climate issues that affords them the time to complete this large amount of evaluations. Principal expectations regarding the number of observations completed, the individuals' own motivation or level of organization to task could be contributing factors to completing four or more evaluations in a month's time.

Seventy-four percent of the respondents have served two or less years as an administrator in the district. 80% of the respondents are female and 64% of them are African American. The data shows this new cohort of leaders is a group of confident, self-motivated females; mostly African American.

The responses to this survey were dominated by females. It is the feeling of this researcher that job security played a part in the response rate for this survey. It is also the opinion of this researcher that confidence is not a trait usually associated with newly hired administrators. Respondents may not have felt comfortable identifying true areas of concern, weakness or need as the researcher is a potential direct supervisor and evaluator of their work. It is hoped that this group of new leaders are courageous enough to have the hard conversations with instructional staff regarding their teaching practices. If they are, they should be able to reverse the trend of achievement gaps that currently exist between children of color and their white classmates.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Vision of Success - Assistant Principal Development To Be

Using the same concept of Wagner's 4Cs, the researcher will explain the vision for what assistant principal development should evolve to ensure quality professional development is provided. This is referenced in the attached figure 8.

- Context: Assistant principals would receive additional professional development in order to provide leadership support in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). Here administrators would be provided with opportunities to learn, discuss and review information relative to instructional practices as well as gain Teachscape certification, which is needed in order to conduct teacher evaluations. This support would be provided directly after assistant principal meetings, through facilitated Saturday sessions with expert coaches, and through opportunities to attend sessions held on non-student contact days. The knowledge acquired would be directly reflected in their practice when conducting teacher observations.

- Culture: Assistant principals would participate in planning sessions aimed at improving delivery of professional development sessions. Suggestions for topic of choice and interest would be gathered and used for future planning.

- Conditions: Professional development sessions are facilitated by content or area experts and include interactive or hands-on learning activities. Feedback from evaluations would be used to determine next steps. Opportunities would be provided for the collective group to discuss perceptions, realities, and challenges of their newly acquired role in a

professional learning community. Assistant principals would conduct observations using the Educator Effectiveness tool that is the Framework for Teaching the Danielson model.

- Competencies: Due to newly acquired knowledge, assistant principals are able to facilitate learning at the school level. The assistant principal completes the evaluation cycle of observations, provides timely, descriptive feedback that informs and improves teacher instructional practices; ultimately improving the academic performance of students.

A cohesive plan that includes planning and evaluation of the professional development sessions for assistant principals will aid in guiding their practice as instructional leaders in their buildings and for the district.

As part of this plan, assistant principals would assist in the planning of their sessions. Content experts would present their session information to a group of assistant principals who will serve as the focus group for these meetings. After the content experts present, the assistant principals in turn would provide feedback regarding the information presented. Assistant principals would also be able to provide information regarding the particular needs of their colleagues.

As a result of their input, sessions for the assistant principal would create opportunities for optimal learning experiences for instructional leadership that address the needs of novice and veteran members of this group. Opportunities for learning that move from theory to actual practice would take place at these sessions. Leaders would be provided with opportunities to examine teaching videos, script the segments and discuss instructional practices from the

teaching videos with other leaders. The discussions amongst leaders would prove to be in line with professional development opportunities as illustrated in figure 6.

Assistant Principal Development To Be

Context
- Highly skilled and knowledgeable professional

Culture
- Sessions are directly linked to Educator Effectiveness and district initiatives
- Participation in focus group sessions designed to assist in professional growth
- Face to face time with Regional Superintendent

Conditions
- Perceived as Instructional leader
- Mentoring and External Coaching to assist in development

Improve Professional Development Opportunities for Assistant Principals

Competencies
- Understands and can articulate district initiatives
- Understands Framework for Teaching, Leading and Learning
- Use surveys to determine effectiveness of professional development

Figure 8. To Be. This figure illustrates the preferred model of professional development for assistant principals in RPS.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Strategies and Action for Change

Most school leaders leave their positions or the profession within the first three years in their role. There is a high need for specialized support for school leaders that are newly appointed to their leadership position. In order to address this challenge, this researcher created a professional learning community and system of support for assistant principals in the first year of their school leadership position.

New Assistant Principal Academy Sessions

This professional learning community was named the New Assistant Principal Academy (NAPA). This community would provide newly appointed leaders opportunities for leadership development and operational support that went from the theoretical to practice. This community would serve as a safe haven where all thoughts and concerns could be shared without fear of retaliation. Each session would take place monthly.

Beginning in October, the researcher held the first session with newly appointed assistant principals at a school site. The session was the first time all 14 new hires would meet regarding the New Assistant Principal Academy. Introductions were done and NAPA guidelines were shared. During this session, leaders were provided with an article entitled "Leadership Is." This short read provided a background for what leaders are, say and do. After reading, each participant was given a picture from a magazine of various scenes; a man sitting in a library with a book, a woman talking to a group of individuals, a group of people looking at a computer. From each photo, the participant was asked how the picture related to leadership; using the article as a frame of reference. The purpose of the activity was to show that leadership has many aspects and reflects different actions or reactions based upon the situation or information provided as well as the individual responding to the situation. It was shared that activities like this would be at the foundation of the work in the sessions.

Participants were asked to define instructional leadership. The purpose of the activity was for the facilitators to gain an understanding of the participant's initial thoughts. It was

shared that sessions would provide participants with researched best practices regarding the topic as well as district expectations involving instructional leadership.

The last segment of the session asked participants to respond to "I wish I had known. . ." This allowed participants to share their thoughts regarding their newly acquired position. Participants also filled out a survey asking what they wanted to learn more about and what information they felt they needed in order to be successful. Participants indicated they wanted opportunities to discuss issues with their colleagues around day to day operation issues they face. Information regarding how to deal with difficult parents, staff and students was given as topics they would need assistance with. Strategies that proved successful for dealing with bus problems, hallway and cafeteria procedures, and students who refuse to stay in class were also mentioned.

Each session with participants opened with an article that would allow each to reflect on their current situation with an opportunity to apply the information from the article into their own practice. Leadership articles that have been shared with participants include: *"What Reflects a Great School," "Getting to Yes: Don't Bargain Over Positions,"* and *"How Leadership Influences Student Learning."* The articles were selected at times based off of conversations held with the participants as well as providing them with material that could influence their practice in a positive manner.

Following article discussions, participants conducted a learning walk in the building where the meeting was held, using the district instructional walk-through tool as a tool to script what they saw in the classroom. The walks were non-evaluative and merely provided participants with the opportunity to discuss what they saw occur. Debriefing the walks included

participants being able to share their information and state what feedback they would provide to the teacher as a result.

Participants were provided the City, Elmore, Fiarman and Teitel's *Instructional Rounds in Education* (2009) book which served as the foundation for all discussions relative to instructional practices. At the end of each session, participants were told what chapter to read next as this would provide the context for the next month's instructional practice discussion. Participants often referred to the reading when providing information regarding the feedback they would give to the classroom teacher.

Each session offered an opening and a closing statement. Opening statements asked about how the participants were handling the position, share concerns with fellow colleagues and ask questions regarding how they handled a situation at their school. It was also a time that allowed participants to ask questions regarding district initiatives, mandates and rumors. The closing statement allowed participants to reflect on the learning that took place and offer encouragement to their colleagues regarding the position.

All sessions were designed with the participants in mind. It allowed for them to participate in a professional learning community that was supportive, collaborative and reflective in nature. Through participant discussions, the facilitators were able to include best practices, share information from their own practice and modify future sessions as a result of the information shared. Survey results confirm that eleven out of the twelve participants felt the information provided in the New Assistant Principal Academy had an impact on their ability to be instructional leaders.

A Redesign of the current leadership structure and infrastructure

In knowing that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction as having the greatest influence on student achievement, it is apparent that school leaders play an important role in promoting high levels of academic success. The role of assistant principals as instructional leaders is pivotal to the academic success of all students. However, the leadership and infrastructure model currently being used in most schools within the district, does not lend itself to supporting the important work of instructional leadership. A three-year plan to redesign the leadership model and the infrastructure of schools should be addressed to ensure optimal learning experiences for all children.

The leadership and infrastructure model currently used in schools is a building principal and one or more assistant principals who are responsible for the day to day operations of the building. The principal assumes the oversight of both instructional and operational aspects of school administration. While there is an expectation that assistant principals focus on both aspects of school administration, the current reality demonstrates that assistant principals spend a high percentage of their time addressing operational matters. The current model has proven difficult for building leadership to have an intensive focus on teaching and learning. A redesign of this configuration for schools will provide opportunities to build additional academic, climatic and district safety nets in order to ensure optimal learning experiences for all students.

A review of the current leadership model should include information regarding the Co-Principal model used in various districts around the country. The Co-Principal Model (Eckman, 2006) includes two principals that serve simultaneously, sharing the position and work with equal authority, yet distinctly different responsibilities. The Co-Principal Leadership Model

lends itself to providing each principal the opportunity to specialize in a few administrative areas rather than all administrative areas related to the principalship. The dedicated focus on specialized areas promotes the opportunity for effective and efficient operations, thus providing an environment where students and staff can experience support and accountability in an effort to improve instructional delivery, academic achievement and college and career ready students. The model would allow each principal to specialize in less administrative areas than what the current model demands. This specialization will afford each administrator to provide greater depth to their practice.

The responsibilities of each administrator would be divided between the Principal of Administration and the Principal of Instruction. The principal of administration would be responsible for the general operation of the building that includes budgets, payroll, facilities, food service, transportation, enrollment, parent and community concerns and all aspects of student life including, but not limited to, athletics, clubs, school events, and discipline. The principal of instruction would serve as the instructional leader and would be responsible for areas such as curriculum design, data analysis, student scheduling, professional development, and evaluation and supervision. The division of responsibilities would provide each administrator the opportunity to work with greater depth rather than breadth. Greater depth would also provide each administrator more time on tasks relative to their specific roles and responsibilities.

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities will serve as a vehicle to maximize the use of human resources and promote effective and efficient operations that result in higher levels of student achievement.

Ultimately, the desired outcome is that these components will lead to focused organizational leadership, optimal opportunities for academic achievement, greater alignment of district

resources, and provide structures that allow students to graduate from high school in four years, career and college ready.

The success or failure of a school is based on the quality of the leader put in place at the building level. Preparing all stakeholders for the next steps of ensuring optimal learning experiences for all students is critical and is a major responsibility of the building leader. A major milestone for completion of this task will be communicating with key stakeholders about new opportunities and professional development needed to move forward with implementation. When in place, evidence of increased learning opportunities and successful implementation will include shared responsibility and ownership among school leaders, increased collaboration, communication, capacity and accountability among administrative, instructional and non-instructional staff members.

The collaboration and collegiality amongst the learning community will provide supports that will:

- Be in the best interest of all children and their families

- Provide effective school support in the areas of academics and climate

- Align district resources for stronger programming to improve student achievement

- Provide flexibility and creative options for planning, preparation and professional development for principals, teachers and staff

- Offer greater opportunities to share human resources amongst schools

- Support clustering of professional development days by content area to allow for greater collaboration among schools

When in place, evidence of successful implementation will include improved academic and operational environments, increased student attendance and reduced suspension rates, and focused professional development at the high school level.

The Future New Assistant Principal Academy Sessions (NAPA)

Leaders often use informal networks to provide support to one another. Recognizing that power networking helps leaders, NAPA will continue to create this avenue within its sessions. Reviews of professional articles, books, and other materials will be included to provide participants with an opportunity to read about best practices across the nation and world. Providing time that is dedicated to instructional walk-throughs, debriefing and providing feedback is instrumental in newly appointed leaders becoming proficient in their ability to effectively assess the instructional practices of teachers on a daily basis.

Participants in NAPA should remain for two years. Year two participants would take a deeper dive into subjects that deal with providing feedback to difficult staff, students and parents. Reviewing data to make informed decisions regarding student interventions would be explored as well as budgetary implications on school staffing. Activities and topics covered in year two would provide insight to assistant principals regarding the principalship.

In order for school leaders to be successful, districts must invest in professional development that is aimed at providing instructional leadership support. This professional development should provide leaders with opportunities to network and engage in dialogue with

their colleagues that provides examples of best practice in instruction. During these sessions,

leaders should be able to have "hands-on" experience in conducting observations of teacher

practice and in providing feedback that shares recommendations as well as commendations. This

work will assist in providing the type of experiences that create trusting, collaborative

relationships for both administration and staff, which will assist in creating environments

conducive to learning for all students.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A

NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Assistant Principal Development. **Dissertation Chair:** Dr. Karen Tardrew (phone: 608-332-9697) (email: ktardrew@nl.edu)

Student Researcher: Katrice M. Cotton (phone: 414-587-1161) (email: ivyleaf005@gmail.com)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research study is to provide a forum for participants that are currently in their first or second year of leadership, to share their belief system and practices, to gain information and experience regarding effective leadership and its impact on instruction. You have been asked to participate in my research study because you are a participant in the New Assistant Principal Academy and will evaluate teachers using the Educator Effective system. This study will include other participants with these same selection criteria and will take place Mid-February 2015 thru Mid- March 2015.

I will send a survey to you via email to share the purpose of my research and to solicit your participation. A letter of consent will be provided to individuals that agree to participate in the research study. The survey is ten questions in length and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. If necessary, I would also like to schedule a brief follow-up interview. The topics in the interview include sharing the knowledge and experience you have gained as a result of participation in the New Assistant Principal Academy.

Your responses will be captured via the on-line survey system. The results will be analyzed and transcribed for data purposes. For confidentiality purposes, I will be the only person who will have access to the survey results.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

Your involvement for this research study will consist of the completion of an on-line survey. An interview session will be scheduled if needed. You will need to provide a date and time for the interview that best fits your schedule.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to a better understanding of administrative beliefs and practices of those participants in the New Assistant Principal Academy who will evaluate teachers using the Educator Effectiveness system.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

There is no specific benefit to you. Your participation in this study will add to the limited body of research that exists on participants in the New Assistant Principal Academy who will evaluate teachers using the Educator Effectiveness system.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your identity will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be attached to the data. Only the researcher will have access to all transcripts and taped recordings. The researcher will store the data in a secure home location and the data will not include personally identifying information.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

In the event you have questions or require additional information you may contact the researcher: Katrice M. Cotton, ivyleaf005@gmail.com , National Louis University, 12000 W. Park Place, Milwaukee, WI 53224.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Karen Tardrew, ktardrew @nl.edu (608) 449-5386, the Chair of NLU's Doctoral Department, Dr. Vicki Gunther, Vicki.Gunther@nl.edu, 224-233-2123 and Institutional Research Review Board Chair, Generosa Lopez-Molina, glopezmolina@nl.edu , 312-261-3149, 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study, it will have no effect on any services you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Researcher (please print):_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Instructional Leadership Readiness Survey

1. Indicate the impact you feel each item below has had on your ability to be an instructional leader.

   - University Coursework

   - Professional Development provided by the district

   - Professional books, articles, magazines

   - Self-Motivation and Confidence

   - New Assistant Principal Academy

   - Work with building leader

2. How much time do you spend on the following:

   - School Operational Duties

   - Email, Phone Calls

   - Student concerns/discipline

   - Instructional Observations

   - Parent, Constituent, Staff Concerns

   - Assignments given by the principal

3. Do you feel prepared to meet the demands required to assess the instructional practices of teachers?

4. I feel confident in my ability to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

5. I believe the professional development I am receiving from the district will allow me to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

6. I feel my years of experience are strong enough to assess the instructional practices of teachers.

7. How many teachers will you complete an evaluation cycle (pre, observation, post) on by the end of the month?

8. Are you male or female?

9. Years of experience as an administrator

10. Ethnicity