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# The experience of individuals who transitioned from teacher to assistant-principal

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The Experience of Individuals Who Transitioned from Teacher to Assistant-principal

by

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

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Ypsilanti, Michigan

## **Dedication**

To my family, for your love, patience, understanding and encouragement. Special thanks to Marsha Hoffert for believing in me and supporting opportunities for me to better myself. And to Myles and Ronna Hoffert for your support.

## **Acknowledgments**

With sincere appreciation and deepest gratitude to my doctoral dissertation committee chair, Dr. Ronald Williamson, for his support and mentorship through my research; committee members, Dr. Ella Burton, Dr. Nelson Maylone, and Dr. Jaclyn Tracy, for their direction and support; Dr. Robert Martin for his unwavering belief in me and for constantly pushing me toward the finish line; Robert Baker for running the race with me; Ann Bartus for her persistent support in writing and discussing of this research; Jen McQuillan for a push in the right direction; and my close friends for their continuous concern and interest in my success. A heartfelt thank you to the participants for trusting me with your intimate stories and personal experiences. I offer special thanks to my invaluable support team, led by Linda Kay, for helping me find progress, strength, and success through balance in life and the belief in myself.

## **Abstract**

The transition from teacher to assistant-principal is complex. The purpose of this study was to better understand the phenomenon of transition to leadership roles in high schools by investigating the experiences of four teachers who moved from teacher to assistant-principal positions in suburban school-districts in the State of Michigan.

This multiple case-study comprises an in-depth examination of four teachers within their first four years as an assistant-principal. Interviews also included one central-office cabinet member from three of the four districts and one teacher in each of the assistant-principals' schools.

Interviews were guided by research questions regarding motivation for successful teacher leaders to move into administrative roles, reflection upon experiences in the transition period, professional preparation for the duties of administration, support offered by the district during their transition into administration, and dilemmas and tensions encountered during the transition period. Data were analyzed to identify patterns that emerged from current social-emotional experiences of teachers transitioning to administration.

The four assistant-principals shared valuable, albeit tumultuous, experiences that encompassed their challenges and ultimately their successes as they transitioned into their new roles. Together with insights about the transition from teacher to administrator by central-office administration and teachers who observed the new administrators, four overarching categories paramount to the transition of teacher to administrator emerged: 1) impetus and origins of the transition into administration; 2) realities and challenges of the transition; 3) tension, pressure, and stressors; and 4) differentials in administrative training and mentorship.

The results of this study provided insight into the phenomenon of the transition from teacher to assistant-principal. Participants consistently affirmed two concepts about the assistant-principal role. First, self-knowledge is critical—strengths, weaknesses and how emotions and stress are handled—and second, control of emotions and managed responses are essential to control the situations on the job. Findings also suggested areas for improvement in each of the identified categories, especially focused on training and mentoring prior to and during the transition period.

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## **Chapter One—Introduction**

Educators who aspire to a leadership position have seized upon the increasing number of open positions for school leaders (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012), including postings for the entry-level job of assistant-principal (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). Undeniably, the increase in administrative openings has implications beyond Michigan, as a 2004 nationwide study by Fink and Brayman (2004) confirmed that 70% of principals anticipated retiring in the next ten years (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Now on the horizon of that ten-year period, retirements have led to a need for qualified candidates seeking entry-level administrative positions and a high turnover rate, as those currently employed at entry-level administrative positions seek higher level positions (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Cooner, Quinn, & Dickmann, 2008).

The prospect of a new generation in search of administrative positions offers an opportunity to explore whether aspiring teacher leaders are prepared for the responsibilities demanded of administration and whether the reality of an administrator's life is clear to those who interview for the role. Whereas some anticipate finally having the power and influence to make significant change in a school-district and look forward to a possible increased salary, these expectations are not always a reality and must be coupled with the demands of the job. Tredway, Brill, and Hernandez (2007) found that the functions of a new administrator as a disciplinarian and system challenger or changer are difficult roles to manage. As a job that often has poorly defined or evolving responsibilities, it is difficult to achieve success without proper training and, more important, mentoring (Tredway et al., 2007). Further, it has been well-documented that assistant-principals have some of the most unmanageable stress and unanswered demands (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Without

extensive preparation, it is difficult for new administrators to be successful during the transition from teacher to administrator (Oleszewski, et al., 2012).

### **Transitions**

As administrators retire, institutional knowledge diminishes. Teachers who accept administrative positions and enter situations with preconceived perceptions of what they assumed administration entailed may face a gap in knowledge of the actual administrative duties (Oleszewski, et al., 2012). To address this gap in knowledge, the State of Michigan altered some of the licensure requirements for anyone entering an administrative position (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). Universities and other organizations offering administrative preparation programs have created programs aligned with state standards and expectations for the preparation of school administrators, but there is little evidence to support whether the required preparation is effectively meeting the needs of future leaders in their daily work lives (Cooner, et al., 2008).

Job descriptions and school system operations vary from district to district and from rural to urban areas. When exploring mentoring and tutoring programs for future principals, Linda Searby (2010) found that school administrators rarely gain what they need from preparation programs and find the experiences with which they are faced in their first few years to be difficult and unexpected regardless of their educational experience in an administrative preparation program. Researchers who interviewed over 90 new assistant-principals concluded that the *other duties as assigned* clause are where an assistant-principal spends most of his or her time and energy (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995). Unfortunately, new assistant-principals may be underprepared for those nebulous and sometimes ominous other duties and may be placed in the position of expert leader at times

without proper training or expertise to deal with the plethora of emergencies that come their way. For example, few laws currently mandate first aid or safety training prior to employment in an administrative role (Hartzell, et al., 1995).

Most often school-districts mandate administrative certification for new leaders hired into entry-level administrative positions (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). Likewise, preparation programs and alternative certification organizations are now responsible for assessing whether a candidate is ready for the job. Melton, Tysinger, Mallory, & Green (2011) acknowledged that validity and reliability are difficult to assess. The transition of new administrators will be explored in this study through interviews with human resources representatives and teachers who have been involved in the transition of new administrators.

For the individual who embarks on a change in his or her position, the transition from teacher to administrator demands a sense of optimism, an embrace of change, and an unyielding will. Modern-day administrators have often previously served in the classroom and earned credibility there in their first few years (Cooner et al., 2008). Some teachers believe that an administrative position is the *dark side*, where one should not be trusted. This idea can lead to the need for a new mindset for the new administrator when interacting with teachers (Cooner, et al., 2008). New administrators may have a difficult time wearing multiple hats, especially where they transition in the same district, in relationships of supervisor to employee and friend to friend. As former teachers, individuals may feel confident that they can juggle the dynamics of relationships in the transition into their role as administrator and that the dynamic will remain the same. However, the dynamic *does*

change, and that change can act as a barrier to positive change within the school construct (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to better understand the phenomenon of transition to leadership roles in high schools by investigating the experiences of four teachers who moved from teacher to assistant-principal in suburban school-districts in the State of Michigan. This study may inform decisions by adding insight into the hiring process or initiate important conversations in districts regarding appropriate and effective professional development and/or mentoring methods to support new administrators.

This case-study encompasses an in-depth examination of four individuals within their first four years as an assistant-principal. Data were gathered through interviews of the four individuals as well as one central-office cabinet member and one teacher working in the same school as each assistant-principal.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What motivated successful teacher leaders to move into administrative roles?
2. How do the novice administrators describe their transition from teacher to administrator?
3. How do the novice administrators describe the effectiveness of their professional development for the duties of administration?
4. How do the novice administrators describe support offered by the district during their transition into administration?
5. What dilemmas and tensions, if any, are identified by the new administrators during their transition period?

6. What insights about the transition from teacher to administrator are gathered by the input of central-office administration and teachers who observed the new administrators?

### **Summary**

The Michigan Department of Education reports that large numbers of school administrators are reaching the age of retirement, which will open the door to entry-level administrative positions for aspiring teacher leaders (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). School-districts' hiring practices as well as the extent and effectiveness of preparation and support given to new administrators are topics of interest and the foundation of this qualitative case-study research that explored the transition from teacher to administrator.

In Chapter Two, the framework for this research is established in a review of literature pertinent to the transition from teacher to administrator, which explored potential challenges and perspective of administrative life and responsibility.

## Chapter Two–Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

Topics addressed in the literature include factors that contribute to the successful transition of teachers to assistant-principals; theories of emotional intelligence and social intelligence, as they relate to leadership; the role of the assistant-principal and related concerns; and constructs of professional development and mentoring applied to the preparation and transition of assistant-principals.

Figure 1 depicts influences into the transition of a teacher to administrator at the school-district level. The model shows that successful development and transition of a teacher to assistant-principal are linked to various interrelated components of leadership attributes and skills.

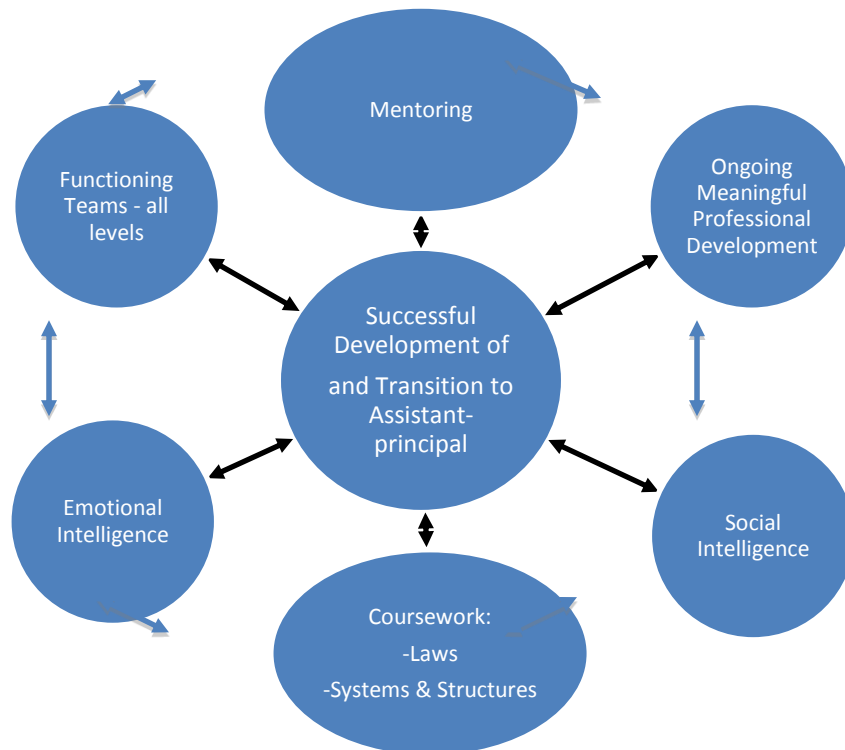


Figure 1. Factors contributing to successful development and transition to assistant-principal

## Emotional Intelligence

**Know thyself, help others.** Some unique metaphors for the transition of teacher to administrator may be found in the play *Oedipus Rex*, the famous tragedy of the king who killed his father and married his mother without knowing he had done so. The undercurrent of the play is the idea of *sophrosyne*, a Greek philosophy that translates loosely to *know thyself*. As Thebes faced a terrible plague, Oedipus took the advice of the Oracle of Delphi and embarked on a journey to discover the killer of his predecessor, never dreaming that the man he is looking for is actually himself. Had Oedipus known himself better, known his strengths and limitations, and paid attention all along, he might have been able to save himself from his ultimate fate: blinding himself in a fit of self-punishment and exiling himself from his beloved Thebes forever.

The tragedy of Oedipus may seem far removed from the leadership duties of an entry-level administrator; hopefully administrators do not contemplate self-mutilation and exile, but George (2011) argued that self-awareness is one of the most important traits of management that each and every leader must develop in order to be highly effective. In spite of what some aspiring or unseasoned administrators may think, “Leadership is not *exerting power over others or exhorting them to follow you*. It results from *your example of empowering others to stand up and lead*. Leaders do that by learning *to lead themselves, becoming self-aware, and behaving authentically*” (p. 13). This notion of self-awareness, more commonly known as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006), if applied to administrative preparation programs for school leaders, has the potential to change the very nature of school leadership. Rather than relying on an antiquated paradigm of top-down management, emotional intelligence studies indicated that work groups must develop



emotional intelligence among their administrators in order to create better workplaces for all levels of the workplace. “Leadership is not domination, but the art of persuading people to work toward a common goal. And, in terms of managing our own career, there may be nothing more essential than recognizing our deepest feelings about what we do—and what changes might make us more truly satisfied with our work” (Goleman, 2006, p. 149). Given that assistant-principals are noted as dissatisfied in their jobs, we cannot ignore Goleman’s recommendation.

### **The Administrative Team**

A functional administrative team can help with development that can make leaders aware of their own strengths and abilities and allow them to create a management style that works for them. Evidence of success may be a generation of administrators who have the self-awareness to make lasting and meaningful change in our schools. A functional administrative team, including support of the assistant-principal’s supervisor, is imperative when assistant-principals must make decisions or deliver information that may anger or upset students, teachers, and parents. Davis (2008) advised that principals should “support [assistant-principals] 100% of the time” (p. 7). Even if there are disagreements or tension behind closed doors, it is imperative that the principal provide a supportive framework for their assistant-principals to create a functional team.

Administrative teams need training in emotional intelligence to build on the strengths of each team member. In this way, individual strengths can complement one another to create a wholly skilled team (Lencioni, 2002). Hoyle and Crenshaw (1999), conducted research and reflect, “What began to surface from our analysis and discussion is that emotions can serve as resources and venues for understanding leadership motives and how

emotions are often expressions of a sense of injustice or inequity for others. This is not to say that the stories did not sometimes display emotionality as an unwelcome intruder on leadership practice. But deeper analysis helped us to see that emotions are fundamental to leadership and decision-making and as motivation to continue to pursue what leaders value and believe is in the best interest of the organizations and people they serve” (p. 243).

Although leaders are often counseled to keep their emotions out of the workplace and to maintain a professional image at all times, a growing body of research suggested that training in emotional intelligence helps to create leaders who are better adapted to the ever-changing workplaces they inhabit, because they are fully cognizant of their own capabilities and where they stand on leadership matters (Goleman, 2006).

School administrators are managers of students, staff, and community. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 2004 supported the idea that all leaders, including those in education, have the power to impact the feelings of people with whom they interact. “The leader acts as the group’s emotional guide” (p. 5). Effectiveness, perception, and management of crisis are required of school administrators; thus, it is imperative that these professionals have the capacity to deal with emotional situations on a moment’s notice (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Emotional intelligence training is necessary for individuals in managerial positions who may be managing a staff, but do not have his or her own capacity for emotional intelligence (Chien Farh, Seo, & Tesluk, 2012). We must, as Oedipus finally learned, know ourselves in order to lead a school effectively.

**Support of the collegial team.** At the district level, emotional intelligence training must be applied to produce effective teams. Lencioni’s (2002) leadership fable addressed the issue with a sports analogy. “Okay, imagine a basketball coach in the locker room at half-

time. He calls the team center into his office to talk with him one-on-one about the first half, and then he does the same with the point guard, the shooting guard, the small forward, and the power forward, without any of them knowing what everyone else was talking about. That's not a team. It's a collection of individuals" (p. 83). In dysfunctional school teams, assistant-principals are often unwilling to acknowledge their own weaknesses because of the competitive nature of the position among other assistant-principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Having the emotional intelligence to acknowledge one's own strengths and weaknesses is pivotal to addressing situations that arise during the course of the day. Asking a fellow assistant-principal for help during a difficult moment instead of hiding one's perceived inadequacies can have a powerful ripple effect in a school administrative team. First, the situation is handled quickly and with better success. Second, collegiality is built when team members treat each other with respect and deference. Finally, the assistant-principal who struggled with the initial situation has the opportunity to glean the necessary skills from the stronger colleague. Rather than leaning away from one another, assistant-principals need to lean on one another for support, which actually creates a more functional team (Hausman, Nebecker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2001). Functional teams would ideally exist at all levels of a school-district, but for an assistant-principal to transition and thrive, it can be argued that it is critical for the teams at all levels, not just his or her administrative team, to form a solid foundation upon which the assistant-principal can flourish (Hausman et al., 2001).

**Support of the secretarial team.** A review of the literature found little research regarding the importance of support staff to the assistant-principal's endeavors. Although some researchers have examined the role of the support staff in the classroom, the

significance of secretaries, specifically, in providing support for the administrator is absent (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). There is a clear deficiency in the research that has the potential to speak to a gap in understanding the transition of the assistant-principal.

**Consequences of a dysfunctional administrative team.** Too often, school teams exhibit all of the dysfunctional qualities outlined by Lencioni (2002): inattention to results, avoidance of accountability, lack of commitment, fear of conflict, and an absence of trust. In addition, as assistant-principals are competing against one another for the next job up the educational ladder, there is often a lack of commitment to the job at hand, lack of desire to help one another succeed, and inattention to results, which are all imperative for good quality leadership (Oleszewski et al., 2012).

Although a member of the administrative team, an assistant-principal, like his or her teacher and corporate counterparts, often falls prey to the behaviors and attitudes that contribute to a broken or dysfunctional team (Lencioni, 2002). The team exists to serve the student population; however, the assistant-principal is primarily an individual who is often pitted against other team members for priority assignments, future advancement, and district-wide recognition (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). This unfortunate situation can impede constructive relationships among colleagues who, together, could affect positive and effective change. There may be times when an assistant-principal fears the negative comments about his or her reputation and is not self-aware enough to know his or her own strengths and weaknesses. Lack of self-knowledge may propel an individual to make decisions to further personal career interests, instead of focusing on the needs of the school to best serve its population.

Senge (2006) discussed seven learning disabilities of leaders. His research discerned laws that can help individuals as they lead in an educational setting. It can be argued that they would apply to the transition of teacher to administrator in the educational field as well. One such belief is that *faster is slower*. In most cases, once an interview is held and an applicant chosen, that individual immediately becomes an administrator swamped with a myriad of jobs and lacking any real guidance. A transition period, which could include a longer training period or mentoring, could produce better results, because the slower solutions often end up being the most efficient (Senge, 2006). Unfortunately, because of our fast-moving society, this is a lesson all too easily brushed aside. We somehow expect our new assistant-principals to hit the ground running, oblivious of the legal and moral ramifications of the split-second decisions they will be asked to make each and every day.

Short-term results become more important than long-term changes, as many assistant-principals see their position as only a stepping-stone to the next position (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). When the results do not reflect growth or positive change, many assistant-principals blame each other or the teachers. Senge (2006) claimed that individuals become enveloped in their own leadership roles and do not always perceive the ways in which they affect other individuals in the same institution. Senge (2006) further explained that without a clear understanding of how roles interact and affect one another, when issues surface, people in different roles blame one another for problems. In some environments, even the students and their parents may be blamed for not delivering the results desired. Without emotional intelligence, Goleman (2006) argued, companies and schools pay dearly; “But the costs can be read in signs such as decreased productivity, an increase in missed deadlines, mistakes and mishaps, and an exodus of employees to more congenial settings. Inevitably there is a cost to

the bottom line from low levels of emotional intelligence on the job. When it is rampant, companies can crash and burn” (p. 148). We cannot afford to let our students or our schools crash and burn—we have to do better by our future leaders and citizens (Goleman, 2006).

### **Social Intelligence**

Social intelligence (SI) must accompany emotional intelligence (EI), as it both “sense[s] another’s inner state” and works “to allow smooth, effective interactions” (Goleman, 2007, p. 84). Without social intelligence, administrators may be unable to see into the emotional states of their teachers and staff. Social intelligence has implications for more effectual relationships between adults, and the development and practice of SI in schools can provide a powerful role model for students as they navigate the high school landscape.

Goleman (2007) defined *social intelligence* “as a shorthand term for being intelligent not just *about* our relationships but also *in* them...Expanding our focus in this way lets us look beyond the individual to understand what actually transpires as people interact—and to look beyond narrow self-interest to the best interest of others, too” (p. 11). Goleman suggested that one way we can improve social intelligence is by looking to Paul Eckman’s (2007) work on reading emotions in facial expressions—that is, discerning fleeting glimpses of emotion visible in a “microanalysis” of micro-expressions (p. 98). Goleman (2007) believed that “For social intelligence, Eckman’s program is a model for training people in low-road aptitudes like primal empathy and decoding nonverbal signals. Although in the past, most psychologists would have assumed that such rapid, automatic, and spontaneous behavior was beyond our ability to improve, Eckman shows that it is not” (p. 99). Although Goleman is the acknowledged expert in social intelligence, there is a lack of research in this area for training leaders. Support of SI research could provide a unique and exciting

opportunity for universities to gauge the best way to train novice assistant-principals in this important skill.

**Social intelligence and peace of mind.** Social intelligence is essential for school leaders because it provides a sense of security, especially in a time of uncertainty. Goleman (2007) cited Kohlreiser, “Feeling secure, he argued, lets a person focus better on the work at hand, achieve goals, and see obstacles as challenges, not threats. Those who are anxious, in contrast, readily become preoccupied with the specter of failure, fearing that doing poorly will mean they will be rejected or abandoned (in this context, fired)—and so they play it safe” (p. 277). In this era, when there is such a microscope on teachers and education, it is essential that administrators use their aptitude for social intelligence to motivate and encourage their staff (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2004). In fact, “Empathy, which includes listening and taking other people’s perspectives, allows leaders to tune in to the emotional channels between people that create resonance” (Goleman et al., 2004, p. 31). If leaders do not reflect on how their actions can affect their staff members, if they remain in the realm of their own egos and forget to practice empathy and compassion, they will never leverage the kind of growth so desperately needed in our schools today. Regardless of the pitfalls and barriers new assistant-principals face during their transitions, they need to hone skills associated with social intelligence so that they can work with staff and successfully implement change.

**Social intelligence and evaluation.** As evaluations of staff by administrators have become more important to job security, it is vital that administrators improve their social intelligence quotient to communicate more effectively. Cited by Goleman (2007), “Dickerson and Kemeny (2004) argued that being evaluated threatens the ‘social self,’ the ways we see ourselves through others’ eyes. This sense of our social value and status, our self-worth,

comes from the cumulative messages we get from others' perceptions about us. Such threats to our standing in the eyes of others are remarkably potent biologically, almost as powerful as those to our very survival. After all, the unconscious equation goes, if we are judged to be undesirable, we may not only be shamed, but suffer complete rejection" (p. 231).

New evaluation requirements for administrators bring added responsibility and may be unsettling to teachers who are aware that the new laws can have grave consequences for them, such as lay off and recall practices. Without social intelligence training to mitigate some of these concerns, administrators may misunderstand the emotional and social needs of their teachers, producing heightened anxiety and perpetuating a culture of fear within the building, which may negate any real change that needs to be made as an organization (Goleman et al., 2004).

**Social intelligence practice.** During their residency, doctors practice a specific type of social interaction and intelligence needed for their profession, and teachers practice the type of social interaction and intelligence needed for their profession during their student teaching practicum. In many instances, assistant-principals are required by licensure to experience an administrative internship, and that practice may include policy discussion, school board presentations, and paperwork (Cooner et al., 2008). It is rare that an administrative intern has practice evaluating teachers, remaining calm in student crises or fights, or conducting difficult face-to-face conversations with staff, parents, and students. (Cooner et al., 2008).

Security, evaluation, training, and practice are important issues in the lives of entry-level administrators and are needed to improve the efficacy of these leaders. Researchers support such training; however, because this job position is the lowest of the administrative



positions in a K-12 setting, structural change that addresses the need for increased training for assistant-principals is not a high priority for allocation of school-districts' resources (Oleszewski et al., 2012).

### **The Assistant-principal's Role and Related Concerns**

As is noted in the literature regarding educational studies and assistant-principals, the role of assistant-principal has been given less consideration and attention in the scheme of educational leadership (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Not only is the job an easy target for intense criticism within a school framework, but also it seems to be deemed the least worthy of study by academics (Armstrong, 2011; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Because the assistant-principal's role is generally considered to be transitory, research, preparation, and training opportunities have been limited. Armstrong (2011) in the author's foreword, argued, "As a result, new assistant-principals and their school-districts are seldom prepared for the depth and breadth of this administrative passage and its challenges for those in the process of transition" (p. xii). It is important to note the use of the word *passage* in Armstrong's quote, as it implies that the assistant-principal position is seen as an entryway to upper-level administrative jobs. Teachers have come to expect high turnover in that position, and upper-level administrators view assistant-principals who are not actively pursuing higher-level posts as either stagnant in their careers or failures in their quest to become principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). With these assumptions in mind, one might question why an assistant-principal would spend time developing crucial skills needed in the current position when the eye is always on the next job on the educational ladder. These perceptions may also induce anxiety for individuals who enjoy the role of assistant-principal and do not want to move to a principal's role in a short period of time.

Indeed, much of the literature suggests that the assistant-principal position has little value in preparing an aspiring principal for his or her next role. Oleszewski et al., (2012) noted, “It follows that the position as assistant should serve as an effective training ground for the principalship” (p. 265). Truthfully, however, researchers have published findings demonstrating that the assistant-principalship often does not prepare someone for the role of principal. Not only is training neglected for the assistant-principals’ current job, but also, because of the unpredictable nature of their jobs, they may not be adequately prepared to take a higher-level position (Hausman et al., 2001). The assistant-principal’s time is often relegated to student management areas, especially discipline, as opposed to working on tasks related to broader issues that are needed to mold an effective principal (Hausman et al., 2001).

**New administrators from the ranks of teachers.** Teachers may view the assistant-principal as a traitor to the profession, a turncoat who could not handle classroom duties or who craved more power outside of the classroom (Cooner et al., 2008). Teachers may envy the salary but complain about the way the assistant-principal handles his or her duties. Loder and Spillane (2005) noted, “Once [former teachers] became administrators, they were no longer viewed as colleagues or friends, but as *bosses* who were responsible for hiring, firing, and evaluating teachers”(p. 271). When the new assistant-principal comes from a cohort of friends and acquaintances, there may be a great deal of jockeying for favors when the *friend* becomes the *boss*. Teachers often expect that a new assistant-principal fresh from their rank and file will reward them with choice schedules, room assignments, and student rosters. When those *favors* are not granted, former friends may slander the new administrator, making leadership of the staff extraordinarily difficult in that first year (Hausman et al.,

2001).

Incoming assistant-principals may not realize that the position is often organized chaos, which provokes what Marshall and Hooley (2006) called *professional shock*. The reality may be failure to accomplish a to-do list because of a medical emergency, an angry parent, or a last-minute meeting scheduled. The authors noted, “New assistants are shocked at the array of tasks they confront. They are surprised to see things that seem unprofessional, unfair, and wrong”(p. 53). Karpinski (2008) detailed the work life of new assistant-principal, Mariah Peete, and recorded her overflowing days. “On the other hand, Mariah spent most of the day in her office with a telephone cocked to an ear, fingers busily navigating the computer keyboard and desk laden with stacks of papers. She also departed with bags overflowing with homework at the end of the school day. Conflicts and blowups with students or teachers sometimes delayed her departure. She often left feeling that she had just managed to keep her head above water navigating most of the administrivia for that day” (p. 89).

Those who take on the position expecting to work quietly undisturbed in their offices on curriculum reform would do well to look elsewhere for a job. Each day is a new challenge with little preparation and little time to seek out the training necessary to thrive in the position (Karpinski, 2008). One study on graduate students seeking administrative certification found that both students and professors felt there was a breach in formal training programs and the realities of what an administrator experiences on the job (Hart, 1993).

Marshall and Hooley (2006) explored what is special about assistant-principals and found that this is an entry-level position that can make or break a career in administration. It is often these individuals who are expected to mediate peace between students, teachers, and

parents and ultimately establish the foundation of norms and policies of a school's culture. If this is the perception of the job, when an assistant-principal creates drastic change, it can backfire on his or her reputation and role in a building.

New assistant-principals may feel sadly unprepared for many aspects of the job when they start find little in the way of preparation or an absence of support for new hires (Marshall & Hooley, 2006), or assistant-principals may enter their position with an erroneous concept of what lies ahead. Marshall and Hooley noted that although assistant-principals often feel daunted by seemingly endless and unsolvable tasks, their work, which includes the impact of “family breakups, poverty, poor health and nutrition, racism, drugs, and violence...”(p. viii) in schools, is *important*. These societal issues, coupled with the immense stress faced by assistant-principals, make it difficult to recruit and retain capable leaders (Marshall & Hooley, 2006), yet assistant-principals “must *frequently play the role of mediator*, addressing the conflicts that emerge among teachers, students, and the community” (p. 2).

In most documented school-districts in Michigan, administrators are required to have the appropriate building administration or central-office administration endorsement; however, a relatively new requirement asserts that candidates have to possess this certification prior to being hired for the role of assistant-principal (some previous administrators were grandfathered in or given time to work on these endorsements while in the first years of their new position). It is critical to note that whereas the duties and responsibilities of assistant-principals are different than those of principals, the licensure is identical (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

## **Professional Development and Mentoring for Assistant-principals**

Despite mandated continuous teacher training, “Assistant-principals are lacking preparation from their university coursework [and] there are few professional development programs designed for this group of administrators” (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 267). This reinforces the stereotype that the assistant-principal’s job is one of the least valued in the framework. Resources of money and time are also in short supply for these most crucial of administrators (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). This has major implications for the duties of their job and possible legal ramifications as well.

Hartzell, et al., (1995) shared the experiences of Maria Winston in her first year as an assistant-principal. “Assistant-principals do as much counseling as anybody in the school, I found out—and I’m not a counselor. I never have been, never had any formal training, but some of these kids need help, and you can’t just enforce the rules and walk away” (p. 5). When students come to the assistant-principal’s door with issues ranging from child abuse to drug use to suicidal ideation, it may be dangerous—if not downright neglectful—for administrators to be lacking proper training in such issues. Yes, school law may be covered in basic training programs, but assistant-principals often have to operate *off the cuff* in situations that pose an immediate threat to individual students or to the school as a whole (Marshall and Hooley, 2006). These situations demand that we provide continuous professional development for assistant-principals in the same way districts do for their teachers and senior-level administrators. Marshall (1993) spoke to the need for targeted training for assistant-principals. The author discussed the fact that it is rare to see this training, but it is extremely meaningful for assistant-principals who are looking to remain in their role for long periods of time.

In addition to providing extensive professional development opportunities, researchers consistently cited mentoring as a key component to the professional development of the assistant-principal. Oleszewski et al., (2012) contended, “Mentoring is an important part of professional development...Not only does the principal-mentor facilitate development and growth, but a positive relationship with the principal has been found to positively influence the level of preparation for the principalship (p. 269). Marshall and Hooley (2006) echoed this sentiment: “Assistant-principals who have sponsors or mentors greatly benefit from the specific advice, confidence-building, access to opportunity, and caring guidance” (p. 133-134). In addition, Marshall and Hooley (2006) noted that principals need to change the old paradigm that ends up dumping unfavorable duties on assistant-principals and instead provide constructive feedback and specific, viable tasks that help to position assistant-principals favorably to both teachers and central administration.

**Ohio’s model for mentoring.** Ohio’s Department of Education provides a model for both entry-level teachers and school administrators. Their website stated the importance of administrators to student success: “However, since 2000 there has been a realization that principals exert more influence, both directly and indirectly, on student achievement than any other school factor besides the teachers themselves” (Ohio Dept. of Education, 2012). The Ohio program gives schools a framework with which to establish their own mentoring programs and rewards those who do so with grant money to help fund their plans. While they are not advocating for any specific model of mentoring, there is basic agreement on the role the mentor can fulfill. For example, Lashway (2003), suggested that mentors can provide support in three ways: “first by keeping attention focused on learning issues and models of successful practice; second, providing administrative and managerial support to help set

priorities; and third, providing emotional support by listening carefully and being present at particularly stressful moments....” (Ohio Dept. of Education, 2012). Although the program is laudable, it is not without its flaws; as a grant-based program, not all schools will win access to the funds necessary to put such mentoring in place. However, Ohio’s recognition of the need for mentoring programs at all levels of education is significant.

**Corporate leadership models.** Many leadership models from the corporate world provide excellent lessons, which can be applied in the educational field. Ideas on how to prepare leaders, taken from theories of corporate leadership models, can have resounding significance for education. Not surprisingly, business school guides stress the economic advantages to having successful leaders in place from the start. Watkins (2004) noted Brad Smart’s research (1999) where “Estimates of the direct and indirect costs to a company of a failed executive-level hire range as high as \$2.7 million” (p. 15). Even if schools are not in the business of making corporate-level profits, high costs can be attributed to a failed assistant-principal; students may not get the academic, counseling, or disciplinary services they need; poor teachers may remain in their jobs without intervention; and the community may view the entire district as ineffective if face time with this administrator did not go well. In terms of cost, this could conceivably be the most damaging to a school-district’s bottom line; if the school is continually deemed unsuccessful, parents send their children elsewhere, and the community will fail to support needed millages (Watkins, 2004).

**Assistant-principals’ job satisfaction.** Hausman et al., (2001) maintained that job satisfaction is lower among high school assistant-principals than among their elementary counterparts. Calabrese and Adams’ (1987) research from the 1980s claimed that employees feel isolated when they feel a lack of empowerment. Hausman et al., (2001) maintained that,

this is still true for assistant-principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Marshall and Hooley (2006) noted a persistent “tendency to keep assistant-principals within a specific chain of command, a hierarchy with the principal controlling the work of the assistant-principal” (p. 20). Further, assistant-principals face many issues and duties specific to the age level of high school students; activities to monitor, including athletic events, school plays, band competitions, forums on ACT success, college nights, and parent nights, teen pregnancies, attempted suicides, substance abuse, and car accidents (Hausman et al., 2001).

Marshall and Hooley (2006) called for principals to create a more collegial form of leadership that ensures that all stakeholders—students, teachers, assistant-principals, the community, support staff, and central administration—can be heard. A concentrated effort by all stakeholders can provide a framework wherein assistant-principals can earn appropriate attention and respect. “The assistant-principal seldom has a consistent, well-defined job description, delineation of duties, or way of measuring outcomes from accomplishment of tasks” (p. 7).

## **Summary**

Understanding the phenomenon of transitioning from teacher to administrator requires a firm grasp on the change in responsibilities and the skills necessary to achieve success. The literary resources synthesized in this chapter with the framework of emotional and social intelligence theory provided a structure for this study. Further, the theoretical framework of social and emotional intelligence provided insight into some of the characteristics that may affect positive leadership and the ability to manage other professionals. Methods for the conduct of the case-study analysis are discussed in Chapter Three.



## **Chapter Three-Methods**

This study explored the experience of teachers transitioning to assistant-principal. This chapter will discuss the methods employed for this study. Topics include the rationale for the study, research design; legal, ethical, and moral considerations; participant selection; data collection; validity and reliability; limitations and delimitations; and mitigating researcher bias. This research study was guided by the following questions:

1. What motivated successful teacher leaders to move into administrative roles?
2. How do the novice administrators describe their transition from teacher to administrator?
3. How do the novice administrators describe the effectiveness of their professional development for the duties of administration?
4. How do the novice administrators describe support offered by various constituent groups in the school-district during their transition into administration?
5. What dilemmas and tensions, if any, are identified by the new administrators during their transition period?
6. What insights about the transition from teacher to administrator are gathered by the input of central-office administration and teachers who observed the new administrators?

### **Research Rationale**

Retirement of large numbers of school administrators in recent years has offered exceptional opportunities for aspiring teachers to move into entry-level administrative jobs (Michigan Department of Education, 2013). The shift in roles and responsibilities provided a foundation for exploring the phenomenon of the transition of individuals from their roles as

teachers to their first four years as entry-level administrators in suburban school-districts. Spradley's (1980) ethnographic research and the later work of Miles and Huberman (1994) addressed factors of setting, activities, and duties, which define the parameters of the employment situation and which together help explain how individuals come to understand, manage, and perceive their roles.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design enables the researcher to understand compound inter-relationships (Stake, 1995). Yin (2009) recommended use of a case-study if the goal is to explain some existing context of a social phenomenon, when the researcher studies modern-day events, but primarily when pertinent behaviors cannot be manipulated. This research study was a multiple case-study of four individuals transitioning from teacher to assistant-principal in four suburban school-districts. Individuals had fewer than four years of administrative experience in a high school environment. All assistant-principals in this study had prior teaching experience. This study sought to understand the sequence of events of each individual and to make sense of how they felt and acted during the first years in their new position (Schram, 2006). The multiple case-study approach investigated the current social-emotional experience of teachers transitioning to administration, thereby enabling the researcher to take an in-depth look at individuals, their practice, and their transition from teacher to administrator.

According to Schram (2006), whether researchers consider case-study as a way of conceptualizing human social behavior or merely as a way of encapsulating, its strategic value lies in its ability to draw attention to what can be learned from any single case. Teachers decide to transition into administration every year, and much can be learned from

their experience. In representative cases, lessons can be learned from the case to inform the experience in similar settings (Yin, 2009). Each situation will undoubtedly have past, present, and future implications for meeting success in an administrative role (Schram, 2006). As a result of this study, central administrative leadership will have an opportunity to open important conversations surrounding possible ways to support their assistant-principals and to provide training for teachers transitioning to assistant-principal positions.

### **Legal, Ethical, and Moral Considerations**

It was imperative to take participant rights and protections into account in this multiple case-study. Yin (2009) declared that sensitivity and care in the form of informed consent, truthfulness in intent, protection of privacy and confidentiality, and special precautions should be considered and managed throughout a case-study. Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasized the importance of ensuring that the participants' reputations are protected and words are respected and accurate.

Spradley (1980) warned researchers to consider the defense mechanisms that may appear from participants and to take into account participants' welfare during the process. These variables can lead to possible implications of bias or guarded answers. To cultivate a comfortable environment, the researcher ensured transparency throughout the process by allowing participants to review field notes and remain cognizant of the stake they have in this research. Making reports available to participants helps to acknowledge that there is no intention to exploit informants (Spradley, 1980).

Participants were also invited to self-check portions of the researcher's work after interviews so that they could see that the categories and conclusions being drawn from the study regarding their experiences were accurately reported. This also helped to alleviate

implications of deception in the study (Yin, 2009). It is also noteworthy to mention that privacy and confidentiality took place as all names and identifying markers were eliminated from the text of the documents in the writing.

Spradley (1980) attested that the researcher should not simply consider the interests of their participants, but should safeguard their interests, rights, and sensitivities. Receiving approval by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Committee ensured the incorporation of the essential components of participant protection (See Appendix A).

### **Participant Selection**

Subjects who were experiencing the transition from teacher to administrator within suburban school-districts in southeastern Michigan were recruited to participate in this study. All participants were within their first four years as assistant-principals at comprehensive high schools. With the consent and assistance of the identified assistant-principals, the researcher identified a teacher who witnessed the transition of each individual and was invited to participate in an interview. A central-office cabinet member in each district where the subjects worked also participated in the research interviews. Three of four participants' central-office administrators agreed to participate. This was done with the explicit permission of the primary participants. The four subjects were not employed in the school-district where the researcher is employed and were unknown to the researcher prior to their interviews.

Participants were selected based upon their employment in a suburban school-district, a willingness to participate, and his or her dates of hire. The demographics and other pertinent background information were gathered from each participant through the interview process.

**Informed consent.** A formal invitation to voluntarily participate in this study was e-mailed to all assistant-principals in school-districts located in a southeastern Michigan county (See Appendix B). The email detailed the criteria, including the need for those serving their first four years as assistant-principals and who transitioned from teaching to administration. The initial information included the time commitment required, confidentiality for the participant, and requested permission of individuals to be interviewed if selected to participate in the study. Consent to participate was not coerced or pressured in any way (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Individuals simply emailed back making the researcher aware of their interest.

The researcher selected the first four volunteers who fit the criteria for participation in the study. Participants were informed that they could choose not to participate in the study at any time. Once the study participants were identified, the researcher discussed the desire to invite central-office and teacher participants to participate in the study as well. Participants were asked to suggest individuals in their district for the study.

### **Data Collection**

The first step in conducting this case-study research involved setting defined field procedures (Yin, 2009). It was important to create systems and organizational structures to help move the study along in a timely, efficient manner. According to Yin (2009), case-study data collection is not predictable and relies on the researcher's ability to be flexible and continually reflective of the process. Yin suggested that a researcher should schedule data collection activities, complete with expectations for deadlines, but to be flexible and accommodate unanticipated changes. Through a strong understanding of the purpose of the study as well as listening to the data as they are collected, the researcher must adapt the study

to meet the shifts that may arise from participant data during the study. Interestingly, Yin (2009) also suggested that the unit of study for individual data collection includes individual behavior, attitudes, and perceptions. This helps guide the appropriate inclusion of data sources germane to this study. Stake (1995) contributed an interesting addendum to the process, noting that data collection has often started prior to a commitment to even do the study as data come with early impressions and cerebral experiences.

**Interviews.** The primary source of data collection in this study were interviews with participants and surrounding personnel who had observed the transition. The interview protocol questions for each type of participant are shown in Appendix C. The researcher met with each assistant-principal for two to three hours, and exchanged emails and phone calls for additional clarification. Central-office administrators and teachers were interviewed for approximately one hour of conversation each. Interviews were conducted in a convenient and safe location for the participants. Participants were afforded the opportunity to choose the location. Three wanted to meet at their high school, two after hours and one during the school day. The fourth participant asked to meet at a local coffee shop. The researcher had access to a computer and tape recorder to document the conversation with accuracy while allowing for connected conversation. Although these electronic methods are important, Stake (1995) stated that it is most important to listen well and to have a space afterwards to record and interpret an interview. After the interviews, the researcher spent time documenting her thoughts and observations from the conversations, such as body language, that the tape recorder would not capture. Yin (2009) also stressed the importance of help from another colleague or case-study investigator. The researcher has met with colleagues who have successfully written dissertations in the educational field to help trouble shoot and

confirm thematic analysis. The researcher also utilized the chair of this committee to help guide data collection and analysis.

**Additional sources of data.** Documentation such as diaries, calendars, e-mail correspondence, and memoranda were discussed during interviews with participants. When deemed relevant in the context of interviews, such documentation was included in the data collection. Physical artifacts such as proposals, progress reports, events, agendas, responsibility charts, and training documents were also discussed as additional information regarding an individual's experience during their transition. The researcher concentrated on the selection of illustrations, testimonies, and vignettes that highlighted important information. Selecting such stories was done with great care. Miles and Huberman (1994) warned that vignettes can hook the reader to engagement, but a researcher must ask if this vignette is truly typical if it is to be included in the finding.

### **Data Analysis**

Beginning with classification and interpretation of raw data, analysis is a continuous process in qualitative research studies. After this initial process, the researcher reflected on whether there was a need to rethink issues or boundaries of the case-study (Stake, 1995), although Stake reiterated that there is no specific moment when data analysis begins, especially because it relies on a research giving meaning to impressions.

As this study is indicative of intrinsic case-study, the researcher relied mostly on direct interpretation, with possible instances of categorical interpretation to better understand relationships and complex issues, all while probing to understand the case through the meaning of patterns (Stake, 1995). Additionally, the study consists of a thematic narrative analysis, and the highly desirable pattern matching analysis (Yin, 2009). In this type of case-

study, the goal is notation of patterns and categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The researcher used pattern coding to fully synthesize the information from multiple participants. The researcher used this tool to place evidence into categories to examine the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The researcher also paid attention to the frequency of events and examined the complexity of those connections and relationships (Yin, 2009).

This process helped to identify any negative evidence or outliers in the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Through various charts, the researcher ultimately created a coded chart of common categories and patterns. After merging inferences based on data from each participant, the researcher generated thematic analysis with broad conclusions and suggestions from these case studies. The one certainty in this entire process is that the researcher attended to all the evidence in order to generate a worthy analysis (Yin, 2009).

### **Validity and Reliability**

*Trustworthiness, accuracy, and authenticity* are terms associated with validity in qualitative studies. Multiple sources of information, verbatim reports of discussions, and member feedback lead to triangulation of data, which contributes to authenticity and accuracy of responses (Yin, 2009). Glesne (2011) concurred that trustworthiness can be developed through prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review, member-checking, thick description in researcher writing, and conducting an external audit. Each of these steps helped alleviate bias and contributed to the solidity and validity of the research. In an effort to enhance the reliability and validity of this study, the researcher piloted questions with administrators who fit the criteria but were not included in the study. This helped guide the interview process and simultaneously helped ensure that the interview questions are understandable and that individuals are taking the same idea away from each inquiry.



In this study, data was triangulated by self-checking of subjects interviewed. Miles and Huberman (1994) advised that member checks and feedback should be part of the process, and open to review by participants and the researcher at any time. In addition, a peer-check group of doctoral students and individuals with doctorates shared and analyzed research findings to help ensure that any important aspects were not missed and that no inaccurate conclusions were drawn. Through the use of multiple sources of evidence, triangulation of the data occurred. Case research calls upon the need to use a myriad of data sources to develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2009). The researcher generated a case-study database to organize the wealth of data that was accumulated. Documents and transcriptions were contained in one area for easy access and to maintain a chain of evidence.

Internal validity is measured by the ability to find congruent examples from the collected data. The goal was to avoid inference and bias during the process of analysis as determinations are made as to how and why facts are the way they are in the school-district (Yin, 2009). Common categories from interviews and ethnographic studies helped to solidify the internal validity of the study. The truth-value can be safeguarded through context-rich descriptions, patterns that converge, consideration of rival explanations, and participant involvement in checking the authenticity of patterns realized (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

External validity is determined by the degree to which a case-study can apply to institutions or districts beyond the one studied (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Although the limited number of participants in this study might indicate a lack of external validity in terms of application of the findings beyond the selected school-districts, many districts share common demographics, programs, and academic structures. They are all located in the same county. School systems that are similar in nature may be able to use information from this

case-study to open discussions about whether they are meeting the needs of their own administrators' growth in leadership during the transition to administration. By participating in each of these stages of evidence checking, the research aims to close the gap between truth and bias. Researchers must be both accurate and logical in interpreting meaning (Stake, 1995).

Reliability in quantitative research is concerned with generalizability and consistency of responses; however, although those considerations are not the focus in qualitative studies, in which reliability is determined by whether the outcomes are believable. Yin (2009) warned the best way for the researcher to ensure the steps are operational is to conduct research as though someone were always watching her and that she may be audited. All questions and methods are transparent and easily simulated in any district with the participants of that district. This will ensure that anyone can follow the researcher's steps to see where the information originated. Creating and maintaining clear and accurate records of all phases of the research process is critical to increasing the reliability of case-study research (Yin, 2009).

Although critics of a qualitative study may claim that these studies only explain specific cases and experiences at a specific time, which does not necessarily mean it is not a valuable study. Qualitative studies serve to describe a specific phenomenon that may open conversations or offer insight into broader situations. This study may inform discussions regarding whether a district has a supportive professional development plan or training for transitioning administrators.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations are those imposed by the design of the research study (Yin, 2009). This multiple case-study relied on a small sample of volunteer participants whose honesty in responses was assumed. Interview responses, which serve as the bulk of the data, were presumed as truthful and precise, but the researcher listened for bias and attempts to delineate any confounding factors that appeared. Additionally, the ability to gain access to participants in a timely matter and for an uninterrupted segment of time was a limitation of this study. The job and time of an assistant-principal is demanding and participants had to set aside uninterrupted time to speak with the researcher. The study was also limited to exploring a phenomenon at one moment in time; in this case, interviews took place during the 2014-2015 school year. The delimitations, those factors determined by the researcher, included the location and demographics of the school-districts chosen for participation in this study.

## **Discussion of Mitigating Researcher Bias**

One hallmark of ethnography is its ability to accurately report the experience of participants in the research (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The ability to conduct research on the culture and experience of individuals in their roles as entry-level administrators will be invaluable. It is imperative in case-study research for the researcher to avoid bias. A researcher must balance familiarity of the issue with the reality and belief that findings are not predictable (Yin, 2009). Participants' supervisors or colleagues were interviewed and therefore aware of the study; hence, there was an undeniable need to protect all participants against offering information that could potentially harm their image.

The researcher must acknowledge and manage her bias as an administrator who experienced the transition from teacher to assistant-principal, which causes her to have some

personal investment in the findings (Chenail, 2011). The perceived bias was combated by the researcher's stout concern toward fortifying the educational field's ability to produce and sustain administrative leaders. The only way to strengthen education and leadership is to explore the truth in all its imperfections. After ascertaining information and having it transcribed, the researcher pulled out various categories that appeared over multiple interviews. Bias was mitigated by asking both the individuals questioned and peer readers to offer feedback as to the validity of the findings.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the phenomenon of transition to leadership roles in schools by investigating the experiences of four teachers who moved from teacher to assistant-principal positions in suburban school-districts in the State of Michigan. The methods of this multiple case-study, design and rationale, and the details involved in the conduct of the research were discussed in this chapter. A narrative analysis of the three pronged interview structure conducted of four individuals transitioning from teacher to assistant-principal is presented in Chapter Four.

## **Chapter Four–Findings**

This study examined the transition of four high school classroom teachers to assistant-principal positions. Data were retrieved from numerous interviews to explore the multifaceted experience of the transition of teacher to administrator. The motivation of this case-study rested in understanding the intricacies of the transition from teacher to administrator. Four public high school assistant-principals, currently in the first four years of their transition, were the primary subjects of the research. Assistant-principals were employed in four suburban school-districts' high schools in one county. Each was in the process of a transition from teacher to administrator and previously worked as teachers in a high school environment.

In addition to the interviews of assistant-principals, the researcher also interviewed central administrators in each district and teachers who observed the assistant-principals as they transitioned to their role. Research demonstrated that, in an in-depth interview, the researcher may rely on the chief subjects to propose their own insights and even suggest others to interview who may have additional perspectives (Yin, 2009). The assistant-principals suggested additional individuals with whom to speak, which resulted in three degrees of perspective about the transition of teacher to administrator. Overall, this multiple case-study approach comprised interviews and follow-up discussions with 11 individuals who shared their experiences and perceptions about the transition from teacher to administrator. Pseudonyms were assigned to each assistant-principal and to county school-districts to protect the identity of actual participants.

## **Assistant-principals**

**Jared, School-district 1 Assistant-principal.** Jared, in his late 30s, is divorced without children. His background in education is varied. Prior to working in education, he worked in television news for six years. Jared stated that he literally stumbled into education, after he lost a bet to a teacher friend and agreed to speak to students in his friend's high school classroom. He was instantly hooked. Like television news, he found that education involved interaction and constant change. He greatly enjoyed working with students. After that single experience, Jared began to transition into his new career. He continued to work full-time in television and added substitute teaching on his days off. To finance his teaching degree, he quit television news and took a new job as a police dispatcher on the midnight shift so that he could take education courses during the daytime. His dispatcher training would later prove helpful as he became a high school administrator.

Jared worked as a high school teacher for nine years in one school-district before beginning the transition to high school assistant-principal in a different school-district. Jared's divorce occurred during the first year of administration, and he realized the need for balance in his life. He began taking better care of himself, working out, and concentrating on self-improvement. Jared's transformation from teacher to administrator heavily impacted his personal and professional life.

**Justin, School-district 2 Assistant-principal.** Justin was in his early 40s and, like Jared, he was initially drawn to public relations and broadcasting. He saw a connection between his communications classes and teaching and began to explore a potential career as a communications professor or teacher. Justin's passion for teaching grew to include literature and English language. He relished the idea of sharing his favorite novels with students.

Justin's experience in education spanned fourteen years; the first 10 years consisted of classroom teaching at the high school level, and he was in the fourth year as a high school administrator at the time of the interviews for this study. At one point in his teaching career, Justin supervised a student teacher and consequently spent more time in the school office with administrators and less time in the classroom. During this time Justin noted, "Well, I'm helping half the building when I teach the kids, but when I'm in the office, I'm helping the entire building." His administrative career began when he applied for administrative positions outside of his home school and landed one in a neighboring school-district.

**Maya, School-district 3 Assistant-principal.** Maya, in her late 30s, is in her third year as an assistant-principal. Unlike Justin and Jared, Maya's entire professional career has been in education. Maya claims she has known "since birth" that she was destined to work in education. She views education as a calling and not simply a profession. Maya spent thirteen years teaching in a high school before transitioning to assistant-principal in the same building. When Maya was still a teacher, she married a fellow teacher, and they have continued to work in the same building. Maya's professional and personal lives are embedded in this building.

After 12 years as a teacher, Maya first considered an administrative career. She stated, "I was still enjoying teaching. I always loved teaching, but was finding myself getting a little impatient, a little bored, with doing the same thing for 12 years. As department chair, I could see the bigger pieces of the puzzle, and it was natural when I saw it [a vacancy for assistant-principal] open." Despite Maya's love for her job and passion for education, she, too, spoke to the challenges of work-life balance.

**Sarah, School-district 4 Assistant-principal.** Sarah, in her mid-30s, is a high school administrator. After a life of competitive dance, Sarah earned a teaching certificate so that she could instruct dance at the high school level. Teaching allowed her to maintain her interest and involvement in competitive dance. When it was time to begin her master's degree work, Sarah chose administration and found that she had a great passion for the work. After eight years of teaching dance, Sarah transitioned in the same school from teacher to interim assistant-principal, and then to assistant-principal. As a teacher and as an administrator, Sarah has found the environment in her school-district to be very positive. Like other study participants, Sarah's personal life is also in transition. She married and recently had her first child.

### **Central-office Participant Interviews**

With the exception of Jared's case, all other participants were able to steer the researcher to a willing and interested central-office administrator who would share their experienced perspective on the transition from teacher to administrator. Justin's District Superintendent, Bernie, participated in the interviews. During Bernie's tenure, he spent many years in education where he fulfilled roles as assistant-principal, principal, central-office assistant superintendent and, recently, superintendent in a district where he had not previously been an administrator. In Maya's district, the assistant superintendent of curriculum, Jacob, was interested in participation in this study. Jacob was previously a principal in this district and left to take an assistant superintendent position in another county. When the position of assistant superintendent of curriculum opened in his home district, he interviewed and was selected to return. Sarah's central-office assistant superintendent of human resources, Dorothy, participated in discussions with the researcher. Like Jacob,



Dorothy had been a teacher, assistant-principal, and principal in the same district. She felt connected and inspired by the district and, when there was an opening in human resources at the central-office level, she applied and was hired.

### **Teacher Participant Interviews**

Assistant-principals in this study provided the researcher with the names of teachers they thought were appropriate and with whose participation the administrators were comfortable. In Jared's district, a relatively new teacher named Myles, who had only once observed a new administrator move from teacher to assistant-principal, offered to discuss his observations and perspectives regarding the transition. Justin suggested Marsha, a teacher who had been in the district for some time. She and Justin had a solid relationship, and she was very open about her observations of the transition from teacher to assistant-principal. Julia, a teacher in Maya's district, was a teacher colleague with Maya prior to Maya's transition. A teacher, Samantha, similarly had been a colleague of Sarah's prior to Sarah's transition. Each teacher brought a unique lens and perspective to the discussion of the transition of teacher to assistant-principal. The demographics of participants in this study are outlined in Table 1. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of actual participants.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Jared	Assistant-principal	District 1	Male
Justin	Assistant-principal	District 2	Male
Maya	Assistant-principal	District 3	Female
Sarah	Assistant-principal	District 4	Female
Myles	High School Teacher	District 1	Male
Marsha	High School Teacher	District 2	Female
Julia	High School Teacher	District 3	Female
Samantha	High School Teacher	District 4	Female
Bernie	Central-office Administrator	District 2	Male
Jacob	Central-office Administrator	District 3	Male
Dorothy	Central-office Administrator	District 4	Female

Note: A Central-office Administrator was not available for interview in District 1

**Data Analysis**

This study examined the transition of four assistant-principals from four different high schools in one suburban county in southeastern Michigan. Interviews were conducted over a six-week period so that multiple perspectives could be attained at a specific point in time. The research began by using a *start list* of codes compiled from research questions, conceptual framework, and problem areas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher looked for recurring phrases and commonalities found in the participants' responses to interview questions and after an initial synthesis, utilized pattern coding to uncover emergent categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Member checking and peer checking were used to ensure accurate analysis of the data.

## **Results**

Four overarching categories surfaced from the data gathered. Insights of central administrators and teachers who observed new assistant-principals emphasized thematic experiences that the assistant-principals addressed in their interviews. Data from the interviews with central-office administrators and teachers are included throughout the discussion of findings.

### **Category I—Impetus and Origins of the Transition into Administration**

**Motivators.** Participants had much in common regarding the motivation of successful teacher leaders who move into administrative roles. Although different paths led research participants to administration, all had a clear understanding of why they wanted to move into the role of assistant-principal.

Superintendent Bernie discussed the importance of mindfulness and intent. He said that candidates need to ask themselves, “Why do you actually want to go into that role? A lot of people do it just because they think, ‘I can make some more money’ or those types of motivators. I think that you have to really know why you want to do it. There has to be a real purpose there.”

Bernie’s comments were insightful, as all four assistant-principals discussed the draw of higher pay during their interviews. At the same time, assistant-principals credited more powerful motivators for their desire for a positional change. Jared said,

There was always the question of can we pay the bills,” as he looked toward the future. More potent, though, was his passion to create change on a grander scale. He stated, “I was at the point where I wanted to help other teachers do some of the same things I had been fortunate enough to do, and so my mind-set had shifted to

administration. I had more power to impact change with other teachers and other students. I felt I had a greater reach as an administrator. Instead of impacting 120 kids, I liked the idea of impacting 1500 kids.

Research has shown that classroom teachers looking to transition to administration often do so in an attempt to make a difference for children (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). Justin felt a similar desire to foster greater change and to affect a larger population of students. When he was given an opportunity to help in the main office, Justin realized, “Well, I’m helping half the building when I teach the kids, but when I’m in the office, I’m helping the entire building.”

Jared felt a similar draw. His impetus for change was to impact student growth and success.

It was my goal at first to teach and teach forever, but I got involved in union activities. I got involved in policy work in the building. The switch to a mindset for administration for me came when I started getting on hiring committees and I saw the people who were interviewing for jobs. I thought, ‘These are people I want to work with’ and others I thought ‘I hope I never work for this person. I think I could probably do a better job than this person.’

Sarah also revealed her concern that she was “on a low teacher pay-scale.” Her passion, however, was more compelling as she spoke at length about her admiration for her school-district. Sarah stated, “I love this school-district. I love the people that work here and I do think some of the hard part about transitioning jobs is knowing the people.”

Remarkably, all candidates cited passion for change as the greatest impetus to move to administration. Although their enthusiasm was notable, a different pay scale was definitely an attractive incentive. None of the candidates mentioned that the different pay scale came

with different duties and responsibilities. Candidates admitted that they were not thinking about the additional pressures or job responsibilities as they began their quest for an administrative position.

In central-office interviews, the researcher noted that desired qualities of a future assistant-principal were consistent among the central-office personnel who responded. Every assistant-principal interviewed for this study also spoke to these qualities. Although their backgrounds and experience differed, the four assistant-principals' impetus for change or grand visions were consistent. This conclusion led the researcher to note that positive indicators mentioned in central-office interviews motivated all subjects of this study.

**Leadership experience and teacher practice.** All central-office administrator interviews affirmed the value of leadership experience and teaching practice. Although certificates or degrees are often required by districts for an administrative position, programs can be experienced haphazardly. Marshall and Kasten (1994) asserted that most educators are employed in a full-time position and are never fully engaged in a formal administrative training program. Every assistant-principal had prior teaching experience as well as building leadership experience. Again, the subjects displayed traits that were deemed important for success by the central-office administrators. Dorothy described the characteristics that she looked for when hiring an assistant-principal.

...someone that has experience in a leadership capacity and someone that has the appropriate education. Usually we're looking for a Master's in leadership. I think it's really important to have someone that has experience in the classroom. If you are someone that is going to be evaluating and driving curriculum, it's really important that you know curriculum and understand. Someone that understands the state

guidelines and expectations, the Michigan Merit Curriculum, the testing, graduation requirements. Certainly someone that is very good at student relationships and adult relationships. Someone who understands and knows the importance of data and how data should be used appropriately to make decisions. Certainly someone that is able to make decisions. And, someone that has the ability to cope because you have to balance and cope. It is also important for someone to know what the AP job consisted of before getting into it.

We are always encouraging people to be part of committees—to lead in school improvement. We offer lots of opportunities for teachers to get involved that way. And there's a gazillion opportunities to get involved with kids, but if it's external, we hire people with experience.

Dorothy said she tries to gauge these qualities by looking at teacher leadership. Although leadership is not always apparent, these particular experiences are a good gauge of a future administrative leader.

Bernie also indicated the important of character in a successful assistant-principal. Because this is not always apparent in an interview, committee work and experience serve as a good indicator of those characteristics. Bernie spoke to qualities he felt were critical for an incoming assistant-principal.

One who has an understanding of what takes place in the classroom. You're looking for somebody who has humility, integrity, all of those character pieces that are really needed to lead. But I think you're also looking for somebody that really is in it for the kids, not for the power aspect of it, but really that's there to serve others and that does

matter. Additionally, Bernie gleans a great deal of candidate information from actual interviews.

He strategically selects questions regarding potential school crises. Bernie said, “Have them say how they would deal with crisis situations. That’s pretty revealing. People tell you more than they think they’re telling you when they’re in an interview.”

## **Category II–Realities and Challenges of the Transition**

**Perception and reality discrepancies.** Central-office administrators identified key qualities of a highly successful assistant-principal. Collectively, qualities of drive, dedication, instructional leadership, flexibility, adaptability, good communication skills and classroom experience were mentioned as necessities. All of the assistant-principal participants possessed those qualities.

Despite the assistant-principals’ enthusiasm, work ethic, and experience, there were still conflicts between the perception of an administration position and the realities of the job. When teachers transition to an administrative position, a discrepancy was often found between perception and reality of the responsibilities and circumstances surrounding the job. Each candidate indicated difficulty in the transition. One of the greatest challenges was in the reality of the role of assistant-principal.

When asked why a teacher would want to go into administration, teachers who participated in the interviews paused before answering. Marsha, for instance, had difficulty thinking of benefits to a teacher transitioning into administration. She eventually identified two main benefits–“no grading and a pay raise.” She laughed as she concluded that those were the only benefits. Myles agreed, “There’s obviously those who get involved who are in it for the pay raise, increased benefits, and things like that.” Myles added that those who

desired a change were “probably people who get into teaching and get sick of the classroom. They just kind of want to be in the school environment.”

Samantha paused when asked about the motivation to become an assistant-principal and asked, “Besides the financial reasons? I mean, you make a lot more as an administrator.” She had an afterthought, similar to Myles’ comment, and said,

Some people are kind of done with being in front of kids all day. I mean they want to stay in education. They want to be a part of that, but they don’t necessarily want the grind of different lessons every day and dealing with parents and grading, and taking papers home. So I think staying in education, yet getting out the classroom, is another motivator.

Julia could not describe benefits or motivations to make the transition from teacher to assistant-principal.

Considering I want no part of it for myself, I’ve never really looked at it that closely to think what the benefits would be. The evaluations you do—even though it adds a whole bunch of other stress—help you get to know the staff. You’re kind of forced to get to know them. Maybe in those small ways.

**Living the role to understand it.** To understand the experience of the transition of a teacher to assistant-principal, one must first appreciate that few people grasp the intricacies, dissatisfaction, and dilemmas of the assistant-principal role (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). An individual has to live in the role to understand the experience. When Samantha was asked if she knew what the assistant-principal’s duties and responsibilities comprised, she stated, “I think a million different things. It’s going to be hard for me to articulate that.”



It is not merely difficult for teachers to articulate. In her interview, assistant-principal Maya succinctly stated what many new assistant-principals tried to say through stories in their interviews.

I just remember sitting at my desk my first official day. Everybody left after they congratulated me, and I was just sitting in there and thinking, ‘What the hell is my job?’ I was almost panicked because I don’t know what I’m supposed to do. And, people kind of could tell me, but not really—here’s a list of all your stuff. I didn’t know what any of this was, and I’m supposed to do it. So I just I remember sitting there being, like—aaahhh, and I thought, ‘I guess you just press on and figure it out.’

Prior to her transition, when Maya was a teacher, her initial perception was that an assistant-principal job would consist primarily of student discipline and teacher evaluations. She thought teacher evaluations would be quick and subjective. Maya discussed her perception of what the job would entail prior to accepting the role.

Discipline—you send the kids to the office and we deal with them. Teacher evaluation—I didn’t really know what that meant. I knew you go in and you watch a room and then you talk to them and apparently grade them.

**Rubrics, models, and tools.** The realities of today’s teacher evaluations often include specific rubrics and formulaic models that administrators must follow. School administrators often have to explain and even defend their analysis of teacher performance. Because evaluations can determine job security with loss of tenure, the basic evaluation in Maya’s perception no longer exists. Administrators often have to learn an evaluation model and evaluation tools that constantly change with state legislation.

New assistant-principals may feel ill-prepared for the intensity of teacher evaluations and the time they require. Additionally, Maya underestimated the amount of time she would spend with teachers. Maya assumed teacher meetings would be brief and evaluation-based. However, she found that teachers often needed her assistance and even her ear to listen. “A lot of times, I think teachers who were complaining just wanted me to listen. I would say I learned from my Aspiring Principals Academy, to ask the question, ‘Do you want my help with this or do you just want me to listen?’” Maya was surprised that much of her time was taken by teachers who needed to speak with her on a myriad of subjects each day. The difficulty about this was that conversations were not scheduled into the day and came up at a moment’s notice.

Equally, Maya had to learn how to set the structure and rules of an assistant-principal’s day. Maya indicated that a classroom teacher has a very structured day. The transition from that structure was initially anxiety-provoking for her. She spoke to the difficulties in her interview.

I remember that a hard adjustment is keeping your own calendar. I mean as far as that, you *can* do that, because as a teacher you don’t have any control of your day. Figuring out how to prioritize—that I had freedom to have my own calendar. I remember the second week of the job, I asked the principal, ‘Can I go to Starbucks and get a coffee?’ He said, ‘Don’t ask. Just go. It’s fine. If you want to go get a coffee, you don’t have to ask me.’

**Unanticipated complexity.** Equally difficult was managing the unexpected events that can consume an assistant-principal’s day. Maya spoke to these surprises in her interview.

As an assistant-principal, discipline is a daily part of your job and if something happens, it can blow your whole calendar up for the day. I mean, something big happens, you gotta call the police, you gotta do this, do that, so it blows up your day. So, I was getting constantly irritated because these interruptions were coming, like kids that got sent down that I had to deal with, and this and that, and this and that, and I'm, like, 'They're interrupting me from my job!' And then I remember having to re-orient myself to say, 'No, this is your job.'

Building administrators are often sought out by staff for help with personal and professional problems. This energy drain can lead to fragmented focus during the administrator's daily responsibilities (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). Even in her third year, Maya continually learned new skills and responsibilities. "We're training all new secretaries. We're hiring over the summer four secretaries, and then trying to figure out how to train them." Maya struggled with the concept of her job duties and responsibilities. Even the most structured and exacting duties can be overwhelming for a new assistant-principal.

I'm the athletic director. It came with the office; yeah, not my dream. I hire and, and evaluate, fire coaches, deal with the parent problems *if* they get to me, for sports. That's pretty much it, but it takes a way bigger chunk of my time than I ever thought it would. I'm in charge of kids A-K because we split it by alphabet [and oversee] discipline [and] 504s with those kids.

Maya continued with other duties she was assigned.

Crisis team and building crisis, so drills—all that stuff. I'm in charge of PDIS. It all blends together and you're like, 'Who's going to take this? Ok, why don't you take

that?’ and you’re like, ‘Wait! What? Ok, fine.’ And building maintenance—so heating, cooling, and graduation.

The fact that duties may change each year or with the change of an administrative team only adds to the skill set that an assistant-principal must possess to lead successfully. It is difficult for a teacher who thrived on the structure of their day to embrace new responsibilities that are often complex and vast. New assistant-principals have to learn to manage an extensive repertoire of skills. As did Maya, Jared recalled a similar appreciation for the lack of knowledge about what encompassed an assistant-principal’s role. He specified,

I had no idea. I had no clue. I went and took the classes, and I knew through my interactions with the assistant-principals at my school that there would be some discipline involved. I didn’t really see them in classrooms that much. I just didn’t. Jared found this to be in direct conflict with the way his principal prioritized leadership in their building. “Advice that I’ve gotten from my principal that I’ve taken to heart is to fight to get into the classroom. You’re always going to have a distractor, but fight to get into the classroom.” Research supported Jared’s assertion. If a new administrator does not fight to get into the classroom, the reality is that it may never become a priority (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). Jared also spoke to the *on-call* nature of the job.

Every one of my teachers has my cell phone number. I would have never thought to text my principal during the day or my assistant-principal. Not that I didn’t have texting available but now my cell phone is just, it’s all texts. Anything from ‘Hey, can you hook me up with a ream of paper?’ to ‘I’m having trouble with D’Andre.’ It’s

amazing how quick the communication is and informal in a good way and in a bad way. It's non-stop.

**Long and unpredictable days.** Assistant-principals often experience responsibility for time-consuming projects or situations and are likewise expected to work overtime (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). Like Maya, Jared struggled with the perception of an administrative job versus the reality of it. Jared described the reality of his daily assistant-principal life in comparison to what he thought the job would be when he accepted the position.

I got in at 6:00 in the morning. I'll be here until 10:00 p.m. and I'll probably have an hour's worth of work to do. I did three observations today, and I did an informal walk-through. It's more of a co-instructional leader position here and partial central administrator. I'm the CTE coordinator, and I work on MI Step testing. What we do is whatever needs to be done. I mean, I've literally put in a door handle. I have a screwdriver in my desk drawer. I'll replenish pencils. I'll put out fires. I didn't know what I didn't know.

Every day is different. Today I finished up a post-evaluation document that I later met with the teacher to go over, corresponded with our attorney on a teacher who's on a Personal Development Plan, and we're in the process of pursuing tenure charges.

My light bulb blew out in my office and started to smoke so I left to monitor students during our pre-first period enrichment. Then I was called down because a student had a seizure and we had to have 911 take him and his father to the hospital. I had to shut those doors down and route students in the other way, did the announcements, did a first period observation, met with a parent for a half hour, then another parent phone call for 20 minutes.

I had a student intervention, supervised lunch, another classroom observation, supervised the other lunch, and then it was just ducking in the rooms, people getting my attention, 'Hey, can you help out with this, or this, or this?' I followed up on a book order, placed a software order, test drove some smart board pens to see which ones worked and which ones didn't, test drove some software, worked with students, did an interview for the student paper, and then supervised the dinner program. Then there were a couple other things like some minor behavioral things in between. No suspensions, no detentions today. Just basically a lot of listening and, and you know, 'Here's some Kleenex,' watching someone cry, and then, all right, coach them back up, 'Let's get you back in class, you can do this.'

In addition to the numerous unexpected daily events in the life of an assistant-principal, Jared found many problems more mental in nature. It was near impossible to turn off his administrative concerns when he left the building for the day. Many administrative decisions impacted not only students but also their families. For example, Jared spoke of a disheartening event that exemplified the mental challenges of an assistant-principal.

There have been some that have been stunning in an 'I can't believe this, this happened' sort of way. We had a mom who came in with a Frankenstein-type scar on her forehead during parent-teacher conferences. I asked if she was okay. It was literally still bleeding; it was an open wound. She said she had fallen down the stairs, she was missing teeth and I said, 'Are you okay?' You know, she looked like she had been beat up. Abused? 'No, I'm okay. I fell down the stairs.' I said, 'Okay.' Her son walked in the next day with a shoe that was caked in blood that he had been wearing

for a couple days. He confided to a teacher that he got in a fight with his best friend. I spoke with him.

We had the school social worker speak with him. And it turned out that his best friend was, in fact, his mom, and he tried to kill her. He had kicked her in the head as hard as he could. He took a crow bar and smashed her in the head, and when we were talking to him, he said that he was abused by the mom. We contacted police and protective services. Police were looking to investigate her, and at the very same time, she had called the police because she claimed she had been jumped.

Apparently, earlier that day, he had beaten her up a second time. So they found her beat up, police came, cuffed him, arrested him during passing time. He escaped the grasp from one of the cops. I was afraid they were going to Taser him in the school. The other one grabbed him, and then he screamed at me because he was mad that I had called the police and threatened to find my house, my dog, my wife, me; kill me. So he was disciplined for those threats.

The Special Ed Director determined that retroactively, the student was deemed to be Special Education. He was concerned that, from a conversation with the mom earlier in the year, she thought that she claimed she wanted special services for him that would trigger some sort of safeguards. So that led to internal battling between me and the Special Ed Director, because I was concerned for the safety of my students. This kid snapped in such a major way.

[The Special Ed Director] said it was a manifestation of his disability and so, the first week back, the kid ran away during one of the days. It was 15 degrees below zero [and he] freaked out because a teacher told him to put his phone away. He just

literally ran home for two miles, and the day that he returned he nearly killed a student. He grabbed her outside the hallway before school started, choked her until she passed out, and a teacher had to intervene. He is in County prison [now].

**Time and money.** Another assistant-principal role reality that Jared faced also impacted his life outside of school. The financial benefit turned out to be, in Jared's words, "a significant challenge."

Payroll is continuously an issue. We've had mysterious cuts. We went to 27 pays this year. We are told we are making the same amount of money but our checks are a little bit less, and less, and less, and so I don't know what the budget is for my school because that information isn't shared with me."

Assistant-principals can bring home concerns not only about students, their families, and their wellbeing, but also struggle with financial concerns and instability. In Jared's case, he spoke of the value of having a girlfriend who is in education and can understand the demands of an assistant-principal. This has been a support for him.

Similar to the experience of Jared and Maya, Sarah stated that, in retrospect, I did not know what I was walking into. I would say I was not prepared for the role of AP. The things they can teach you in school are theoretical. It's nice to have awareness that you should probably know this law. In reality, you're going to look it up, but at least you're aware there is that law.

Sarah's perception mirrored the others in that she felt that assistant-principals had time, power, and the ability to make positive change in a building. She spoke to the reality of her daily responsibilities as an assistant-principal. "I'm in charge of NWEA testing, transportation, field trips, parent-teacher conferences, curriculum night, OSTC, dual



enrollment, and attendance.” Sarah, too, was surprised by how limited, in reality, was her time to visit classrooms.

I would like to get into teachers’ classrooms more than just my scheduled observations, but there’s 41 indicators and you need to write about six to ten of them, so it’s an hour in the classroom. It’s probably another 40 minutes finishing that up. Then the post-conference. I thought it would be more teacher observation and projects and less putting out fires. I didn’t realize I would have to put out so many fires that I shouldn’t have been putting out.

**Teachers and parents.** The perception and reality of interaction with teachers and parents were recognized as factors in assistant-principal transitions. Sarah went on to discuss her frustration with teacher behavior as well as parental behavior.

My biggest shock was the lack of work that staff does. I assume everyone takes their attendance. I would never kick out a kid for not having a pencil. ‘Here’s a pencil, sit down.’ I would call a parent and manage it on my own [as a teacher]. It would never occur to me that I would just get your [teachers’] garbage.

Sarah felt discouraged because she wanted to inspire and motivate her staff, but what she saw were teachers needing assistance with basic management skills. Her work, at times, could feel punitive as well. Sarah tried to support her teaching staff in areas of discipline. Even though she followed the code of conduct and felt she was supportive, teachers believed that she was not supportive enough. One teacher told her that she, ‘didn’t feel like [assistant-principals] were doing enough discipline on a cheating situation’ but we are following the student code of conduct. That is board policy. I can’t just make up a new rule because you’re [a teacher] mad that these kids are cheating. I try to be very matter-of-fact.

Sarah is willing to have a negative interaction with a teacher, if it is the best interest of the student. Sarah wants her teaching staff supported, but puts the student first.

I think that you need to ultimately have the mindset that you need to do what's best for the kid. And sometimes, that's hard, because sometimes it's more work.

Sometimes it's more dramatic. Sometimes it requires more digging. Sometimes it requires upsetting teachers, taking flack from other parents. But you have to ultimately be satisfied in this is why we're here. I also think that having a growth mindset—education is not stagnant. You have to be flexible, you know; be willing to grow, be willing to change—it's not going to be stagnant.

Sarah's relationships with parents were also different than she anticipated. She often had to contact parents under difficult circumstances. "Typically my conversations were more proactive with parents and now it's on the reactive. That's a different approach to talking to parents and not being intimidated by them. Searching kids—stuff like that that they don't teach you in grad school." As a classroom teacher, Sarah often enjoyed positive interactions with parents and colleagues. Her perception did not include the reality of undesirable interactions and having to defend her actions. Like the others, Justin had differences in perception and reality regarding his daily responsibilities.

I thought a majority of my time would be discipline and attendance. But coming here, this building is incredible. I don't do much discipline, cause our kids are just so great. Our principal, in his first year said, 'Wow, you really don't do a lot of discipline.' So that was what I kind of thought I was stepping into [discipline], but also the teacher evaluation piece and what little I do with budgets and school safety are things that I knew I would have my hand in. But [they] have taken more a majority of my time

than I anticipated. I oversee the English Department and the Math Department. I do all those teacher evaluations, and that's a total of 24 teachers. So I evaluate them according to the Charlotte Danielson rubric. I'm also in charge of attendance every day, all discipline-in-school suspensions, detentions. I monitor and track all those, make sure they get served. I also attend every IEP here in the building. I'm in charge of the Yellow Stop Light documentation for our anti-bullying program.

Time was a constant struggle for new assistant-principals. Justin talked about how long it took for him to institute a new school policy.

My old principal didn't like the attendance policy, so she had me come up with a brand new one, and there's no perfect policy for any school anywhere. So, it's been a—a three-year process of really trial and error, mostly error. I had formed an attendance committee towards the end of the school year, and we came up with, I think, a pretty solid plan, and I haven't heard the grumblings like I've (heard) in the past, and we're holding kids highly accountable. So, that's a step I've taken in improving it, but one I want to take a bigger leap in, and it's just hard with the time constraint. Like I said, there's one of me and over a thousand of them.

**Expect the unexpected.** When Justin was asked what he wished he knew prior to applying for an assistant-principal position, he stated,

You don't know what's going to happen. You have to be flexible, kind, caring, compassionate, and level-headed. You just do not know what your day will bring, and some people like that aspect of it, and some people do not. I had a bunch of things I needed to get done today. I had to skip a teacher observation that's been planned for a week because of an incident that happened last night. So, everything else gets pushed

to the back burner, and you re-organize, and you reset, and you regroup. I haven't touched it. I added to it [a list of to-do activities] but I haven't touched it. As you can see, I've got attendance paperwork sitting right here—haven't touched it. This is stuff that normally would have been done before now. And the hot line tips come right to my phone, too, so that's instant.

Novice assistant-principals are often surprised at just how unprepared they are for the demands and responsibilities of the role (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Justin genuinely had to expect the unexpected when he created an anonymous hotline system, where students and parents could send texts of importance to school administrators. Justin's enthusiasm and innovation often provided more work as evidenced by Justin's comment, "From a discipline standpoint, one text to our anonymous hotline can be three hours of my morning."

Justin was very perceptive in understanding the delicate balance in the experience of an assistant-principal who spends half of his or her day as the boss and the other half taking directives from his or her principal and central administrators. An assistant-principal has to be comfortable with this duality.

You have to be comfortable in your role, and I am very comfortable taking orders from people above me. I'm very comfortable being the middleman— you're middle management. And if you're not prepared to do that, you have to be comfortable in your role. I'm very comfortable—I could be an assistant for the next 15 years and retire, be completely content.

The researcher noticed a discrepancy between the job qualities described by central administrators and the actual duties as experienced by the assistant-principals. Official assistant-principal duties are noted earlier in the literature review. Research consistently

indicated discipline as a major responsibility and cited long days and balance as challenging components (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Cooner et al., 2008). The research also consistently points to the all-encompassing *other duties as assigned* clause that often comprises most of an assistant-principal's day (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995). Central-office administrators listed different responsibilities that they see assumed by new high school assistant-principals. Superintendent Bernie stated,

At the high school, there is the primary traditional building component of it, and that would obviously be discipline with students. It would also be operation management of the building involving custodial work and a variety of other things like that. So it's real operational— probably the primary [responsibility]. But then, [the assistant-principal] is also involved with curricular decisions. [The assistant-principal] does the master schedule; that's a huge component.

Assistant Superintendent Jacob described the job of an assistant-principal in his district.

Historically, the assistant-principal was the disciplinarian, and they did a lot of managerial things. We began moving into making sure that assistant-principals were viewed as instructional leaders in the building. Also scheduling of maintenance, discipline, instructional duties—and then there are one-time events, like freshmen orientation.

Dorothy pointed out that “It is important to know what the AP job consists of before getting into it.” Conversely, Superintendent Bernie felt that while assistant-principals should have a sense of what they are getting into, it might not be possible until one is actively in the position. He stated, “I don't think that you really understand how important the job is until you do it.” Of course distorted perception is of concern for new assistant-

principals. They are embarking on a journey with new responsibilities that are ill defined and rapidly changing. Even central-office administrators are unable to define the requirements of an assistant-principal.

**Teachers have a limited view.** Satisfying central-office administrators is only one component of an assistant-principal's job. Teachers have an entirely different view of a successful assistant-principal. It is also a more limited view. Teacher Myles assumed that assistant-principals only have two responsibilities "Through discipline or whether through providing instructional feedback." Teacher Julia struggled to articulate the reality of assistant-principals' hours. She contradicted herself when explaining what she felt were the responsibilities of an assistant-principal and the benefits of the role. She shared that she believed assistant-principals share responsibilities so the time commitment really was not bad, and later stated it was a huge time commitment. Julia believed that an assistant-principal's job could be described thus:

Part of it, since last year, has been evaluations, of course. So trying to squeeze in evaluations, dealing with discipline, having your door always open to talk to staff, a lot of committee meetings, and after-school events. I'm not quite sure exactly which ones. She [assistant-principal, Sarah] has similar hours to teachers. I know there's a lot of night activities but I know with the administrators, they rotate so it doesn't all fall on one person. That includes traveling to other districts for sporting events and other things, too, which is a huge commitment.

When asked about whether she would consider the role she was firm in her answer. It is nothing I am interested in. It's a huge time commitment. You might not be grading

papers but you have a lot of extracurricular activities that you are dealing with. You're dealing with parents and discipline.

Julia struggled to find positive components of the assistant-principal position.

Marsha, another teacher, stated,

Assistant-principals handle the students' disciplinary issues. That can range from boyfriend-girlfriend fighting, to having to just deal with high school drama, to serious issues like we had this past week with the threat online. [The assistant-principal] also deals with evaluating half of the teachers. Ninety percent of the time, he only sees parents when there is an issue, and I don't want that. That's not for me. The only benefits of administration were higher pay and no grading.

When looking at the perspective of individuals who have never experienced an administrative position, the realities of the administrative role are often shocking. Maya summed this in her interview,

The first year I did get tossed in a fight in the cafeteria over the table. It was always kind of interesting, almost exciting, because as a teacher, you don't know three quarters of what goes on in school. Then you become an assistant-principal and you're, like, 'Oh my God, there's this whole seedy underworld that I knew nothing about and I'm so happy that I knew nothing about.'

### **Category III—Tension, Pressure, and Stressors**

One of the dominant categories that surfaced throughout interviews was the often unforeseen stress of administration and the effect that it has on the individual transitioning in an assistant-principal position. Teaching does not fully inform individuals about the vast duties and responsibilities that an assistant-principal handles each day. Therefore, when

teachers transition into the role of assistant-principal, they often are surprised by the type of responsibilities incurred and how much time those responsibilities take from their day (Hartzell et al., 1995). The awareness of the full extent of the job can lead to a great amount of stress on the novice assistant-principal.

Jared had multiple examples of unforeseen stressors in his transition from teacher to assistant-principal. One of the stressful situations happened shortly after he started in his new role.

We actually had someone quit midway through the year and he was the only person that was certified to teach the classes. We couldn't find a sub, we couldn't—the timing was terrible, so I taught. I went back into the classroom for 12 weeks. [I] was the teacher of record, kept my radio on my hip, posted my lesson plans to the wall, and invited my teachers who I was evaluating to come watch me teach. So it was a bear, because my first year as an AP, I was an AP and a teacher. I was making all the phone calls home. I was there for parent-teacher conferences. I was having dual interventions. I was prepping three classes.

**Problem-solving and quick solutions.** Although Jared's experience was highly unusual, it spoke to the need for an assistant-principal to problem-solve and find solutions quickly. In another, unrelated situation, Jared had to act quickly, as the stakes were extremely high, and he had not dealt with anything similar before.

We had a very disturbing situation a few weeks ago where an adult who does not have any kids in the district was a foreign exchange host. I had a 16-year-old girl confide in me that she had been living with him for the better part of six months, so that prompted a full-scale investigation. [It] involved two different police agencies,



Child Protective Services, 11 different CPS numbers, because it turned out that this guy was hosting 10, 11, 12 kids to spend the night in his house. [He] would never lock the door; there was potentially alcohol present, and it was not a safe environment. And he had significant ties with school board members in this district to the point where he had been publicly thanked at a board meeting for his support for athletics. So, this was an interesting decision, and I had to fight very hard within some of the internal bureaucracy to pursue a CPS report, because there were people who were not interested in taking this on. But I knew that once the student reported it to me about the situations that were involved, I had no choice but to be a mandated reporter, so we had police here.

Often, solutions may be unorthodox or demanding and likewise, may be scrutinized, but it is often the responsibility of the assistant-principal to fix situations that no one else can. Not only are assistant-principals and their decisions up for analysis in the school building and community but also their decisions can also bring them into the legal arena. Teacher evaluations can become legal cases as well. This situation can mean the AP's evaluations undergoing the utmost inquiry and inspection from staff as well as attorneys. Jared discussed the firing of a tenured teacher and the tenure hearing that ensued.

I was the centerpiece of a tenure case last year (after which) we were able to successfully transition the teacher out of the building. That was tough. She was on my caseload and she had kind of bullied her way through before, because she was tight with a couple of school board members. And the first observation I had with her, it was an unmitigated disaster; she showed up 20 minutes late, and she wasn't prepared. It wasn't effective; it was poor teaching. And when I provided her the feedback, she

reacted literally with profanity and with shouting, and so, at that point I said, ‘Listen, we’re going to have to shut this down. You’re going to have to bring a union rep with you because this is just not appropriate.’ She said, ‘I can’t believe that you would mark me ineffective.’ I said, ‘The irony here is that you’re ineffective in your professionalism for things outside, not just your lesson but also things before [the lesson], and you reinforced it by swearing at an administrator during your post-evaluation meeting. That is the essence of being an ineffective teacher with respect to professionalism.’

The impetus for removing her was two different incidents. One was, she allowed students to watch cell phone video of an underage student being gang-raped; didn’t have any problem with that, and then she lied about it after the fact. And then, equally as bad, we caught her feeding answers to a pre/post-test that were specifically geared to doctor her student growth numbers. She put all the answers up on a screen. She told the students to mark these down, but to intentionally get a few wrong; a student captured it on a cell phone. And then, she tried to fail the kids who ratted her out, and so, it was a long process. We had to get our attorneys involved.

Situations like this speak to the many uncertainties assistant-principals face each day.

**Many problems are out of an administrator’s control**, yet assistant-principals are seen as experts who need to solve the problem. In reality, assistant-principals often don’t have experience or answers in a given situation. Maya addressed the stress of this reality.

Obviously, I don’t want to do something wrong, because you know conferences are huge – you can’t mess those up or you hear about it forever. Or the first time a parent

challenges your discipline, and you're like, 'Oh God! Did I do it right? Was it wrong?' There was definitely a lot of anxiety surrounding it.

Central-office administrator Dorothy implied that on the job training is by intentional design.

I think that's important in this area; leaders have to recognize other leaders and help grow them and push them. You know, one thing, my own growth is learning not to do everything for everyone. Like letting them struggle. Giving tools and saying, 'Here it is. You're— it's ok to struggle.' That's how I learned.

She went on to offer that the ability to rise to the occasion is a skill critical to the success of an assistant-principal.

So much of what I do is on the job training. Figuring it out. Calling the State. Going online. That's the other thing you need to be able to cope and you need to be someone who takes initiative. You don't wait for answers; you look for them. You have to have initiative. If you can't cope and you don't take initiative, you're going to sink. Jared spoke about how he handled this learning curve as a new assistant-principal. What I didn't know, I didn't know. Even yesterday looking through MI Star and seeing how ours is configured—things I've looked at a hundred times, but I didn't know to look for things that are missing. Immediately today after a conversation with [another administrator] who works with that system in her district, I contacted our data coordinator at County A Schools and said 'we need to update our MI Star because we don't have our WEDA numbers accurate.' Last year, I tried to teach myself Special Ed law as much as possible, especially with the MDRs and the procedural safeguards.

Jared spoke to the fact that assistant-principals are often left to their own devices to educate themselves on myriad issues. Teacher Samantha described an incident that spoke to the downside of the idea of leading and learning on the job. She spoke of a situation that occurred with one of her assistant-principals in the first year of the job.

I think she [her assistant-principal] gave a presentation earlier on in the school year, and it was not really a fault of hers; it just was unclear coming from the district-office. And she was in charge of sort of delivering this unclear message. It wasn't really her fault, but when people were kind of peppering her with questions, you know; we all wanted answers to them. I just think, in general, maybe people were like, 'Hmmm. I wonder why she doesn't have the answers right.'

Assistant-principal Jared confirmed a similar experience early in his transition. The principal said, 'You're taking over scheduling.' I've never scheduled anything a day in my life. I even said it at my interview, 'I'm not versed in scheduling.' I made that clear. Then they sent me to a whole bunch of trainings, and she [the principal] didn't like the way I wanted to do scheduling and was saying derogatory things to staff members about me, and made a difficult process even more difficult.

Jared's concern also influenced decisions he had to make in his new role. One revolved around the area of discipline. As a new person to the community, he was concerned about false accusations or interpretations of his actions. "We have discipline. I've had my share of some crazy moments. I've already been accused of being racist once this week." Again, Justin echoed fear in decision-making. "Am I violating a student's rights? Special Ed laws make everything extremely difficult, 504's. All these things that you have to take, *all* these factors into consideration when making decisions."

**Quick decisions can impact employment.** Assistant-principals often have to make decisions quickly, and there is apprehension that those decisions can impact their employment, as they are mostly at-will positions. Jared showed concern regarding having to make important and massive decisions in his new role and having to prove his expertise in unusual situations in a new district.

My fear was, I was tenured as a teacher and I had a job where they—I never had to worry about getting canned. They liked me. The parents liked me. The kids liked me. My co-teachers liked me, and I could have stayed. And when I left, I knew that I went to a district where nobody knew me, and I was completely at-will. So it was going to be either you do this and you make it work, and then you see what happens, or you do this and then you hope you can get a teaching job that might be as good as what you left, but it's going to be \$30,000 less. So it was a little bit of a stressor, a lot of a bit of a stressor, but it was worth it. It was worth it.

Sarah acknowledged that she was lucky to be able to avoid this stressor. She recognized that she was “lucky to have an interim position for a year. [I] had a contract just for me that said if I go back into the classroom, I could go back into my dance classroom. And they hired the dance teacher on a one-year expiring contract.”

Justin shared the sentiment of fear of security in light of decisions he makes daily as well.

The main reason I left teaching in my last district was job security from a district standpoint. But now, I make a lot more decisions that put me in jeopardy, legal decisions that put me in jeopardy. I don't have a – I mean, I have a union but it's just the other administrators, so there's only like eight of us. Job security is less here, and

I kinda wish – there’s still days this year, I drive home and say, ‘Man, I should have stayed in teaching.’

**Assistant-principals carry stress and anxiety**, which also may manifest itself physically. Several subjects alluded to physical transformation after taking their new position. Some were positive changes and, unfortunately, some were negative. Maya battled a number of personal stresses stemming from her assistant-principal role, and the stress added to her physical ailments. “I had physical therapy for my neck. I had back surgery.”

Justin also spoke of the physical ailments he felt were caused by work related stress. “I mean I had pre-ulcers, I had shingles, I had anxiety. I mean, it was hard—it was really hard. Then I learned some coping mechanisms in the spring. Physical activity was a big one.” Justin started lifting weights with a neighbor four times each week. “Taking better care of my body and no junk food, no spicy food and just really watching my diet. Sleeping.”

Jared spoke of his own healthy transition.

As a teacher, I was not in the best of shape. I would smoke. Not like I would go to school drunk or anything, but I’d have a couple beers during the week, and then, as an assistant-principal, I had this regiment and I kind of kept that approach burning at both ends. Nothing crazy during the week but still my routine was I’d come home, smoke a couple cigarettes, have a beer, cook dinner.

Later in the year, I added the misery of looking at divorce in a slow speed car wreck—car crash. Once I moved out, I started working out, going to the gym, and I revamped my diet. It went from 297 pounds down to 247 and um, was able to drop my cholesterol, quit smoking, got in better shape, and it became a routine to be healthier, to be able to have the meditation time to go for eight-mile walks and to think and

watch less TV, spend less time on the couch and more doing. And that's helped in a more complete emotional support necessary thing.

Assistant-principals often resorted to drastic measures to preserve their health from job-inflicted stress. Some embarked on entirely new lifestyle paths, whereas others used surgery and medical procedures to help their ailments. Although the assistant-principals had differing health issues, three attested to the role of job stress on their physical well-being. Jared summarized the stress of an assistant-principal job. "Whenever I do leave, I'm going to miss it, but this place has been like dog years. One year here is like seven years."

**Preserving and fostering relationships.** Assistant-principals spoke at great length about their experiences preserving and fostering relationships as they transitioned from teacher to administrator. Hartzell et al., (1995) proclaimed that the role one holds defines them and thereby defines and alters their relationships with others in applicable settings. Administrators have to analyze their interactions with teachers, as even their silence can be interpreted. Central-office administrator, Dorothy, spoke to the reality that even gestures and body language can be open for staff analysis.

Or you learn very fast. Whenever people let their guard down, it's just natural, you want to talk, you want to be social, and even like when you're dealing with really confidential stuff, sometimes by not saying stuff, puts you in an uncomfortable situation. 'Cause you might be asked a question and then they say, 'Oh, by you not responding, now I know it's true.' I just never want to put someone else's personal life in jeopardy. I know I can control myself, but sometimes people like to gossip and chat—you've gotta toe the line very carefully.

**The job transforms relationships.** Teachers transitioning to assistant-principal roles experience transformation in relationships at school, regardless of whether they are in the same building or a different district. However, teachers transitioning in the same school undertake a change in their role from colleague to supervisor that is palpable. Maya transitioned to an assistant-principal in the same building in which she taught. “And it’s kinda sad. You feel like you can tread both worlds, but it’s like you meet a new group of people that kinda become your crowd at school. Within the school, I kinda had to shut some of that [socializing] down.” Maya spoke about the relationships she has maintained in the building.

I wouldn’t say I lost any friendships. I would say they diminished in their closeness, you know what I mean? And then it’s like you’re not getting invited to as much stuff or your old group’s going out for a drink, and you’re like, ‘Awwww.’ For a while you get invited, and then you kinda don’t, you know? And I just–bittersweet–but I’m like, ‘Ok, I get it.’ They want to go and bitch about work, and they can’t if I’m there.

Maya also discussed the struggle of transitioning from colleague and friend to supervisor and evaluator. “At first, I anticipated it being very awkward, evaluating my friends because we hung out, and I was in charge of the English department, which was where most of my friends were.” Maya said that although she knew relationships might change, she was not necessarily prepared for the extent to which they would change. “Maybe a little bit expected, but maybe not quite expected as I thought.”

Sarah’s initial reaction was positive. She had long standing relationships within her building and did not anticipate any conflicts in her new role as assistant-principal.



I have a couple friends at the school but I was pretty confident they would still be my friends. The majority of my close friends exist outside of the school, so that wasn't an issue. I already know the school, I already know the teachers, so it was a little hard because it—it went from being my peers to not my peers.

**Benefits and drawbacks of internal transitions.** During internal transitions, there is often excitement that a peer who understands the teacher's experience will be a leader in the building. As a teacher, Julia remarked that she appreciates the need for change in relationships when someone moved from a teaching position to an assistant-principal role in the same school.

The obstacle of the administrator going from classroom to administration in-house is also very difficult for them, I'm sure, because they have to be able to maintain those relationships but also be able to separate them, too. Because they have a completely different leadership role now.

Maya recalled comments when she first was hired as assistant-principal.

So it's been a revolving door for administrators, and I think people were excited to see somebody that knows the building, knows the history, knows the culture, knows the people. And it really would just be learning the job. Relationships intact.

Sarah felt a great deal of pressure interviewing with her current administrative staff. They knew and supported her, and she did not want to let them down. The stakes are often higher for an internal candidate who already has established relationships in the building.

It was actually my hardest interview because I felt like it was so hard because—I was so prepared—but the letting them down. These are my friends; these are people I spend time with. I didn't want to let them down. What if I do poorly?

Superintendent Bernie also lauded the positive benefits of having an internal candidate for assistant-principal. “You know your way around and you know policies.”

Maya did experience struggles transitioning within the same building, but she also spoke to the many benefits that came from that internal transition.

I think that was a huge benefit for me, because relationships end up being the most important thing in this job. People that go to a different building have to do all of the relationship-building and the learning of people. Who you ask to do this, and who doesn't like who, and the history, you know what I mean? You know, the stuff that happens in a family of school teachers and you have to learn the job at the same time.

Jacob is a central-office administrator who was able to also comment on an internal transition, having experienced one himself.

A small district, it might be a little bit more difficult because you develop friendships with people. You know where people's warts are and you know where all the skeletons are. In a larger district, I would say that that would probably not be as difficult because you might not be as well known of a commodity in that district. I would say, some of the pros would be you know the culture of the district, you know how the district operates, you know who to call when you need this, you know who *not* to call. Some of the drawbacks would be -particularly if you developed friendships.

Bernie recognized that relationships must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for preexisting friendships.

“I think for the long haul it can be very challenging and a lot of times it depends on how close you've been with the teaching staff. I think when you come in from the

outside, and all they know you as is an administrator, it sometimes allows you to be more objective.”

Assistant-principals must be able to evaluate teachers who are sometimes friends and help teachers who are struggling to improve. This often means new assistant-principals must create new boundaries in their relationships with teachers in their buildings (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Dorothy and Bernie both alluded to the difficulties of meshing personal and professional relationships. Unfortunately, in some instances, it cannot be avoided. Many teachers who transition to assistant-principals had long-standing relationships in their building that could not dissolve or change following the transition of one of the participants. When a teacher becomes an assistant-principal, he or she enters a new level of employment status that is no longer equal to former teaching colleagues. Finding new balance is particularly difficult when teachers are married and one becomes an assistant-principal in the same district or building.

Maya was challenged by this type of situation.

It was an incredible stressor having your husband teach in the building you are an AP in. I would never recommend it to anyone, and we were talking about that the other day. We're actually in marriage counseling now, part of it, I think, was because of that job transition.

In Maya's situation, her safe home environment for venting was compromised because she was married to a staff member.

It was very rough at first and it was very hard and I would go home and break down to my husband about it because I was like 'Oh my God. I can't handle this anymore. I

can't just have people coming in bitching all day long.' But I would never tell anyone no. That's how you wreck those relationships, and so I decided to be patient. I can remember one teacher who was displeased with her schedule, and she had gone through all these different channels, and met with the principal, and couldn't let it go. She just came to me to talk about it with her department chair, and I finally looked at her and I said, 'You have to let this go. That ship has sailed. There's nothing that can be done about it. I understand you're not happy and I'm really sorry about that, but this is done. Keep moving on, we'll see what we can do for next time.' And her department chair afterwards said, 'Thank you.'

Similarly, Sarah viewed her colleagues through a different lens as a result of her assistant-principal position.

How am I going to balance my interactions with my colleagues now because they were my peers, and now I'm the boss of them? And my other worry was, 'What if I hate this and they have spent all this time training me?' I didn't think I would hate it, because of all my experience, but what if I really hate this and I'm going to go back in the classroom and they will have spent all this time mentoring me and all this time helping me for a year, for me to say, 'Yeah, I'm going back to the classroom.' So I was like, 'Please make me like it.'

Like Maya and Jacob, Sarah transitioned in the same building and district as well. She was affected by the fact that she started to see teachers who had been friends in a new light. One of her friends acted unprofessional and that was difficult for her.

So that was hard for me last year. I was probably more withdrawn from her [her past teacher friend] because I was just so irritated. I just couldn't get past her professionalism to

be her friend outside as much. She is the nicest person, and she would do anything for anyone, and she is the greatest friend, but I just had the hardest time being like, 'Can you just follow the rules?'

Sarah went on to speak about this conflict.

One challenge I had is a teacher here, who I'm super close with on a personal level. We do not see the same eye-to-eye on a school level. When I was in the classroom and she was in the classroom, we were able to maintain. We hang out outside of school. We like a lot of the same arts things. She is a little bit more college-oriented in the fact that she doesn't believe in censorship; she is not careful about stuff like that. She is fine with her kids saying the f- word in class. I am a little bit more—I would like to have my job. This is a public school in a conservative, conservative community. We do not live in an artsy community. This is not [name of a school-district in a known liberal community]. We are not there. This is not college. It is high school. So anyways, when I went into this, I had the job of approving all of her curriculum. And, and it wasn't even peer—it was that we're friends outside of school. So now, all of a sudden, I'm the person editing her social issue [classroom] stuff, and she is not a very good rule follower. And she is very artsy in the fact that nothing's on time, everything's last minute.

Sarah also felt frustrations when socializing with her former staff.

I have some close friends, not that many of them. I'm not a 'hang out with a big group' people at work kind of person. I think often school culture breeds in the high school staff that often act like high school students as well, and I'm not interested in that mix. I've had a few bad experiences on some staff outings; I'm not interested in

being drunk out of my mind and acting like an idiot, acting inappropriate with a colleague. Or being part of that in any way, shape, or form.

It is often necessary for a new assistant-principal to make authoritative decisions, regardless of whether the teacher is a former friend. Sarah faced this in her building. “You know, I’m the middleman, they’re going on this field trip. And with the editing, I was always willing to say, ‘I’m not willing to advocate for this to lose my job.’”

Assistant Superintendent Jacob also spoke to the difficulties facing assistant-principals with former friendships in the building. While Jacob recognized the value of knowing staff and knowing the strengths and weaknesses of teachers, he also observed how difficult the social transition could be; “One administrator is having some issues now because—ok, she was everybody’s friend. They went out and had beers on Friday and shot the breeze together. Now, she doesn’t do that as much. She might have to discipline some people or she might have to tell some people “No.””

**Taking cues from teachers.** Assistant-principals often have to take their cues from teachers regarding what teachers need for positive support. Teacher Samantha stated,

Sometimes when people move into that position, kind of my expectation would be that she would change a little bit. She would be less friendly to me in school, or less friendly to me, or less goofy with me joking with me when I went past her office or something like that. I had another colleague who went into an administrative position, and he used to joke with us and say crazy, you know, hilarious things at the lunch table and goof around and things like that. And then, when he became an assistant-principal, he just really changed and he was not, did not goof around with us anymore. And when I saw him, he was very, very professional, which I appreciate his

professionalism, but it was just very weird for him to kind of cut off that like, social side of himself towards teachers.

Teacher Myles agreed that relationships should change between teachers and assistant-principals. He indicated it is difficult to have a social relationship with the people who are making the personnel actions.

I don't see that place. Just because you do want the delineation between, you know, your chain of command. It's tough to make friends with the people you work for or under for that matter. In an instance, let's say there's a situation where he had developed a social connection and a staff member's performance warranted some professional action, whether it is a suspension or talking to, things like that. It seems like it is hard to implement when there is a strong social bond.

While establishing new relationships between assistant-principals and teachers can be murky and sometimes difficult, efforts made by assistant-principals are respected and appreciated by the teaching staff. Regarding staff social events, both teachers and administrators agree, assistant-principal attendance and participation is appreciated. However, both assistant-principals and teachers felt comfortable when administrators recognized their new role and left social events after a brief appearance. Marsha demonstrated this, as evidenced by a recent staff function at her school.

We [Marsha and her assistant-principal] have a good relationship even outside of that in that he'll come up to my classroom and ask me about my family, about my life. We have some similar family issues, and I appreciate that. It is very nice when a boss will ask me about my family. It shows he cares. And not everyone will do that. Not every principal will do that. However, I was very happy at the Christmas party to see he left

early. ‘Cause I don’t think he should be partying it up with the teachers or the staff. He should separate himself in that regard.

Justin, without any knowledge of Marsha’s comments, mirrored her sentiments regarding the same staff function.

Last Friday, we had our staff party, our Christmas party, organized by a couple of teachers. A couple of the staff members introduced me as their boss, which is always uncomfortable. I’m trying to be on the same level as them at the party, and a couple of the teachers swore and they apologized immediately. And it’s like ‘you know, we’re outside of school now, this is a social event; this is not a school function.’ So just them still seeing me even in a social setting as their boss, just last Friday, and I’ve been here four years, and I have great relationships with those four teachers. But I’m still not on their level.

**Communication is important.** Assistant-principals with positive teacher relationships often make those relationships a priority and work very hard to establish and maintain them. Many assistant-principals allude to such relationships as strengths. Maya molded her relationships based on what she knew she did not want to see happen. She watched a principal who actually struggled with communication, and found value in positive relationships after seeing him struggle.

I want a good communicator in all senses of the word. I have worked for several principals, under them, with them, and I can say that my principal now—I love him to death, and he is a good man and a good principal but—he is not a good communicator and that sunk him from like day one. Yeah, he’s having to climb back out of that hole. The other assistant-principal and I had *several* tough conversations with him, where



we had to say, ‘You have to care about relationships.’ Because he didn’t really understand why [he had to care] and not to be like -whatever.

Teachers also spoke to the value of strong administration communication skills in regards to their relationships with staff. The teaching staff often recognizes poor communication skills. Marsha spoke of her assistant-principal. “He used to be more—he would talk about teachers to other teachers. And that was a huge complaint among the staff. That you know if you told him something you never knew if you would be talked about later.”

New assistant-principals must learn how to appear as the professional at all times, including limiting risk in the projects they undertake, avoiding moral dilemmas, and keeping disputes private. These assumptive guidelines help administrators to portray acceptable values and behaviors to stakeholders (Marshall & Kasten, 1994). Poor communication and unprofessional behavior can often mar teacher-assistant-principal relationships. Positive communication can bridge philosophical differences and help teachers improve their practice with administrative guidance. Assistant-principals who recognize that building relationships requires patience and time have found success. Justin has been working on this for the past four years of his transition from teacher to assistant-principal. He cited his patience and perseverance as tools for positive change.

Probably 20 staff members that had seven years or under experience, are all in this building. And those old administrators and the new administrators are completely opposite in the ways they handle things. So they only knew, they grew up only knowing, one way and my way was a 180 degrees different. It’s a radical shift for them. And now we’re all on the same page and it took—there’s one that it literally

took me four years and now she gets it. And she even said to me at the party, ‘See, I’m softening. I know what’s going on now.’ But it took four years.

Justin was able to establish respect and trust by becoming a safe place for teachers to vent and share information.

There are two teachers who I respect highly and they’ve come to me with a lot of sensitive issues that they know I will handle correctly. So I let them into my inner circle, my trust a little bit. They’ve come in before and they say, ‘Please I don’t want this to leave this office,’ and it hasn’t—I’ve built that trust up with them. And I tell them to reciprocate, you know, ‘Hey, what I’m about to tell you can’t leave this office.’ It’s never really about personnel issues or school issues. It’s just kinda things that I’m upset about district-wide.

One way that Maya established strong teacher relationships was utilizing very intentional conversation skills. Maya was very cognizant of how she spoke to teachers and found that listening instead of talking promoted stronger relationships and a feeling of support.

When I’d go into conversations with people, it’s a little bit easier. I tried to do much more of a not me talking, but me kind of questioning, having them answer, then saying, ‘A couple things I noticed’ or ‘What do you think about this?’ I think, again, having those relationships did help because I know who I can talk to and how.

Maya began proactively to reach out to teachers who might need social support in the building and found that that helped establish her role as a caring and supportive assistant-principal.

“We have a teacher getting a divorce, so I just kind of grabbed her the other day and like, ‘How’s it going? How’re you doing? Are you ok?’ I heard a rumor the other day about one of my teachers and so I grabbed him yesterday and I’m like ‘I just want you to know, as a friend, this is out there.’”

While focusing on communication skills, attending staff parties, and taking the time to meet with colleagues might be time consuming, these efforts often pay off with great staff respect. Justin speaks of this payoff when addressing clerical personnel.

My secretaries have had other bosses before that they haven’t worked with, and one of them took a pay cut to come here to work for me. I mean, they’re like ‘I make \$8,000 more in this position but I’m miserable, and I’ve heard good things about you. My kids love you. I want to work for you!’ Take care of them. Give them the benefit of the doubt on some things, and they appreciate it.” With patience and effort, assistant-principals can gain respect and loyalty from building staff.

Justin reflected on his transition from teacher to assistant-principal and the impact that this transition had on his work relationships. It was not without difficulty that Justin distanced himself and acted in a more professional manner.

When I was a teacher, I was a lot of people’s go-to when I first came in, and then a lot of them left. So not being one of the gang, being seen as the boss, was not something I was anticipating. Not having that same connection with the teachers. I mean, we’re friendly and we’re cordial, and that’s fine, but it’s the aspect of I’m not one of them anymore. I’m one of the other side; the three of us [administrators]. That was something that I wasn’t anticipating or prepared for.

Teacher Julia recognized the importance of seeing assistant-principals at staff functions but, at the same time, Julia ascertained that assistant-principals should always maintain their professional role.

I think there is a place for social relationships. They also try to build rapport. They do try to go to a Friday after school ‘let’s get together with staff.’ They try to be there at least for a little while, just to have that sociability, so it’s not all-just business. But also keeping that fine line of business and, you know, those personal relationships.

Assistant-principals, particularly those new to a building or district, need to establish positive relationships with teachers outside the evaluation. Maya spoke of situations she is aware of, where former colleagues transitioned to new districts and struggled with relationships. She specifically cited that it might be harder to lead change in a new school and district. “Even if it’s good, well-intentioned change, people are kind of like, ‘you don’t know us, you don’t know who we are, you don’t know our history or why we do this.’”

**See the bigger picture.** Assistant Superintendent Jacob cited the fact that new assistant-principals might have initial difficulty thinking as a leader outside of the classroom. “There’s currently a person here who started as a teacher and it was difficult at times for her to make that transition or to think with a broader—she’s an excellent teacher, excellent leader—but when she became the assistant-principal, she still was thinking as a teacher.”

Teacher Julia also recognized the difficult transition for a new assistant-principal.

When you have an administrator that transitions from the classroom to administration in-house, it’s very different. You know these people for years and you do or do not have some sort of relationship with them in some way or another. If you were to ask me about past administrators, who were not from in-house—you don’t know them

from anybody— they're new. You have no idea what their work ethic is, you have no idea how they tick, and some you get to know a lot quicker. It's easier when you know the person.

Maya spoke to the feeling of isolation that can upset assistant-principals regardless of whether it is an internal or external transition.

When I'm having these marital issues, I can't go to one of the teachers and talk about how I hate my job, maybe at this particular time or how this isn't working, because I'm there to build people up. I'm there for them to come complain to me about stuff, so I can't throw my own mess out there, and then they're sitting there knowing like 'God, our leader doesn't even have any confidence in this initiative.' I found that I had to find some different people to talk to about that.

She went on to disclose that the knowledge of this change took some time for her to understand. "It took me a while but I realized, I can't say these kinds of things anymore."

Central-office administrators had strong opinions on the appropriateness of work relationships and the boundaries an assistant-principal should implement. Assistant Superintendent Dorothy, who also experienced multiple in-district transitions, spoke at great length about this topic.

My husband and I laugh because my social circle with colleagues is very, very small. I've been in this district for 20 years, and my work-related social circle is almost zero. Now that I'm at Central-office it's gotten even smaller. I think that there's got to be a line of professionalism at all times, and I think that if your relationship and the person that you have a friendship with can handle it, you know who those few people are. Otherwise, when there are social situations and people are drinking or whatever that

may be, people talk. There is so much in our jobs that require such a high level of confidentiality, whether it's kids, staff members, parents, community. And when you get yourself in a situation where you are being pulled for information or you give information that is inappropriate, there's no taking it back. And so, I just think, I'm the play-it-safe adage, you know what I'm saying? I do think that if it's meant to be a staff outing, fine. But you have to be very careful of mixing those relationships. You know who those people are that you can trust. And typically, those people that you can trust outside of the work day, you don't even talk shop when you see them 'cause you're truly friends. Your friendship is different; it goes deeper. I've had this conversation with my husband a lot; it's so interesting. And a lot of times it's not about me not wanting to be around people. I make people uncomfortable in social settings. They're uncomfortable around me.

Jacob expressed almost an identical sentiment.

I went from peer to supervisor. Some of them [staff], I already knew when I was their peer, that there were things they needed to work on, but still had cordial relationships with them. Now I have to have conversations with them, with some of those same people, and say, 'Hey. You need to work on this.' And now they look at me like, 'Oh! You've changed.'

Superintendent Bernie was particularly candid on the very specific lines he draws with social relationships. He believes there should be no socialization with staff members and makes no exceptions. He feels this preserves the integrity of his decision-making so as not to convolute the integrity of his fair judgment.

I'm pretty strict on this. I never drank with teachers. I don't go out with teachers. I think that that will shoot you in the foot. I'm very social. I keep a really strict line, because I think you must. It protects you from when you want to be fair, you want to be objective, and you don't want to have a perception of bias. I think it really helps you in that regard. I consider people that I work with—I'm their administrator. So, no, I don't think that social relationships [between teacher and administrator], I don't think it's good for the organization.

Jacob may also be in a central-office, but disagrees with Bernie. He has been able to maintain prior friendships with teachers. They have had difficult discussions but have actually found boundaries and an appreciation for his new role.

I think the terms of the relationship have to be clear, or the lines have to be clear. I had to make it very clear that, if we had a beer on a Saturday or, if we went for coffee on a Saturday; that was our friend space. But in the building, they had to understand that I was their supervisor. It's a real fine line to walk, but the people with whom I was friends, and still am friends with, understood that line. One of the people I evaluated is my friend. We started running together. We went on a trip to Harvard to get some professional development. We were roommates, but when it came down to time to have conversations about his teaching practices, I had to tell him the truth. He appreciated that.

Sarah was also able to preserve her teacher relationships once she transitioned to assistant-principal. Part of Sarah's success was a group of teachers who understood the need for change in their relationship and respected Sarah's new professional boundaries.

I don't interact with teachers as much, so I think naturally—I have a couple of girlfriends who I still interact with and they're super-good, like actually this weekend one of them texted me, 'Oh my God! What I heard about [another teacher], blah blah blah. You can't say anything, can you?' 'No, I can't.' 'That's what I figured. Okay.' They've been really good about respecting the fact that I probably have more information. It's hard 'cause normally you'd be at lunch and like, 'Oh my God, did you see what she was wearing?'

**Working with the administrative team.** The forging of relationships with new people, namely the administrative team and support staff, are also critical for success. Sarah spoke about wrestling with how to use her secretarial support. As a teacher, she had to do all the work herself so she was unsure of when to delegate work to her secretarial staff.

I have a guilt issue. I feel bad giving her something else to do. I could – there's no reason I can't type it. I'm perfectly capable of typing. I typed all my own stuff before— that was actually like a random adjustment.

Sarah also spoke of the newfound connections and relationships with her administrative team. "I see this team more than I see anyone else - my friends, my family, my baby, anyone. These four people more than anyone else."

The issue of balance and fairness to everyone surfaced in the area of relationships between home and work. Sarah said she often questions where her loyalties remain.

So you're torn between 'well, do I leave my team here or am I leaving my family at home?' Trying to find that balance between doing my work, not being the first one out the door here, carrying my load here, versus being at home and being a wife and being a mom. And so that was a hard balance.



**Home relationships.** Assistant-principals interviewed for this multiple case-study were dating or married to educational professionals. In the single situation where a participant was not married to a fellow educator, he divorced within his first year of the transition to assistant-principal and is now dating a fellow educator. Multiple participants discussed at great length the change in their spousal relationship caused by the new assistant-principal role.

Maya felt that her support system changed at home due to her new role, and she started to question her personal relationship as a source of venting about work concerns. Maya knew that she was sharing extremely sensitive information with a colleague. Even though he was her husband, he was still a building employee. This made her rethink what she should be sharing at home.

We always vented so I vented to him about things that are appropriate, and if there's things that he can't know about, then, you know he understands, and I just don't say anything about it. He gets that, but for the most part, to be honest, he's also very discreet, and so a lot of stuff that's bothering me, I'll just tell him about it and he never says anything to anyone. He understands what that means. Like if he started leaking those things— but he's found that a lot of times people come to him to try to get the inside scoop, and he just has to be like, 'I don't know, we don't talk about work. You know, I don't have any idea.' Like, they'll be like, 'Wait! I heard blah, blah, blah. Ask Maya.' And he's like, 'Dude.'

Maya found that her reaction changed significantly when speaking with her husband. In the past, they were on equal footing and often felt the same about work-related experiences.

Maya's new perspective as an assistant-principal changed the joint viewpoint they once shared.

Before we were two teachers, had the same views on things, same understanding of things, we bitched about the same stuff, you know. But now he comes in and starts complaining about something and I'd be like, 'Well, actually, the reason we're doing that, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah,' or he'd say something about something and I'd be like, 'Well, I worked on that, you know, thanks a lot. I think it is important and here's why.' Or he'd complain about something and I'd be like, 'Quit whining! Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.' It was a huge stressor. And we had to learn. For a while we just said we can't talk about work. That doesn't work though. Then we kind of 'What is it? Are we splittin' or are we together?' And, I think work, in its various forms, is part of it." I don't mind talking about it but that was a big part of it, having to reconcile my job.

Justin confirmed Maya's sentiments about the change in communication at home after adopting a new position. Justin noted that the topic of conversation changed, which was harmful to his marriage.

It's overwhelming for her 'cause I start dominating conversations and everything. My first year was really, really hard, physically, emotionally, mentally—I mean, everything's really hard. And then, second year, I backed off and then this year. I just decided I just need to leave everything at work. I don't want to burden her anymore. She doesn't need to hear these things. She doesn't necessarily want to hear every little, tiny detail so I've really tried to keep it all at work.

Jared, recently divorced during the first year of his new position, is now dating someone who works in educational administration. He observed that his conversations in that new relationship consistently involve work.

It makes a difference to have someone who gets that. My divorce was final in February, but for the last five months, I've been dating someone in education. So even in my personal life, we're still talking about ways to do things better, and in my sick, demented, self, that's a lot more fulfilling than the conversations from my marriage were.

Multiple assistant-principals noted that their relationships were a factor in career decisions including the choice to accept an assistant-principal position. Sarah and her husband worked in the same district when the assistant-principal position vacated. Sarah said,

I would say family was my only concern. My husband actually was the Assistant-principal [here] for eight weeks. We had a talk about what was best—who was better for our family to take it. A couple decisions—financially, I was on a low teacher scale. He has two stepchildren so that's a time-sucker for him. He does not miss t-ball games. His ex-wife is not flexible when shifting visitation with the kids, so if he were going to have three days of night duty, he conceivably just wouldn't see them. He would like an admin job, yes. Not right now, because that would be hard on our family.

Maya, too, had to consider her husband's teacher position when accepting her assistant-principal job. She also had to consider future promotions. She was told that she could not be building principal if her husband was on staff. Her relationship had the potential to impact future job possibilities.

A big part of it obviously was my husband who also works at my high school. He's got his friends, I've got my friends; we don't sit together at lunch, we don't sit together at staff meetings. We're independent people, and I think for us to survive together as a couple, it helped to have that separation. I was told on the first day I was hired, by the Superintendent, 'It's ok that your husband works here while you're Assistant-principal. But if, for some reason, you become principal of this building, he has to go.' My husband was a big consideration 'cause you know, it takes more time. When I was an English teacher I was at home grading papers every night but that's not the same as being at basketball game. It's like I was still *there*, you know? So we had a talk about that. It meant him picking up more of the kids. They're young so it meant him picking up more of that; picking up more stuff around the house. He understands the job, which at least is nice. He gets the demands and he gets that it's like-'I'm sorry, I just have to do it.'

Justin also had to consider the needs of his family when accepting his position and indicated that his well-being influenced his career choice.

I'm married and have two children, so this was, this is more time away from home. This is time on the weekends; these are meetings. When I was a teacher, I got out at 3:00, and when I was a coach I was home by 6:00. She [his wife] told me, 'yeah.' When I started to fill-in for the principal, she said, 'You're better than teaching. You're, you're better than that. Your skills are being wasted. You're being underutilized. You should do this. You could be a principal. You could help more on a larger scale.'

Several assistant-principals noted the role that the concept of time played in their relationships. As noted previously, an assistant-principal often has unexpected emergencies and does not always have control over his or her daily calendar. This often impacts the length of a work day, which can influence family dynamics. Sarah stated,

The other transition that was hard was the unexpected. Sometimes like, 'Oh, now we're having a fight,' and 'Now we're here until 5:00pm.' Emergency; who's going to get the baby? That was a shift from teaching. Where, if I needed to, I could walk out the door at 2:00 p.m.

She went on to discuss more familial concerns.

You know, obviously it is a time constraint. I was having a baby so I needed a husband who was going to be in full support of the fact that on Friday nights, I have football and on this night we have this. I have two stepchildren who are twins, who are nine, who we have custody of sometimes. So that was an extra balance of what was that going to look like. What am I going to do with my baby during the day? I needed my husband on board for me to take the job, basically. My mom was also nice that she was on the board because she is like my back-up babysitter.

Jared actually found that he was more productive as a single person at work. His marriage often impeded his ability to be a productive assistant-principal.

I went through a divorce last year, so that was kinda part of the transition to it, which you know is right with the statistics of the job. I mean, it wasn't because of the job; it just certainly didn't help. The positive was it allowed for me to not have to feel guilty about being on my computer doing work e-mail at 11:00 at night and being accused of neglecting anything else.

Justin's family is comprised of teachers. He has grown up aware of the time constraints of an educator. Despite Justin's knowledge of hours, despite his family's knowledge of his responsibilities and the time it would entail, he still had an inconsistent schedule that impacted his family.

My wife is a teacher, and my mom and dad are both teachers. My wife knew at a moment's notice (fingers snapping), I won't be home at 4:00 p.m. I won't be home at 6:00 p.m., because of something that happened. So she had to get on board with that because I have two children. Maya explained the lasting impact of her job change on her marriage. She indicated, "We're actually in marriage counseling now, part of it I think, was because of that job transition."

#### **Category IV–Differentials in Administrative Training and Mentorship**

**Pre-training, mentorship, and preparation.** Participants spoke about the many situations when they felt unprepared and uneducated yet had to problem-solve quickly and make a decision without a great deal of prior knowledge. Although many assistant-principals had positive experiences with their training prior to accepting their new position, they still recognized the need for specific training related to the assistant-principal position. Although the assistant-principals acknowledged significant pre-training and leadership experience, their administrative professional development did not focus on the areas where they needed assistance the most.

When asked about training future assistant-principals, Dorothy implied that teachers need multiple leadership experiences within the building. "You have to put yourself out there in leadership positions. You cannot expect to be solely a teacher and make the transition. You have to have something on your experience and resume that shows that you have led and

that you have worked through some adversity.” Bernie concurred and stated that future assistant-principals should shadow and observe current assistant-principals and learn from those experiences.

I think just reaching out, talking to as many people as you can, shadow people, watch what your assistant-principals and principals are doing when you’re at staff meetings, the pros, the cons, sign up to take leadership to give you experience in making decisions. Build up your resume that you put on paper, but more importantly, build up your resume of the experiences that you can use as you move into the future.

Before transitioning to an assistant-principal position, Justin earned a formal degree from Eastern Michigan University. He stated, “I have my Master’s Degree from Eastern Michigan in Educational Leadership. It was a good program.” He also participated in a leadership program geared toward future assistant-principals in Genesee County. His experience was positive and he gained a great deal from his assigned mentor. “Genesee County has a leadership academy program. It’s a whole year long and you do a project and internship, and they have different speakers come in.”

Jared also participated in an aspiring administrator program geared toward future assistant-principals.

I worked a lot with County A Schools and was lucky enough to be part of the Aspiring Principal’s Academy, the year-long cohort, where it was really eye-opening to work with just a Who’s Who of teachers in County A. It was that [principal leadership] (2007) stuff. Each session was regimented, had an agenda; there was a plan for it. So whether it was instructional leadership, teacher training, evaluation, the

hiring process for teachers, the hiring process for assistant-principals, law, plus we were assigned homework to look at things. We were assigned books to read.

Jared spoke of the training he received in his internship tied to this program.

When I started taking the classes, and I did my internship—I did a couple different internships, but one of them was with [a local administrator], 60 to 70 hours with her.

Saw the lunch room duty, okay, I get that. Went to some hockey games; I get that.

Went to prom; I got that part, understood. What I started to get more and more of at

my last school-district was the PR component of the gig in a high-end district like

that. Where you're going to spend more and more time on the phone, dealing with

parents for non-academic issues. Maybe it might be teacher-shopping or it might be

some sort of thing where you kind of scratch your head and think, 'Really? You're

going to complain about this?' The internship in a high-end district in particular

showed Jared a great deal of functions beyond that of teacher leader that an assistant-principal is responsible for in his or her new role.

Maya attended a similar leadership symposium while working as a teacher. She participated in many leadership initiatives, both in the building and outside of her district.

Maya collaborated with other future leaders and shadowed administrators outside of her building as well.

I was in the Galileo teacher leadership program, I was department chair of the

English department for five years, and then I joined the Aspiring Principals

Leadership Academy through County A Schools. Through Aspiring Principals, I

applied and interviewed for it. Then part of the internship—we got matched with a principal.



Bernie, in his capacity as Superintendent, recommended the specific leadership academy that both Maya and Jared attended. He believed that this opportunity is tailored to an administrator rather than a teacher leader. “We have the County A Schools Aspiring Principals Program. That’s the best spot for them to go. Galileo is about leadership, teacher leadership, but that can help you to become an administrator as well.” Dorothy struggled for a minute to name opportunities the district offered for formal training to new assistant-principals. Dorothy ultimately came to the same conclusion as Bernie stating,

Oh, we participate with County A Schools, the Aspiring Principals. We put people through the County A Schools New Principals, all the principal leadership stuff. We will certainly take advantage of that with new assistant-principals. And really more principals rather than assistant-principals.

Dorothy acknowledged there is ongoing training for building principals but limited opportunities for strictly assistant-principals. While both share a similar title, their roles require very different training and assistant-principals come to the position with less knowledge than someone transitioning to the principal position from an assistant-principal role. Training is also very specific to the type of district an assistant-principal is joining.

Jared stated,

I like the County A Schools Aspiring Principal position or Aspiring Principal’s Academy with a caveat though. It’s great for the, the high-end districts. I don’t think they do a very good job at all of really acknowledging low socio-economic status education. County A Schools, the State of Michigan—we can do a better job of preparing our teachers and preparing our administrators to help our teachers transition to a district with more than 85% free and reduced lunch.

**On the job training differs by district.** There is limited agreement from state, county, local, and university officials as to what constitutes the best formal training experience required for administrative positions (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Jared's comment highlighted the reality that an assistant-principal role often differs dependent upon the district of employment. Jacob attested to the value of on the job experience and teacher leadership. Building relationships is an integral part of a successful assistant-principal. Committee involvement is one way for teachers to demonstrate instructional leadership. Jacob spoke of the value of both success and failure in teacher leadership.

I would look for someone who is an instructional leader, who has evidence of their leadership in their current position; someone who has the skills to be a principal. I would look for evidence in solid relationships with staff members, with community members, with students and parents. They have concrete examples about how they have created relationships. They talk about their failures, because if someone sits in an interview and only talks about things that have gone well, then do not believe them 'cause we know everything doesn't go well all the time. So I would look for those artifacts.

Jacob went on to emphasize the importance of on the job education.

Because I don't really think you can know what the role truly consists of until you can do the job. 504s, I mean, those are things you just don't know until you actually do the job or helping to write a personal curriculum.

Although Sarah did not attend a specific leadership program, she sought any leadership opportunity she could find within her school building, as Jacob suggested aspiring

assistant-principals experience. Much of Sarah's pre-service education comprised committee membership and teacher leadership.

During my Master's I gave up my prep period every day for the semester, pretty much to get the hours in. And then I would stay after school and I would work football games, try to work night duties. I'm the queen of volunteers. Let me be on this committee, let me be on this, I always helped with standardized testing. As a teacher, I was already doing a ton of things like I was on AdvancEd committee.

Unlike Sarah, Samantha's teacher perspective of administrative training opportunities was limited to the school building. She spoke of teachers needing to take the initiative to ask current assistant-principals and principals to include teachers in activities.

If anybody was interested in becoming an assistant-principal, they could also contact our assistant-principal or whoever and say, 'Hey! I know you run graduation at the end of the year. Can I be your kind of right-hand man running it?' And they would be super-pumped about the extra help, and then you would learn a lot about how it's all run and stuff.

While finding that leadership opportunities in her building were seamless, Samantha did, ironically, have to find her own mentor in her formal training program.

I had an assignment that I had to find a mentor and I had to have a certain amount of hours, but if they didn't have that I think that any administrators would be willing to be your mentor and you could shadow them and work with them.

Another building teacher, Julia, also explained her perspective on administrative training for teachers in her building. She had no knowledge of formal programs, but mentioned the availability to fill in for absent administrators.

I have no idea [if there is a formal district training program]. I honestly don't know. I've never looked into it. I really have no clue. I do know, at least in our building, teachers who are on an administrative path—if we need somebody in the hallways, they'll have the walkie-talkies, they'll be in the front hallways, and sometimes if [an administrator] has been out at a conference for three days, they'll choose one of those people that are interested in moving up the ladder to kind of take over that role. So I think that's kind of a mentorship.

Myles explained that as a teacher there were not any significant opportunities. It's more like if you are certified and there's an opening we will consider you. It would be an interview just like any other applicant for that position. There's no real development program to speak of here.

Teachers struggled to think of formal district programs that provided experience for the reality of an assistant-principal's role.

**Finding opportunities in the building.** Justin is a strong example of someone who, as a teacher, thought his building experience trained him appropriately for administration. Justin spoke of his teacher leadership as assistant-principal preparation. "I coached middle school all the way up through varsity football, middle school and varsity track, National Honor Society Chair, co-department chair, NCA Chair, things of that nature." He went on to say that the impetus of his administrative training stemmed from having a student teacher, which allowed him to spend more time in the office.

I was teaching for ten years, and I had a student teacher, and she was really, really good, so I spent some of my time in the office and in other classrooms and in the cafeteria. Just places they needed help and (I) kinda realized, 'Well, I'm helping half

the building when I teach the kids, but when I'm in the office, I'm helping the entire building.' So just while I was in there doing my athletic duties, they would say, 'Hey, we're searching a student, you want to help?' 'Hey, let's go search this locker.' 'Hey, this parent has a question.' So [they] just kind of utilized me while I was there, and then, after a while, it just got to be where I would just check-in every couple of hours – almost like a mini internship. And then I started to help other teachers. And I was a mentor teacher for six years. Before I went into administration, for six years, I was the head teacher in the building, so when the principal was gone, I filled in. So two different principals pegged me for that position and then I really started to help teachers and students, athletic director, on a different level.

Jared also found many leadership opportunities within the confines of his own building. He worked on his teacher prep period and often spent weekend mornings assisting and mentoring teachers and students.

So knowing that I had to get a Master's anyway, it made more sense to do administration, and by then, I had been getting involved in building-level quasi-administrative things. I was kind of on an internship my last year as a teacher to work on interventions with students with attendance issues, so I didn't have a prep period. I didn't get paid extra for it, but I basically dedicated my prep period every day to interacting with students and either working on them with discipline or coming up with behavior plans. And then I would supervise Saturday detentions. [My former district] was terrific in building leaders. They sent me to Boston for a leadership conference with a bunch of other teachers to the Harvard Building Learning Communities seminar.

Jared learned that demonstrated enthusiasm and interest often generated more learning opportunities as a teacher. He found administrators would select him for exciting new chances to learn educational leadership skills.

Part of it was showing I had interest. I had interviewed for a 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning coordinator [position] within the district just to work on interviewing more than anything else. It was interesting because interviewing for a technology position in the district opened doors by showing administrators at the central level that I was interested in that. So they tapped me for teacher-directed professional development. I led a PD session on using cell phones in the classroom. We hosted a conference that was, and I had a chance to lead some breakout sessions for that. I had a chance to work with some really good people, and what happened was, each time I showed interest in something, they fed more to see what I else I wanted to do. So I got to work with our Deputy Superintendent to either proofread or then craft, and then work on policy, so working my way up.

Jared felt that each time he showed interest, it opened more doors for him to gain experience and exposure to the role of assistant-principal. Although the assistant-principals had numerous training configurations, one category remained consistent. Regardless of cohort participation, teacher leadership or satisfaction with university programs, Sarah explained that she still felt there were several unknown responsibilities that she was ill prepared for in her new role. "I don't feel like anything in my program really prepared me." Anticipating this, many school-districts' administrative teams know they are responsible and will be faced with providing continuous on the job training.

## **Concurrent Training**

Participants spoke about their individual experiences, but most were trainings of chance and circumstance. Central administrator Dorothy spoke of the downfall of a lack of training opportunity within districts.

Well, I think that's where our profession has a downfall right now. We certainly do a lot of shadowing. I feel like that area could use a lot of work and strengthening for our administrators. A lot of it is sitting and pulling each other in and saying, 'This is a situation that um I need you to see' or 'Why don't you sit in on and watch me manage this situation with student discipline?' So a lot of it is shadowing, which takes time and there's not a lot of that to go around.

At a district level, interviewees were frank and open to the idea that training is a necessary and important part of successful transition to leadership. Assistant Superintendent Jacob also felt training was one area that many districts lacked when thinking about how to prepare their novice assistant-principals for their new roles. He explained how they attempted to rectify this in his district.

We have no structure whatsoever. But one of the things we began doing was we provided opportunities for teachers to see what it would be like to be an administrator. So any time administrators are out of the building, they [an aspiring assistant-principal] would sub for us for the day. After, some said, 'No way, I'm never doing this. Thank you for the opportunity.' Some said, 'I want to try this out.' So that was one of the ways that we gave people the opportunity to see if that's what they wanted to do, moving forward. Because we don't have an articulated structure for this [training]. We rely heavily on County A Schools to provide mentoring, to

provide opportunities for people to talk with other assistant-principals throughout the county. Within that framework our assistant-principals are able to talk about problems in a safe place because sometimes the problem might be with their principal.

**External support is important.** Superintendent Bernie also felt external support was critical in case there was internal conflict.

You do a lot of things to provide external support because sometimes they [assistant-principals] need support from a pain-in-the-butt principal, you know. [An external mentor can be really important. It can't be just the principal. They have to have somebody to go to, to help walk them through, particularly when they first come out of the classroom; they need to have that go to person, where they can ask the really dumb questions without like, feeling judged. When you're brand new, you need a lot of that support around because the first year for an administrator is probably the most challenging. Especially coming out of the classroom, because you get to do a lot of the stuff you didn't like to do as a teacher without the good stuff to balance it sometimes, and so it can be tough.

Central administrators all mentioned the need for outside help and guidance.

Participant assistant-principal, Justin, when he discussed some of the dysfunction within his team, highlighted this principle. Justin's earlier quote about stressors demonstrated the vast difference in leadership styles and philosophy of principals. Justin's experience is relevant here as well.

The principal said, 'You're taking over scheduling.' I've never scheduled anything a day in my life. I even said it at my interview, 'I'm not versed in scheduling.'



Justin's experience was unfortunate, as his principal did not like the way he scheduled, even after sending him to trainings and began to talk about him to other staff. Justin explained further difficulties within this dynamic as well.

As a new administrator, from what I've learned now after being in the position, is you don't make wholesale changes your first year. You come in, you observe the system, you see what's going right, what's going wrong and *then* you make your judgments. Well my principal was an assistant here first, so they knew what they wanted changed, so they said, 'Change the attendance policy, come up with a cell phone policy, change our dress code, and change our student handbook.' So I made wholesale changes to everything about our school, not realizing that that's not what you do. So I was treated by probably half the staff, 'Who is this guy? Why is he changing? What's his deal?' So that's a hard position she [his principal] put me in.

Justin's negative experience underpins the critical nature of a functional and supportive administrative team. As two of the central-office participants mentioned, it is helpful if not critical, to have an ear outside an assistant-principal's district to bounce situations off of and gain advice.

Although many of the participants' districts openly agreed that there was no structure for training, participants also agreed that once hired into the role of assistant-principal, on the job training commenced. Maya discussed the importance of relying on her school team for help learning her new role.

When I had a question, immediately I would go to my other assistant-principal or my principal and ask, who do I ask for this? What does this mean? Can you sit down with

me and tell me how to do a 504? Can I sit in on a meeting with you while you do this or that? You know, I called other administrators.

Maya further praised her team for caring about her and looking out for her.

So, they were all like, “Anything you need,” you know and “take care of yourself too, ‘cause you know, you can burn yourself out.” In fact, she credited her principal with not giving her some of the more difficult tasks right away.

My principal did the scheduling for this year and last year, because he was in charge of it at his last district so he has always done that, and he’s like, ‘This is like really, really complicated,’ so he’s like, ‘This is something I’d like to work on, and then he’s like, in a couple years, I’ll show you guys how we did it.’

Sarah reinforced the importance of the administrative team. “The admin team was amazing last year. I could not have asked for better handholding, and we’re all very different, so our strengths are very different but that was nice.” Sarah continued,

I needed one AP [assistant-principal] to coach me up on being sassy to a parent, and I need the other AP on my team to coach me up on how to probe the kid and talk about his grades. It was sit in and watch me. ‘Okay, now what are you going to do in there? I’m going to walk you through it. Okay, now you try. Now let’s talk about like what was wrong, what could you fix, what else could you have said?’

Sarah spoke of situations she encountered on the job training.

I knew that we would be called to medicals. The other day, this girl passed out, fell on the floor, hit her head, and urinated all over herself, so you have to call the secretary to pull her file. I would have not known that. You are relocating the kids, but then you’re thinking strategically. The ambulance is coming—what’s the least disruptive

place for the ambulance to come in? How do you communicate that place back to dispatch? It's class change, so what are we going to do with those kids 'cause it's class change, and they need a place to go, not this classroom. They don't ever teach you in school.

She explained that her learning did not end there.

Then in this case, the mom did not want to come up and did not want her [the student] taken to the hospital. Now you're rationalizing with the parent. 'Legally, ma'am, we are going to send her via ambulance. You can meet here and go with her. We are sending her.' It never occurred to me that a parent would argue about medical treatment for their child. It was really eye opening.

Sarah also relied on external resources to continually educate herself as well. "I get the Marshall Memo and all that stuff. I just need to make it a priority to read it."

**Mentorship is important.** Maya lauded the importance of mentorship in many forms for critical on the job advice and training. She explained that she had a short but helpful transition period involving her predecessor.

The woman whose job I took over –I shadowed her for a few days. It wasn't a lot, because she was transitioning, too, so she was kinda one foot out the door, one foot in, but she was very helpful. She was a great mentor for the short amount of time I had with her. She coached me through the interview process as well, and she helped me with a lot of things right away.

Justin also spoke highly of his mentor, whom he met during his time exploring whether he wanted to transition into administration.

He [Justin's mentor] was very instrumental in helping me as a department chair for common assessments, the common core, power standards, how you conduct PD days.

He said that I was his *go to* as his liaison between the staff and himself, kind of his barometer. Justin stated that when he decided to make his move to apply for an assistant-principalship, his mentor was supportive in the process.

It was really helpful. My mentor is the one that said, 'Here's what your resume should look like, here's what you put in your portfolio, here's what you need to say in your first interview.' And he really prepped me to do the groundwork of how you research the school, the talking points that you're gonna want to hit, and the data you're going to want to find. And then, after I had that first interview, I said 'I have a second one' and he said, 'Ok, now here's what you are going to do for the second one.'

Superintendent Bernie also credited mentorship as incredibly important for new assistant-principals. "I think it takes a great deal of mentorship. Any successful leader is somebody who mentors those that they work with as well as learn from those people."

Participants spoke of a lack of mentorship at times as well. Justin's mentorship took place prior to accepting the position of assistant-principal. Once in the role, he felt the mentorship opportunity decreased. I'm doing it on my own. I'm kind of learning those things as I go.

Jared had this to offer,

I get it [training and knowledge] on my own. I couldn't have asked for a better mentor to grow under than the principal I have here. [When I first transitioned to assistant-principal], I had no clue what a manifestation determination review was

when, even when I graduated with my Master's Degree. I had to force myself to become an expert. [I] did not know what the Michigan procedural safeguards were—turned myself into an expert on that. Didn't know that there are things in between a ten-day suspension and a full-on expulsion. Had no idea about the 45-day expulsion or 90 day things—learned about those. Didn't know about individual learning plans. Didn't know about not just a certificate of completion but a certificate of attendance. So there were a lot of things that I didn't know from a logistics standpoint, but the thing I was probably the most surprised about was the role of counselor, where you're going to have parents and students tell you some crazy stuff.

Maya felt similarly.

As for the actual duties of the job I was not prepared, as far as knowing what to do, knowing what a 504 is. I mean you *barely* know as a teacher, you just know it's a document you have to follow. As for knowing anything about athletics, the rules, I mean besides having been an athlete myself a million years ago, not much. I think I possessed the skills to learn the job but I didn't know the job.

Participants also felt they gained skills from observing others fail. Justin explained that he learns from watching other leaders make mistakes.

I've learned from their [other administrators'] mistakes of what not to do. There is a saying that goes, 'You can learn more from your mistakes than you can solutions.' I've learned a lot from other people's mistakes. So, some of the mistakes I've seen are not having staff input, staff collaboration when making decisions, not being visible—not being in the building was a complaint I've heard about other

administrators from teachers—and I've had administrators who make kneejerk decisions.

**Impact and growth of emotional intelligence.** Goleman's (2006) work emphasized emotional intelligence, which draws upon characteristics of empathy and compassion in the process of leadership. Central-office administrators and teachers cited the importance of emotional intelligence in assistant-principals. The assistant-principals also recognized numerous situations where emotional intelligence was imperative for success. Although there are many aspects of emotional intelligence that are necessary to an assistant-principal's achievement, Samantha summarized the reason why emotional intelligence is a requirement for success. "I just think you have to be able to read people. I think you have to be extremely empathetic to people and their situations. If you don't have that connection to people, that skill, or if that's lacking, people will not want to follow you."

Another teacher, Sarah, defined emotional intelligence as perception. A perceptive assistant-principal can read a situation and find solutions quickly.

I would say it is necessary to have high emotional intelligence as an assistant-principal. You can be aware that your emotion might be changing your perception of a situation—it's good for you to understand that for other people, it does the same.

There are emotional triggers for them. With students, it's important to perceive their emotion accurately. If you don't know them, they'll say, 'Everything's fine.' Or, 'I was just irritated. It's fine.' Dig a little bit deeper because you can't solve the problem if it's 'everything's fine' and goes away.

**Emotional intelligence is important for job survival**, whether working with teachers, staff, or students. Jared defined multiple facets of emotional intelligence.

If you don't, as an administrator, have the ability to have both a thick skin and to understand people's perspectives and to not take the bait, you won't survive. I've had parents swear at me. I've had students swear at me. I've had times where I know that someone's been so far in the wrong, and they try to twist it and use baiting words; that the easy thing to do would be to say the greatest line you have saved up for that temporary release, but knowing that there's a long-term implication for that. But if I didn't have the restraint, ability to compartmentalize and the ability to understand, I don't think I would have survived that position; and I think that's a big relationship piece. If you can't build relationships with your teachers, and your students, and your parents, it doesn't matter what type of instructional knowledge you have. If you can't interact with people, you are done—the job doesn't happen.

In addition to assistant-principals and teachers, central-office administrators also recognized the necessity of emotional intelligence when hiring new assistant-principals. Superintendent Bernie discussed emotional intelligence at length.

Any person in leadership has to have a very high emotional intelligence because it is what leadership is all about. It's about working with others, making people uncomfortable with the status quo, investing in others so that they're able to grow. So it's enormously important.

Bernie dissected emotional intelligence and determined two particularly important components that could be potentially helpful or hurtful for a potential assistant-principal candidate.

First off, self-awareness. On every decision you make you have to discriminate between your own feelings and your own biases in order to create the environment

that's really fair and consistent. It's important, particularly when you're dealing with discipline, to take your own value system out of it and really treat everybody fairly, because my eyes are not the only eyes that are used to determine what's right and wrong. If you are a huge control person, and there's some ego problems, this is not the place for you, because your ego's going to be put in check again, and again, and again, or you're going to be a horrible administrator.

Sarah acknowledged lack of ego in her self-reflection and growth as an assistant principal. She was able to own her decisions, both positive and negative, and has developed the ability to de-escalate a situation by acknowledging that she may not have all the answers right then.

When I did not know something, I would always say, 'I'm really sorry. I didn't know. I will take a note and make a checklist and next year, I will fix it.' Sarah went on to say, "You know, if I make a mistake, that's fine—coach me up. It's not going to be perfect. I'm going to make a hundred mistakes." Sarah is receptive to coaching and advice as an ongoing part of her professional development.

Central administrator Dorothy agreed that emotional intelligence is a non-negotiable skill for new assistant-principals.

I mean your emotional intelligence is so critical because you can't be in a leadership position and your narrative be, 'I'm overwhelmed.' It just can't work. And 'overwhelmed' shouldn't even be in your vocabulary. That's a daily thing. You should thrive on helping people and multi-tasking and understanding how your job, as crummy as a conflict feels, sometimes you have to realize that that conflict can have a



positive end result. And sometimes people can't see that. It's hard work, but not everyone is made for administration.

For these reasons, Dorothy made an intentional effort to look for emotional intelligence in assistant-principal candidates.

It's really important that they understand their role; that they're an advocate for the student, the staff member, and the parent, and being able to manage the role of sometimes having to stay neutral and help facilitate communication between teacher, parent, and student. And that relationship piece is really important.

Dorothy went on to say,

I think it's critical. 'Cause you are put into so many emotional situations, and to me, that goes back to that coping piece. Your ability to gauge your own emotions. We use 'eye' observation and there's an element in there called *with-it-ness* and people are like *with-it-ness*? I mean, it's literally being able to anticipate and be a positive force in reducing emotions and behaviors before they escalate. Being able to be one step ahead of that is critical. You have to be able to cope and you have to be able to manage that and keep your own emotions in check.

The assistant-principals regarded emotional intelligence as an important and necessary skill and strength. Maya found emotional intelligence to be absolutely necessary when developing a positive atmosphere in the building. She found that the role of a building leader and their emotional intelligence greatly influences teachers and staff.

I think my strength is working with people and cultivating relationships. My focus in this building is on the culture, because our culture is real rocky and it's been a real tough few years. Our new principal is not real well-liked for some reasons that are his

fault and a lot that aren't. My role all last year and a little bit of this year— he would just come into the office and shut the door and just complain. Teachers would complain to me. So it's a go-between, which I did for a while, and then after a while I started kind of weaning people off and say, 'You know, you need to talk to him. He's very approachable. He's very nice.' And I can do some of this, but you have to talk to your principal.' That's part of this deal and some people understood that, but I think that's probably my greatest strength.

Teachers recognized the importance of emotional intelligence in building leaders. Samantha cited emotional intelligence when describing a strong working environment. She spoke of a past administrator who had lower emotional intelligence and the result of that on building morale. Samantha stated that this administrator used to say,

'People shouldn't complain, they should be lucky they even have a job' or 'People don't understand how good they have it here. I don't know why anybody would ever take a second to complain.' Or even like childcare things like, 'Well, you know, I'm sorry but you just have to figure out your childcare.' That rubbed people, a lot of people, the wrong way and it made following her a little bit more difficult 'cause it's like, 'Wait! Why don't you understand where I'm coming from?'"

Another teacher, Myles, remarked on the impact of poor emotional intelligence in teacher relationships and evaluations. Myles found that administrators without strong emotional intelligence often had a negative impact on the teaching staff.

When the administrator isn't necessarily in tune—doesn't have emotional intelligence and doesn't have direction; sometimes that can decrease staff morale. Say for example, there's an incident where corrective action had to be given to a staff

member. I guess lack of emotional intelligence, as far as that action, perceived to be much more harsh than it is, can lead to a kind of self-defeating spiral for that staff member. The emotional intelligence is kind of required to be able to provide support in not really an actionable way, but in a way that that person is going to be receptive to it.

Marsha recognized this in one of her assistant-principals as well. She spoke of mass emails and announcements to staff that really pertained to specific people, and the fact that a more direct conversation would have created a more positive feeling amongst the staff.

He basically just takes the information and sends it out to the staff. Just kind of ‘as a reminder you know people need to be doing their jobs.’ I wish he would be more direct. And sometimes I think that’s actually a sign of lower intelligence, emotional intelligence. I think you have to have the strength to be able to face someone directly and say, ‘This is what I am hearing. What’s going on?’ Rather than just kind of say it to the whole group.

**Emotional intelligence is critical for evaluating and mentoring difficult teachers.**

Like Maya, Jared mentioned emotional intelligence when describing difficult situations and job success as an assistant-principal.

That very same day that she did the post-test thing, a different teacher who is a Hall of Fame coach here in this district had been struggling with his teaching, but didn’t know he was struggling. He showed up late to a formal observation. He would not submit lesson plans. He didn’t have lesson plans. His version of teaching was open up to page 24, circle the vocabulary words, and then he’d sit and read the paper and drink coffee. There was no teaching, so the instructional support that I tried to

provide, he wanted nothing to do with it, to the point where he ended up just badmouthing the whole process.

And so through documentation, I put together a paper trail and eventually I said ‘We need to meet,’ and he became confrontational in public. During our dinner program, I said, ‘Why don’t you cool down and we’ll meet in your office,’ and it came to a head when he said, ‘You know, I think that you just think that I’m incapable of doing the job and I’m incompetent.’ And I said, ‘That’s exactly my concern,’ and he grabbed something, threw it across the room and started swearing at me—got up, got in my face. I said, ‘You need to take a breath.’ I’m thinking, ‘Wow. Here’s a guy in his 50s but he’s about my size and he’s angry enough to take a punch, take a swing at me. And this is my first year as an assistant-principal.’ So I told him, ‘You don’t want to do this. You’re going to need to get a union rep because if you keep doing this, you’re just going to find yourself out of the district. You can’t act this way.’ And just swearing and swearing. I said, ‘Listen, I’m not swearing at you. I’m not yelling at you, but do not continue this out in the hall. There are students here.’

So he followed me, and he just ratcheted it up and looking at the security video you can see all these students follow us and he’s swearing at me and I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, what is gonna happen?’ So that became an uncomfortable process. He was suspended and then moved to another building. They didn’t want to fire him. They were afraid there would be a racial component to it among other things, and it was a very contentious and uncomfortable situation.

Emotional intelligence allows assistant-principals to diffuse angry staff members and turn volatile situations into learning moments for staff. Because evaluation and job security

can lead to contentious relationships between teachers and assistant-principals, Justin found that emotional intelligence was a necessity in his position. When analyzing specific components of emotional intelligence, Justin noted,

The biggest thing I've heard about that is it can be boiled down to trust. And how quickly you build that trust, and I built my trust very quickly, because my actions, my words followed my actions. If I said it, I did it. I was a man of my word. If this is the policy, I adhere to it. That was what really garnered the most trust in the staff. 'Oh! I have an issue. I gave it to Justin. He took care of it.' And, a lot of times, I run things by them. 'Hey. I can do A, B, or C— you brought me this issue, what do you think? I want you to have input.' That goes a long way." Emotional intelligence allows assistant-principals to serve as trusted advisors and supporters of teachers.

**Emotional intelligence is also necessary when interacting with parents.** Maya identified the value of emotional intelligence as manifested in listening and conversation skills.

It's hard sometimes, because people will get in your face. There's hard conversations every day, and justifying what you do all the time. It takes a lot of poise, a lot of character. I mean I think sometimes it's just 'fake it until you make it.' I mean you get in a situation and you don't feel at all confident but you fake it. Particularly, Maya noted difficult parent conversations in her building.

Poking, poking, and poking, and you have to be able to just sit and bring it down. I had a dad come in the other day, and he was screaming at me for five minutes, and I tried to explain, and he didn't want to hear it. I said, 'Ok, I'm going to let you yell at me for three minutes and then we're going to be done and you can leave.'

Jared also noted the ability for emotional intelligence to factor into de-escalating difficult situations. He likened difficult parent conversations to his former work as a police dispatcher. Both were intense and required extreme emotional intelligence.

I think that I have a pretty long wick when it comes to managing my emotions. And the positives of the two professions I had before education. TV news, which is a high stress environment. The other, working as a police dispatcher and 9-1-1 operator. I went through very specific training to focus on being able to control your emotions when you're dealing with a crisis situation, [and that was] very beneficial through the position I have, so I have an ability to compartmentalize and keep my cool and not yell during a tense situation. But it doesn't mean I'm a robot. I just wait until I'm in the car and I'm thinking, 'What the ???' Or I might have a couple of drinks with some friends, and then re-tell the story in a much more animated way, but I do think I'm perceptive.

Jared mentioned the subtle balance between listening to a parent and informing the parent about delicate legal issues. He noted a particular conversation where emotional intelligence allowed him to navigate a very difficult topic.

I had a woman come in and she was a little bit younger than me. The teacher had found a note between her daughter and this boy, and they'd been plotting where they're going to have sex. So when I talked to mom she said, 'Wow, she said she doesn't want to have sex in the bushes, that's okay.' I said, 'Yeah, keep going she's still planning on having sex.' She said, 'Oh.' I said, 'I think this would be a good conversation point.' I'm thinking this is interesting for me, because I don't have kids and I'm having a parenting conversation with a woman who's younger than me who

has five kids. 'I'm concerned that your 14-year-old daughter can be making some really life-changing decisions. You know, there's disease, there's pregnancy, the boy's 16; he could potentially go to jail if something happened, and we don't want anything to happen. There's cell phones and cameras. There's so much to discuss and, even if she wanted to, she really couldn't give consent because she's not old enough. And so this woman, she says, 'Well, I learned in my Med Tech class that even if you are high on meth or cocaine or oxycodone, you really can't give permission.' I'm thinking, 'That's not even the point I'm making, but I will concede that to you.' I said, 'Yes, that's very good.' So part of that was how do you respond without being rude, without being condescending? Because maybe they don't mean to be flippant; that's really, that's important to them. I said, 'Okay, that's a good point.' She said, 'I think that I know why she did this.' I said 'ok' and I'm thinking, 'I don't know if I want to know this.' She said, 'Her stepfather and I were having a good time last week. We were up at this bar and really had more than we probably should have. And we get back to the house and we just we start just going at it.' And she starts telling me in the most graphic terms what she and her husband were doing in a sexual manner and I'm thinking, 'I don't want to know this. Why are you telling me this?' And I'm having this out of body experience to where I can see myself having this conversation with her but I'm not the person—and it's kind of funny, and so when she says, 'He has me bent over in the door, I don't know if it was unlocked or if I left it open – but she got herself an eyeful and I think we inspired her.' I'm thinking, 'Inspired. What an odd choice of words to use—inspired.' I said, 'Okay, well, I guess be cognizant of that time next time, maybe make a mental note?'

Jared shared a situation in which the safety of the staff and students was in his hands. His ability to diffuse a situation was a necessary skill to maintain building safety.

We had a kid who threatened to bomb a class. He said he was a terrorist. So, the student was suspended, and we were concerned about him. We were concerned about the safety of our building and the students, but the mom was mad, because she worked midnights and she said it was an inconvenience to her to have him home, and this was being blown out of proportion. So she kept interrupting as I'm trying to talk about safety. She said, 'I don't care. This is more important.' I said, 'Listen. Your concerns have been documented for the record, they're down there. I'm putting them down but we need to move on and explain something else.' She said, 'I want something else documented.' I said, 'Alright, okay.' She said, 'You're a fucking condescending asshole.' I said, 'Okay, I've got that documented, too.' And so I think the rest of the staff looked at me, they're like waiting for me to kick her out or say something back and I just tried defusing. 'Okay it's down, let's move on. It's acknowledged, got it.'

These types of cases exemplify the need for strong emotional intelligence in assistant principals. Although staff relationships and satisfied parents are both important to maintain a positive community, the health and well-being of students is the most important consideration. Both assistant-principals and central-office administrators cited emotional intelligence many times when discussing student interaction. Assistant superintendent of curriculum, Jacob, knows that students need their general emotional needs met before they can progress academically. He recalls the role emotional intelligence played in his former assistant-principal experience.



I think it [emotional intelligence] factors greatly into it. You're dealing with teenagers who have emotions that are all over the place. I had one student who lost his dad to cancer, his mother fell into a deep depression, he fell into a deep depression, and he called me names all the time, just all the time, and he skipped school and he was coming in high. I had to understand that I couldn't treat him like I might another student who didn't have that background.

**Emotional intelligence important for student well-being and safety.** Dorothy recognized the importance of emotional intelligence in maintaining building security. She explained the daily need for high emotional intelligence.

A simple one is like hall passing. You're hall passing and you see kind of a group of kids – an unusual group of kids, starting to gather. And before it goes to the escalating piece, you know that I'm here every day at one point and this group of kids does not pull together typically. And just being able to walk in there and have a discussion and kind of break that group up, but then, once you're down in your office, knowing to call one or two of those kids down that you know or you recognize and say, 'Hey! What was that really about?' And then hearing the story behind it– they're going to fight at lunch–and now you've avoided a fight at lunch, just because you were aware of the surroundings and what was not a typical behavior.

While developing solid emotional intelligence can have a positive impact on the school environment, these skills may backfire in personal relationships. Jared found that his ability to not react with a high charge of emotion actually upset his now ex-wife.

The one part I have to be cognizant of is, I know that when I would have arguments with my ex-wife, her biggest complaint was that that was exactly how I would argue.

It would be not robotic but, you know, pragmatic, and kind of calculated, and to be cool about it, and she said, ‘You just don’t have any emotion. Do you even care about this?’ And so, yeah, I care. I just didn’t want to lose my cool, so I’d try to temper it and not seem distant, not seem aloof. I want parents to know that I care, that this is important to me.

He had a hard time separating how he should act with adults at work and how he should react with adults at home.

Assistant-principals specified the importance of perception when working with students. Justin considered listening to students and recognizing that their emotions are temporary as two invaluable sections of emotional intelligence.

Well perceiving emotions—when kids come in and they’re upset, I never take anything personal. I know it’s not me they’re mad at, and they can come in here and swear and yell and just get things off their chest, and I never take that away from them. And when I tell them, ‘You’re upset, I understand, that’s a valid emotion. I’m not taking that away from you. I understand that.’ I never tell a kid, ‘Calm down!’ No, let them have it. I always tell kids when you’re really emotional, your rationality goes down. So, once we get the emotions down and the rationality then starts to level out, that’s what we have to do. And I recognize that. So, once they get it all off, and they start to be reasonable, it kind of levels. And when there’s parents who are unreasonable, I understand that and say, ‘Okay, we’re going to have to agree to disagree and that’s okay.’ So I understand that one. I never have a kneejerk reaction to things. I always know parents are going to be upset. There’s very few times I’ve had to go to our school liaison, our principal, and say, ‘Talk me off the edge.’ I have people come to

me all the time, saying, 'Talk me off the edge on this' and I'm like, 'Okay, okay.' So there's not many of those, and as an assistant, I say, 'Well, any of my decisions can be overturned by the principal. Here's the appeal process and here's his phone number and secretary's phone number, make an appointment.'

My first couple years, there were a couple parents that thought I was specifically picking on their children. They just would repeatedly make mistakes that were brought to me. I didn't go looking for them. The one parent said, 'You need to look at the damage done to my son's car from your parking lot.' I said, 'Okay,' and as I go out and check her student's car, there's cigarettes lying in the front seat. 'You told me to go look,' now it's a three-day suspension for tobacco. I don't get too high. I don't get too low. I can't. I can't let emotions dictate how I do discipline. That's why I take diligent notes and I file them. I file them in the student's file. We do everything; even warnings, go in our system. So, I pull up all that data, all that information, before I make any decision and I take emotion out of it. I've had kids cuss and swear at me, call me all kinds of names after I do my discipline. I don't tack anything on, it's part of the job.

Sarah found that perception was also necessary in student discipline. She recognized the importance of reading student emotions and problem-solving with students in a new role where she does not have the same history with the student as she did as a classroom teacher.

I'm still dealing with kids, still often the same kids, but now you have no relationship with them, and in 30 seconds, how are you going to read them, how do you know their story? How to break kids down, how to get them to tell you the truth, how to see when they're not telling the truth.

**Emotional intelligence is important for leadership.** Although emotional intelligence is often an inherent trait, building and central-office administrators recognized the importance of continually building emotional intelligence in leadership. Bernie and his staff participated in an ongoing book study designed to analyze and improve leadership skills, such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006).

We're doing a book study with all of our administrators, including me, we're all doing it together. In this book, it's all about serving others; it's all about humility, integrity, being careful with your intent. We're having a really good dialogue about these topics here, but if I'm not truly willing to look at myself and just be really open to it then you're going to have a challenge. I would say that the innate piece of this is that confidence, that ability to realize that we don't have all the answers that we're not perfect, that we are all flawed human beings. If you have that innate piece, I think that you really can develop and grow your emotional intelligence.

Sarah also participated in a book study in her district.

My principal has us do a book study through our admin team. The book we are reading now is really about how you take your feedback, and how you can give feedback. We did one on using data to drive your decisions. We did one on leadership, talking about just like, key elements of leadership. We've had a lot of training on having courageous conversations, so like, 'Hey, is everything okay? Are you just having a bad day?'

Another central-office figure, Jacob, summarized the importance of emotional intelligence. Although the concept of emotional intelligence is very intricate, Jacob said, "You have to sort of be able to gauge where other people's emotions are, and adjust yours."

Teacher Julia was skeptical of the ability to increase emotional intelligence from her past observations of administrators. “Authentically, I think it’s really hard for some people if they don’t already have it. But again, this is a business; it’s kind of strange that you wouldn’t have that quality already.”

Sarah exemplified growth and change for a new assistant-principal. She has had to reflect on her own emotional strengths and weaknesses and has to adjust accordingly for career success. She stated that early in her transition that the avoidance of confrontation created bigger problems. “I [used to] avoid confrontation. On the flipside, sometimes by the fourth thing you’re so irritated, and then they don’t even know why you’re irritated because you blew off the last three things.” Reflecting now, Sarah says, “I’ve had to grow a thicker skin in this job of having hurt feelings.” Assistant-principals have to grow and change intellectually, emotionally and physically to meet success in their transition.

### **Summary**

The findings from participant interviews were reported in this chapter. Four overarching categories captured responses from the assistant-principal interviews about their initial decisions to enter the area of administration; realities and challenges faced; tension, pressures, and stressors; and differences in training and mentoring. Teachers and central-office administrators provided supplemental information to further dissect the experiences of teachers transitioning to assistant-principal roles. Figure 1 in Chapter Two speaks to each of these elements and the need for support and skill sets to work in concert for successful leadership. In Chapter Five, an analysis of the data is presented with conclusions and recommendations based upon the data gathered in this study.

## **Chapter Five –Conclusions And Recommendations**

In this study, the researcher strived to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of the transition from teacher to the role of assistant-principal in secondary high schools in one southeastern county in Michigan. The researcher analyzed positive and negative impacts of the new assistant-principal job on health, personal relationships, and attitudes toward career. The researcher discovered unforeseen challenges and unexpected rewards, both personally and professionally in this experience. The research comprised a multiple case-study approach of four assistant-principals in their first four years of the transition. All assistant-principal subjects had prior teaching experience. Subjects reflected on their transition from the classroom to assistant-principal, the training they received, interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006), and requirements for job success. Central-office personnel and teachers who observed the new assistant-principals in their districts were also interviewed for this study. They not only discussed unique transition stories of specific assistant-principals but also gave recommendations for successful transitions from the classroom to administration.

### **Findings and Interpretations by Categories**

Assistant-principals, central administrators and teachers provided elaborate, illustrative data through anecdotes and descriptions of the subjects' experiences as novice assistant-principals. The four assistant-principals experienced complex and valuable, albeit tumultuous, experiences as they transitioned into their roles. Four overarching categories paramount to the transition of teacher to assistant-principal emerged in a series of three interviews: impetus and origins of the transition into administration; realities and challenges of the transition; tension, pressure, and stressors; and differentials in administrative training

and mentorship. Although the subjects' prior experiences differed, many had similar experiences in their first years as assistant-principals. These four categories encompassed their challenges and ultimately their successes.

**Impetus and origins of the transition into administration.** Although the assistant-principals each had unique experiences, many commonalities were found in the impetus and origins of the transition into administration. All assistant-principals began in the classroom, and all cited a love for children and teaching, but expressed frustration at the inability to create broad change. Administration offered participants the chance to continue their work with students on a broader scale. The subjects did cite a salary increase as an additional motivator, the main impetus for each transition to assistant-principal was the opportunity to create positive change for a larger population of staff and students. Maya stated, "I found myself becoming more interested with things on a school level versus a department or a classroom level."

Most subjects experienced building leadership experiences prior to applying for assistant-principal positions. Subjects reported an initial confidence based on those experiences and felt that their time as teacher leaders would ease the transition into assistant-principal positions. The impetus for transition is critical in becoming a successful assistant-principal. In his advice for emerging assistant-principals, Superintendent Bernie posed questions related to impetus. "What is this job all about? What's your goal? What do you want to do? What do you want to accomplish by getting into this role? That's an important thing." In accordance with recommendations of the central-office cabinet member, all of the subjects indicated a strong positive impetus for becoming an assistant-principal.

**Realities and challenges of the transition.** Despite the initial confidence and enthusiasm, the assistant-principals' perception of their new roles prior to entering the office quickly changed when they assumed their new roles and discovered unexpected challenges and unforeseen dilemmas. The concept of time was very difficult for many of the subjects. Assistant-principals struggled with their new autonomy. Planning their own daily agenda was foreign to former classroom teachers who lived bell to bell. Additionally, unforeseen crises often disrupted whatever agenda the participants had planned for the day. Assistant-principals cited building emergencies, student conflicts involving law enforcement, and staffing issues, which could completely consume an entire day. Participants often had to balance required appointments with unforeseen emergencies. Maya discussed the struggle of scheduling for an assistant-principal. "It's like you live by the 70 minutes as a teacher. Now as an administrator, I had freedom to have my own calendar."

Classroom teachers often spend evenings grading or planning; the participants stated they were ill-prepared for the long hours of their new positions. In the research of Marshall and Hooley (2006), participants attested that a typical assistant-principal day can span 10 to 15 hours. In addition to a long, physical day, assistant-principals also had to answer countless emails and texts from teachers and finish tasks well into the evening hours. Interview time in the process of this study was continually interrupted by incoming cell phone calls, as every assistant-principal received work-related communication that needed immediate attention.

Participants were correct in presuming that teacher evaluations would be a significant part of their job as assistant-principals. All four assistant-principals cited examples of contentious teacher evaluation experiences. Evaluations were both time consuming and challenging for many participants. For example, Jared shared, "I was the centerpiece of a



tenure case last year. The teacher was on my caseload and she had kind of bullied her way through before, because she was tight with a couple of school board members. The first observation I had with her, it was an unmitigated disaster. When I provided her the feedback, she reacted literally with profanity and with shouting.” In this instance, Jared had to navigate difficult evaluation and school board politics.

Time and scheduling were among the most difficult concepts for new assistant-principals. Learning to balance long hours, the needs of parents, teachers, and students was problematic. At times, there were not enough hours in the day to tend to every task. Perception of the job was very different from reality. Assistant-principals often felt a lack of control. Justin spoke to his new reality. “The teacher evaluation piece and what little I do with budgets and school safety, those are things I knew I would have my hand in but have taken more a majority of my time than I anticipated.”

**Tension, pressure, and stressors.** Job stress and its effect on the relationships of the four subjects generated the most discussion in their interviews. Intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships among student and parents, teachers and other staff members, and friends and family members were of tantamount importance to the subjects. Although the new assistant-principals had experience with discipline in the classroom, they were ill-prepared for the parental challenges to their administrative discipline decisions. Assistant-principal Justin learned a lesson his first year, “I can’t let emotions dictate how I do discipline-wise.” Assistant-principals often take positions in new buildings and are expected to build relationships with all stakeholders immediately. Administering discipline can complicate the relationship-building process as parents and teachers often challenge the assistant-principal’s decisions.

Building or maintaining teacher relationships while conducting formal evaluations contributed to stress on the job. Some participants evaluated former colleagues when they transitioned in the same building. Other subjects had to prove themselves and establish positive relationships while evaluating teacher practices. It was a delicate balance for many assistant-principals during their first few years in the position. Likewise, assistant-principals, central-office cabinet members, and teachers all spoke to the change in friendships and relationships after assuming a supervisory role.

Assistant-principals spoke to a sense of confusion regarding their roles in professional and social events where they were expected to attend events but needed to limit their time to provide a comfortable environment for teachers. The source of confusion may stem from the strong, differing opinions of central-office administrators and teachers. Two of the three central-office administrators spoke against having personal relationships with staff members. However, one administrator spoke highly of the value of maintaining such relationships. Three teachers discussed the need for a distinctive separation between teachers and administrators, whereas one felt friendships were appropriate.

All assistant-principals indicated a noticeable shift in personal relationships due to the stresses and demands of the new role. Long hours, constant emails and texts, additional training, mental stress, and exhaustion affected all assistant-principals. Not only assistant-principals but also their family members felt the demands of the new position. All assistant-principals, in some way, had to restructure their home life to accommodate their new work life. In the one case where that did not happen, the assistant-principal divorced in his first year. Teachers often have work obligations outside the school day. Maya spoke to the drastic difference in evening responsibilities of an assistant-principal. “When I was an English

teacher, I was at home grading papers every night, but that's not the same as being at a basketball game. It's like I was still *there*, you know? And we had a talk about that, because it meant him [her husband] picking up more of the kids.”

Uncertainty often led assistant-principals to feel isolated. It was difficult for them to gauge the authenticity of relationships with teachers in the building, and several participants cited stress at home as a result of the new position. These factors led to a sense of isolation in the role and in the building. Each assistant-principal discussed the benefits of forging new relationships with other administrative team members. Fellow administrators could advise, listen, and empathize with navigating the overwhelming sense of responsibility and difficulty of maintaining relationships. Sarah found her administrative team to be necessary in her success as an assistant-principal. In addition to listening and offering support, they helped her hone her skills. “I needed one assistant-principal to coach me up on being sassy to a parent and I needed the other to coach me up on how to probe a kid and talk about his grades.” The participants and their need for administrative relationships presents a safe space for growth and development as a new assistant-principal.

Lack of employment security added to pressure in the administrative position. Teacher tenure laws protected their classroom position, and a union supported them; however, decisions made as assistant-principals could influence their job security. When the reality that his decisions could impact Jared's employment, he realized the safety in his prior teaching position. “I never had to worry about getting canned.” Now, the stability of his employment lay in his daily decisions and actions. Sarah acknowledged that her one-year contract was a great source of comfort and security. She knew if her time as an assistant-

principal was not successful or did not work in her lifestyle, she could return to the classroom. The other three assistant-principals had to take the risk.

Health was the most tangible form of stress for three of the four assistant-principals. Both Jared and Justin spoke of the health and wellness programs they created for themselves during their first year in the assistant-principal roles. Justin adopted serious weight-lifting as a coping mechanism for his stress. Jared adopted eight-mile walks as a healthy way to manage job-related stress. Maya discussed the stress of her job and the tie to physical surgery she underwent. While several participants developed health lifestyles to help manage stress, making time for exercise or physical therapy added another demand on assistant-principal's time.

**Differentials in administrative training and mentorship.** Opportunities for novice assistant-principals both prior to and concurrent with their first year of the role were critical to success and preparation. All central-office cabinet members alluded to the important of teacher leadership before transitioning into an assistant-principal role. Similarly, assistant-principals indicated the importance of experience with building leadership prior to applying for the position. While experiences differed, teacher leadership opportunities gave insight into various components of the assistant-principal role. In each district, individuals spoke about county programs aimed toward preparing principal leaders. However, all interviews exposed that training was geared toward principal leadership and did not target the assistant-principal role. Cabinet member Dorothy indicated that although many districts try to utilize training for school leaders, it is not always aimed toward assistant-principals. She spoke of a particular program for teachers who aspire to become assistant-principals. "We participate with County A, the Aspiring Principals. We put people [classroom teachers] through the

County A New Principals program. And really more principals than assistant-principals.”

Three of four assistant-principals in this study attended these county programs while they were employed as classroom teachers. The opportunity allowed them to network and practice some of the skills necessary for building leadership; however, these experiences did not prepare them for the daily frustrations and difficulties that their jobs entailed. Even teachers who aspired to the assistant-principal role recognized the lack of training for the position. In one district, teacher Myles stated, “There’s no real development program to speak of here.”

Before Justin became an assistant-principal, he had many leadership positions. He recalled coaching and chairing departments and committees as the foundation of his training. He transitioned into assisting with attendance issues on his prep hour. Justin believed that these experiences prepared him for his new role. Despite this belief, Justin found many gaps in his training and had to learn a vast amount about the assistant-principalship quickly during his first year in the position. Similarly, Jared found his school-district enthusiastic in training aspiring assistant-principals. He was sent to Boston for a leadership conference at Harvard University. Coupled with volunteering time in discipline and attendance, he felt confident in his ability to lead a building. Jared, too, was humbled by the difficulty of the new position during his first year.

County-wide administrative preparation programs often included principal mentors from outside districts. This structure supported a safe environment to make mistakes. Superintendent Bernie said that mentorship is incredibly important for assistant-principals. “You really want a mentor, as it can be really important. Internal Mentors, such as principals, might be looking over assistant-principal’s shoulders and so you create that external network.” This rationale can help create strong emerging candidates. The practice of having

an external mentor is a strong element to preparation programs, but candidates stated that this component was absent during the first year in an assistant-principal position. All assistant-principals felt some lack of support during their first year in facing the multiple challenges and responsibilities of their new role.

Data showed that concurrent training was frequently absent for assistant-principals. Both assistant-principals and central-office cabinet members indicated that concurrent training was sporadic at best. Dorothy stated that this was a significant concern in the profession. “We try and mentor people one-on-one, but once you’re in it, it’s so hard. It is especially hard when you have three different umbrellas of your job going on. I feel like that area could use a lot of work and strengthening for our administrators.” Jacob also specified that concurrent training was inconsistent at the district-level and admitted that training was provided and relied upon heavily through county opportunities and programs.

Although emotional intelligence can be considered an intangible skill (Goleman (2006), central-office administrators, teachers, and assistant-principals concurred that emotional intelligence is one of the most important elements of a successful assistant-principal. High emotional intelligence allows assistant-principals to defuse angry parents, counsel frustrated teachers, and resolve student issues and emergencies. With low emotional intelligence, assistant-principals struggle with the demands of their daily duties and responsibilities.

All assistant-principals alluded to the role of emotional intelligence in building safety. Their emotional intelligence helped them manage numerous building situations. Often, emotional intelligence is assumed to be an inherent trait and not a skill; however, in other professions where emotional intelligence is valued, consistent and formal training is often

provided. For example Jared was trained in emotional intelligence as an emergency dispatcher. “Working as a police dispatcher and 9-1-1 operator, I went through very specific training to focus on being able to control your emotions when you’re dealing with a crisis situation. This was very beneficial to the position later [of assistant-principal].”

The category of differentials in administrative training and mentorship is a frequent topic of research surrounding new assistant-principals and the experience of a transition from teacher to assistant-principal. Marshall and Hooley (2006) and Oleszewski et al., (2012) discussed the need for targeted assistant-principal professional-development programs as well as other critical professional-development opportunities. These research findings were confirmed by the case studies of all four assistant-principals in this study.

### **Implications for School-districts**

As the emergent categories of this study showed, assistant-principal positions are stressful. As referenced in their interviews, assistant-principals indicated that their jobs caused difficulty in personal relationships, health, and well-being. It is imperative for counties and districts to provide specific training during the transition from teacher to assistant-principal.

School administrators often develop a passion for administrative leadership after spending time as teachers. Recent studies have shown a decrease in enrollment in teacher-preparation programs, which leads to a decrease in the candidacy pool for talented educators (Freedberg, 2013). Additionally, further research examined the decrease in teacher salaries as compared to most other countries, also demonstrating the discrepancy between teacher salaries and salaries of similarly educated professionals (Strauss, 2013). Given these facts, the educational field may have fewer people aspiring to school leadership. School-districts in

this situation may have to begin to grow their own leaders and take the process on to enhance and cultivate talented school administrators.

### **Category I—Impetus and Origins of the Transition into Administration**

Assistant-principals cited a love for children and a desire to improve school conditions and opportunities for students and staff, as motivation for their transition. Central-office cabinet members cited the importance of knowing what the assistant-principal job entailed before entering the role. All participants discussed experience and training for the assistant-principal role. However, their description of experience and training opportunities, consisted mainly of teacher leadership. It is important to recognize the value of chairing a department or coaching a team; however, all participants indicated great surprise at the reality of assistant-principal responsibilities. Teacher leadership as the sole training experience often leaves gaps in the preparation of administration. Each assistant-principal felt he or she was prepared for their position prior to entering the role; however, once in the position, they faced surprises for which they were ill-prepared. Sarah commented, “I would always say ‘I’m really sorry. I didn’t know. I will take a note and make a checklist and next year I will fix it.’ I try to do that a lot and I make a check list for success and save it.”

**Recommendations.** Implement proper job shadowing for aspiring assistant-principal and internal district programs that allow teachers to substitute for their administrator colleagues. These opportunities would give teachers a specific idea of the actual responsibilities and stressors of an assistant-principal, which might encourage or dissuade an applicant from pursuing this career. All applicants indicated surprise and anxiety upon beginning their new roles. Greater exposure to the actual responsibilities would alleviate that stress and afford experience prior to officially assuming the role.



When shadowing or interning, participants cited their experiences as being menial and removed from authentic responsibilities. Jared said, “I shadowed an administrator in another district. She was great. She would reach in with both hands and help out on the spot. She would pick up a mop or a paper on the floor. I was really inspired by the dedication to her building. At the same time, though, I never really saw her with an angry parent or teacher that was yelling at her. I never got to see that part.” Confidentiality is critical in many of these situation and it can be difficult to have someone present who is not in an official capacity. However, in other professions, such as medical interns, individuals have these critical experiences. School administration could benefit from a similar model. Often, an administrator will assign an intern supervisory tasks that take place out of the administrator’s office, and although those experiences qualify as leadership, they do not allow the intern to see the actual conversations and meetings that are so integral to the role.

In addition to providing internships that allow teachers to see the reality of the assistant-principal job, first-hand experience is invaluable as well. Some school-districts provide teachers a chance to substitute for an assistant-principal, another level of exposure that complements the internship experience. Jacob indicated, “This is a great program in my district. One person who tried subbing decided it wasn’t for her. The internship actually turned the teacher away from administration. This is a good practice to implement in all school-districts. We would save people a lot of headaches.” This program could evolve to help current assistant-principals as well. In addition to giving aspiring assistant-principals an opportunity to work in the role, this kind of program could allow current assistant-principals some time away from their numerous requirements. All of the assistant-principals interviewed in this research discussed the long hours and strenuous days that often ended

with night supervision. If a teacher could cover an evening of supervision, that might allow an assistant-principal some much needed relief.

### **Category II–Realities and Challenges of the Transition**

Participants at every level were extremely open and seemingly honest as they shared their experiences; however, the assistant-principals in particular used the process to vent, share, and process their experiences. The interview process of this research actually created a safe environment for subjects to share experiences and candidly talk about the stressors of the job. Participants were able to collaborate with another administrator, looking at the challenges of their transition and giving validation to that experience. In the interview process, there was no fear of professional judgment or retaliation, which is often lacking in the support structure of transitioning assistant-principals. Jared and Justin, for example, were the only assistant-principals in their buildings and, although Maya and Sarah both had other assistant-principals in their buildings, it was not always safe or appropriate to share with colleagues frustrations or personal dilemmas that stemmed from job stress.

**Recommendations.** Offer an opportunity for assistant-principals to share their frustrations and challenges, reflect on their practice, and get feedback and suggestions from colleagues. Counties could devise confidential forums for assistant-principals to meet and discuss a number of topics with a particular leader selected for the discussion. Another possibility is an online forum where assistant-principals could remain anonymous and communicate with other professionals in the state or region. This collaborative approach would alleviate the fear of information leaving the discussion and potentially being used outside of the program. In many counties, assistant-principals, who might approach face-to-

face discussions with apprehension, might potentially work together as they apply for future positions or they may use confidential forums as a networking activity.

The frustrations of an imbalance in family and work time should be explored and honored when possible. It is imperative that assistant-principals have the opportunity to decline a night of coverage and gain respect for their own needs and time. Interviews showed that the nighttime commitments for assistant-principals were consistent and frequent, often impeding on family time. Maya shared, “When I was an English teacher I was at home grading papers every night but that’s not the same as being at basketball game, you know what I mean? I was still *there*, you know.” In addition to supervising an event, assistant-principals were also responsible for responding to parent and staff emails, paperwork, and often graduate classwork. Sarah and Maya both mentioned the responsibilities facing them at home, regardless of the time they clocked out.

Individual districts might create their own methods of requesting nights off, but that time should be provided, when possible. A night off for personal reasons or even to respond to some of the job-related paperwork should be available, if needed. And, again, aspiring assistant-principals may provide the perfect vehicle for a cost-effective structure to meet the needs of multiple employees. Using these eager individuals to sub for assistant-principals or handle some of the projects and responsibilities may benefit the entirety of a high school’s needs while supplying significant experiences for aspiring assistant-principals.

Ronald Williamson (2014, January and February) published a series of research briefs on leadership in schools and the role of time management and balance. Sources of information of this kind offer tools for school-districts to begin discussions and to shape individual programs related to balance, health, and wellness and to incorporate these skills

into the lives of assistant-principals. Williamson also supported the concept of time and respite for assistant-principals and respect for individual need. He cited that balance helps the individual and the organization. Balance promotes increased productivity and loyalty.

### **Category III–Tension, Pressure, and Stressors**

All assistant-principals mentioned specific situations in which they felt unprepared in the role of assistant-principal. The category Tension, Pressure and Stressors addresses the specific stressors and situations along with solutions for developing relationships with students and parents, teachers and staff, friends and family. Relationships either added to the stress and pressure of the job or alleviated stress by offering validation. Sometimes candidates discussed personal relationships and how they evolved, suffered, or ended after taking the assistant-principal position. Often, relationships led to concerns of isolation, employment security, and health.

**Recommendations.** Health and wellness programs for staff members could be promoted in districts or individual buildings. In addition to helping assistant-principals manage stress, teachers and office personnel could also benefit from positive ways to burn energy and connect in a healthy way. Programs may include activities after school, healthy cooking demonstrations in the school kitchen, walking for a community benefit, or a staff softball game.

Wellness programs also provide opportunities for assistant-principals to bond with teachers and staff in a positive environment, where specific parameters exist. Interviews indicated that staff holiday parties were difficult events for new assistant-principals: they wanted to attend the party and show support and interest, but also needed to know when to leave and to be aware of their role. A wellness activity does not include alcohol and has a

great deal of structure. This would be a safe environment to interact with teachers and other staff members in a productive, appropriate, and meaningful manner.

Because time is a constant stressor and issue with assistant-principals, attending additional meetings or presentations might be impossible during the week. A webinar structure allows an assistant-principal to improve his or her skill set and work on interpersonal relationships with privacy and on their own schedule. Webinars would effectively address many of the specific relationships necessary to job success. A menu of key topics would allow participants to select specific facets of the job, such as time management and establishing a daily calendar, or relationships with teachers or parents.

Specific webinar topics could be reviewed in alphabetical order. The viewer could also select *What If?* scenarios, for quick assistance on a specific topic. Finally, webinars could address trends in hiring, new programs and degrees, and other opportunities to create a competitive resume for the job market. Since employment security is often a new concept for a new assistant-principal transitioning from a teacher contract, employment resources would reduce participants' feelings of isolation and provide an opportunity for assistant-principals to share and collaborate online.

An online forum would give participants an anonymous forum to vent and seek impartial information. An online format also allows participants to choose the time they use the forum, which is important given the long nights and demands of the role. Assistant-principals could also blog or write online in regard to webinar topics in a secure platform and may suggest new webinar topics as well. Many counties already have Aspiring Assistant-principal programs, but the addition of anonymity is a new component as are online collaboration forums.

Teacher evaluations were one of the most surprising experiences for new assistant-principals. Assistant-principals were not prepared for the amount of time required for each evaluation and the impact evaluations had on relationships with staff members. In a large suburban high school, multiple administrators conduct teacher evaluations. This created a sense of inconsistency, comparison, and often insecurity for novice assistant-principals. It also demanded a great deal of energy from numerous assistant-principals. Creating a position in which one staff member conducts all teacher evaluations in a calendar year can eliminate a great deal of stress and allow assistant-principals more time to devote to other building needs.

Relationships based on the evaluation are often accompanied by tension and anger. Most participants shared encounters with angry or weeping teachers regarding evaluations. That stress, in turn, had a negative impact on the participant. A new evaluator position would allow all assistant-principals, not just beginners, to use their time more efficiently and promote strong relationships with the teaching staff.

#### **Category IV–Differentials in Administrative Training and Mentorship**

The category of differentials in administrative training and mentorship addresses specific solutions to provide support and continued training to new assistant-principals through their first years. Many county schools have model programs that provide training for teacher leaders, including courses such as Aspiring Principals and Aspiring Teacher Leaders. These seminars provide specific information for teachers and building principals, but currently, there is not a class targeted to assistant-principals in the first year.

**Recommendations.** A training program designed to help an assistant-principal in the first year would be beneficial. Additionally, specific districts could provide professional

development for assistant-principals. Effective topics might include school law, culture of the building, diversity, emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006), and evaluations. Although an aspiring teacher leader might read about these things, presentations designed to address specific issues at the district-level would be much more applicable and timely. Further, an annual session with current assistant-principals hosted by central-office administrators would afford districts an opportunity to train their aspiring principals in the culture of their community and specific expectations that may be unique to their district.

Another implication for districts suggested a mentor who is not a direct supervisor for each assistant-principal. A district mentor might even lead at a different grade level, but could provide a great deal of information on topics presented at the professional development but related directly to the job in the building.

Jacob and Bernie adamantly felt that new assistant-principals should be assigned a mentor outside of the building. Jacob said, “Sometimes the very person a new assistant-principal has difficulty communicating with or understanding is the building principal.” Bernie also stated, “It can’t just be the principal. They have to have someone to go to help walk them through, particularly when they are first out of the classroom; they need to have that go-to person. They need someone to ask the really dumb questions.” Unfortunately, the principal is often the mentor for a new hire, which limits the safety and appropriateness of what the assistant-principal discusses. The choice of someone in a different capacity allows for the assistant-principal to see more than one example of leadership. Assigning a mentor in the same district who is more removed from the building of the new assistant-principal can give a new perspective and enhance advice. A mentor from another district would beneficially address some of the isolation and job insecurity mentioned by participants in this

study. An external mentor could answer questions regarding general employment and career trajectory in a broad sense, not just regarding a specific building or district. The combination of mentors would allow an assistant-principal to select the best mentor for individual situations, and scaffold support.

Training may also help in forging relationships. Participants indicated that relationships were one of the most difficult components of the job. Emotional Intelligence is essential in interpreting the emotions of others and managing one's own emotions (Goleman, 2006). Although emotional intelligence may be an inherent strength for many teachers and administrators, many find it to be a learned skill. Even a skilled teacher may find that emotional intelligence looks different outside the confines of the classroom. Although teachers use emotional intelligence regularly in the classroom, the importance is much more prevalent in the role of an assistant-principal; an assistant-principal needs to read critical situations quickly and diffuse angry parents, students, and staff members.

Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2006) should be included in both the administrative preparation program at the university and in district professional development. Assistant-principals need ongoing training on how to deescalate a situation and control personal emotions and difficult situations. In a constantly changing environment, new assistant-principals might be located in a district entirely different than the one from which they acquired teaching experience. Socioeconomic differences are only one example of vast differences assistant-principals might encounter. These differences might impact standardized testing, discipline, scheduling, and daily interactions. Training to build emotional intelligence is imperative at the district-level and in university programs.



## **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research might compare the transition experiences of teacher to assistant-principal in high school, middle school, and elementary settings. The role of assistant-principals is not as common in elementary schools; thus, research that includes these aspiring building leaders may yield different information and comparisons.

Future research may determine whether there are consistent practices found in international educational programs and whether there are any significant trends that are emergent in the world. Finally, cultural intelligence was not explored in this study, and would be an integral component of a future study on teachers transitioning to assistant-principal capacities.

Based on the findings in this study, multiple recommendations for future research would benefit both districts and aspiring assistant-principals. To examine the experience of a wider sample of teachers in transition to assistant-principal roles, a quantitative study with a large sample is recommended. Further, a similar study in rural or urban settings could extend the experiences of participants and to determine similarities or differences attributable to various settings. Findings and recommendations common to a broad range of teacher-to assistant-principal experience might help school-districts to distinguish what elements of a support program would be most helpful to novice assistant-principals.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrated two consistent facets of the assistant-principal role that may not have been understood prior to the transition from teacher to assistant-principal. First, a successful assistant-principal should know himself or herself—how emotions are managed,

how stress is handled, strengths, and weaknesses. Second, that if an assistant-principal can control his or her emotions and manage responses, he or she can control the situation around him or her. In Chapter Two, the metaphor, from *Oedipus Rex*, speaks to knowing oneself. It should be noted as one determining factor that can help in the transition from teacher to assistant-principal. Knowing one's strengths and limitations, paying attention to the intricacies of emotional intelligence and balance, might save future transitioning assistant-principals from a fate of stress and confusion, moments of helplessness and overwhelming pressure. The art of self-awareness can be cultivated and nurtured by numerous mentors and in many capacities at the university, individual building, district, or county.

### **Summary**

Chapter Five concludes this research study. The findings produced four categories that linked the transition of four assistant-principals: Impetus and Origins of the Transition into Administration, Realities and Challenges of the Transition, Tension, Pressure, and Stressors, and Differentials in Administrative Training and Mentorship. The researcher's recommendations speak to the district, county and educational institutions that can influence the experience and transition of a teacher to assistant-principal.

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## Appendices



## Appendix A–University Human Subjects Approval Letter

### RESEARCH @ EMU

**UHSRC Determination: EXEMPT**

**DATE: November 13, 2014**

**TO: Mara Hoffert, Ed.S.**

**Department of [DEPARTMENT NAME]**

**Eastern Michigan University**

**Re: UHSRC: #**

**Category: Exempt category 2B**

**Approval Date: November 13, 2014**

**Title: The Experience of Individuals Who Transitioned from Teacher to Assistant-principal**

Your research project, entitled **The Experience of Individuals Who Transitioned from Teacher to Assistant-principal**, has been determined **Exempt** in accordance with federal regulation 45 CFR 46.102.

UHSRC policy states that you, as the Principal Investigator, are responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of your research subjects and conducting your research as described in your protocol.

**Renewals:** Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. When the project is completed, please submit the **Human Subjects Study Completion Form** (access through IRBNet on the UHSRC website).

**Modifications:** You may make minor changes (e.g., study staff changes, sample size changes, contact information changes, etc.) without submitting for review. However, if you plan to make changes that alter study design or any study instruments, you must submit a **Human Subjects Approval Request**

**Form** and obtain approval prior to implementation. The form is available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website.

**Problems:** All major deviations from the reviewed protocol, unanticipated problems, adverse events, subject complaints, or other problems that may increase the risk to human subjects **or** change the category of review must be reported to the UHSRC via an **Event Report** form, available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website

**Follow-up:** If your Exempt project is not completed and closed after **three years**, the UHSRC office will contact you regarding the status of the project.

Please use the UHSRC number listed above on any forms submitted that relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the UHSRC office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 734-487-3090 or via e-mail at [human.subjects@emich.edu](mailto:human.subjects@emich.edu). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Beth Kubitskey

Chair

COE Human Subjects Review Committee

## **Appendix B–Informed Consent Form**

**Project Title:** The cognitive, social, and emotional experience of four individuals who transitioned from teacher to administrator

**Investigator:** Mara M. Hoffert, Eastern Michigan University

**Co-Investigator:** Dr. Ronald Williamson, Chair Eastern Michigan University

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the transition of four teachers who moved into entry level assistant-principal and administrative intern positions in one suburban county and four school-districts in the state of Michigan. This study aims to understand the phenomenon of the cognitive and social-emotional experiences of people who transition from teacher to administrator. This study may inform decisions district make in the hiring process and aide them in better determining a more appropriate and effective interview process or mentoring method for new administrators. This study may also inform districts on the best method to aid administrators in their transition from teacher to administrator. The findings of this study may be applicable to other districts with analogous structures. The study will consist of case-study methodology, and will encompass an in-depth study of four individuals from one school-district, in their first four years, transitioning from teacher to administrator.

**Procedure:** Mara Hoffert will explain the study to you, answer any questions you may have, and witness your signature to this consent form. You must be within your first four years transitioning to the position of administrative intern/assistant-principal.

Mara Hoffert will conduct one to two hour-long interviews with you in regards to your transition into administration.

**Confidentiality:** A code name will be used to identify your participation in this study. The transcription of interviews will be stored separately from the consent form, which does list your name and other identifying details. Your name will not be associated with your interview or test results at any time during the publication or discussion of this study.

**Expected Risks:** There are no foreseeable risks to you participating in this study, as the results will be kept completely confidential.

**Expected Benefits:** There will be no direct personal benefit to you, but your participation will contribute to our understanding of the transition from teacher to administrator.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may

choose not to participate. If you should decide to participate, you may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without negative consequences.

**Use of Research Results:** Results will be presented in a qualitative data analysis form of words. No names or individually identifying information will be revealed. Results may be presented at research meetings and conferences, in scientific publications, and as part of a doctoral dissertation being conducted by the principal investigator.

**Future Questions:** If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study now or in the future, you may contact the principal investigator, Mara Hoffert, at 248-866-8686 or via e-mail at [mhoffert@emich.edu](mailto:mhoffert@emich.edu)

The research protocol and informed consent documentation has been reviewed and approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee for use from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact the Director of the Graduate School (734-487-0042, [human.subjects@emich.edu](mailto:human.subjects@emich.edu)).

**Consent to Participate:** I have read or had read to me all of the above information about this research study, including the research procedures, possible risks, side-effects, and the likelihood of any benefit to me. The content and meaning of this information has been explained and I understand. All my questions, at this time, have been answered. I hereby consent and do voluntarily offer to follow the study requirements and take part in the study.

PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURES:

PARTICIPANT (your signature)

DATE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

INVESTIGATOR OR SPECIFIED DESIGNEE

DATE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C–Interview Protocols**

### ***Teacher to Administrator Participants***

1. When did you choose to make the transition from teacher to assistant-principal? What was your motivation to move into the position?
2. Talk to me about a day in the life of an assistant-principal. What is it like?
3. Describe how prepared you were for the role of assistant-principal. Discuss the mentoring or training you received that helped with your transition to school leadership.
4. Discuss the difference in your perception of your role as an assistant-principal and your actual job. Share some examples of that difference.
5. What type of support do you receive to continue growing in your current role? Talk to me about where it comes from, what it looks like, etc...

Possible Follow up: If you could have further support what would that look like?

6. Describe some of the social/emotional considerations that took place during your transition from teacher to administrator.

Describe a tension or dilemma that occurred during your transition to school leadership.

7. Talk to me about emotional intelligence and how it may, or may not, have played a role in your transition to school leadership.

Possible follow up: Describe a situation where emotional intelligence was evident and helped you in your transition.

## **Appendix C–Interview Protocols (continued)**

### ***Central-office Leadership***

1. *Researcher has copy and provides copy of mission statement promoted by district.*

In your view, how does this statement meet the reality of what drives the district's actions presently? How does the reality of what drives your district veer from the statement?

2. What are the roles and expectations of Mr./Mrs. X's role as an assistant-principal?

a. Follow up: What are your expectations of a person in the role of assistant-principal?

3. How do social intelligence and emotional intelligence factor into the hiring and/or professional development of assistant-principals in your district?

4. How does Emotional Intelligence factor into a successful assistant-principal? Can you offer an example?

5. Describe the various training opportunities/ professional development your district offers for teachers interested in administrative advancement?

6. How do you offer support or mentorship to individuals you have hired during their transition from teacher to administrator? For how long?

### ***Teacher in District***

1. What is your view of Mr./Mrs. X's role as an assistant-principal?

2. What are your expectations of a person in the role of administrative intern/assistant-principal?

3. How do you think emotional intelligence (EI) plays a role in the ability of an assistant-principal to lead successfully? Can you give me an example of a time when you saw a situation call upon the emotional intelligence of Mr./Mrs. X to do his or her job?

4. What type of training or other opportunities does your district offer for teachers interested in administrative advancement? How would you go about expressing interest in advancement? Have you considered advancing yourself and what would your motivation be to remain as a teacher or move into administrative leadership?