CAN THEY ROW ALONE?
PRACTICES THAT GROW AND SUPPORT BEGINNING PRINCIPALS

A disquisition presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

By

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The Scholar-Practitioner Trio

Early in the coursework, students in the Western Carolina University Ed.D. program are required to identify problems of practice that are significant and merit further action research. It was during a cause-and-effect activity called 'fishboning' that the authors of this study had an epiphany, seeing natural overlaps between their areas of interest.

What began as a brainstorming session in a small study room blossomed into a research partnership among the three students. At the time, one scholar-practitioner was a principal in Henderson County Public Schools and another was a principal in Burke County Public Schools. The third student held a regional position with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Through shared passion for the broad topic of support for beginning principals, the three committed to the disquisition process together. Though two of the three scholar-practitioners changed professional roles during the course of the research, the trio remained committed to working together to develop and implement replicable interventions that accelerate the competency of beginning principals. One quote, in particular, summarized their shared belief in the importance and merit of pursuing this work:

Sustainable leadership matters, spreads and lasts. It is a shared responsibility, that does not unduly deplete human or financial resources, and that cares for and avoids exerting negative damage on the surrounding educational and community environment. Sustainable leadership has an activist engagement with the forces that affect it, and builds an educational

environment of organizational diversity that promotes cross-fertilization of good ideas and successful practices in communities of shared learning and development. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004, p. 3)

This quote served as a mission statement for the scholar-practitioner trio. Always seeking the practical intersection between solid research and implemented practice, the scholar-practitioners would return to this quote as a reminder of the desire to purposefully create "communities of shared learning and development" that ultimately moved both individuals and the district forward.

Collaboration

The disquisition process deviates from the traditional dissertation in several ways. One notable difference is the ability of scholar-practitioners to collaborate on both the written product and the implementation of an intervention. This trio of scholar-practitioners recognized early on that collaborative research and implementation planning across the miles could potentially be a barrier. With intentionality, the team utilized processes and resources that minimized geographic barriers. Examples include:

- Google Docs. The use of Google documents enabled for collaborative writing. All three scholar-practitioners had edit rights in every document, providing real-time access to edit or comment. This allowed the product to be organic and fluid. It precluded any need for emails and attachments. The collaborative writing process and compiling of the triple blind coding process would not have been as efficient or effective without the use of Google documents.

- Transcription Services. The scholar-practitioners shared a single online account at Rev.com for transcription services. This allowed each person the opportunity to

upload audio or video files for transcription as well as the opportunity to view all

transcribed files.

- GoToMeeting. Western Carolina University provides all graduate students with a

    subscription to GoToMeeting, an online, synchronous meeting space. Some

    valuable features of this software include the ability to share screens, use video,

    and record meetings. The scholar-practitioner team met regularly using this

    platform. Additionally, GoToMeeting provided an efficient way to work with the

    university advisor.

Scholar-Practitioner One

John Bryant is the Senior Director of Human Resources with Henderson County

Public Schools. His previous roles in educational service include elementary school

principal (Glenn C. Marlow Elementary), high school English teacher (Southern

Alamance High School, Apopka High School, and East Henderson High School), and

high school administrator (East Henderson High School). Mr. Bryant has led professional

development opportunities for teachers, school administrators, and educators at the

district, state, and regional levels. He is the proud husband of Lisa K. Bryant, Producing

Artistic Director at Flat Rock Playhouse. Recognizing that public educators are the

stewards of our great nation's foundation, Mr. Bryant dedicates his work to the men and

women who tirelessly serve the students of public schools across the country.

Scholar-Practitioner Two

Jan King has spent more than two decades in public education. Her teaching

career included service at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and she

achieved National Board Certification in 2003. She also served as an instructional coach

prior to moving into school administration. In 2010, she was named the North Carolina Principal of the Year. Following that honor, she worked for four years as an advocate for local school districts while serving as a regional consultant for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. In July 2015, she re-joined Henderson County Public Schools as the Director of School Learning and Leadership Development. Mrs. King is married to retired educator Wade King. Their children are Justin and Maggie. With a belief that the quality of leadership directly impacts teacher and student success, Mrs. King dedicates her work on this topic to public school administrators, past and present, who work feverishly daily in an effort to help each student find success.

Scholar-Practitioner Three

Brett Wilson has been an educator with Burke County Public Schools since 2008. He currently serves as principal at Hildebran Elementary. Prior to his move into school administration, he taught secondary mathematics in both Vance and Burke counties. Mr. Wilson holds an undergraduate degree in psychology from North Carolina State University and the Master of School Administration from Western Carolina University. He has achieved National Board Certification in secondary math with an Adolescent/Young Adult focus. In his time with both counties, he has coached men's basketball and ladies' golf. He has served as a Lead Teacher for the North Carolina High School Turnaround initiative, a mathematics representative for the Howard Hughes Math/Science program at Duke University, and is a graduate of Vance County's Teacher-Executive Institute. Residing in Valdese, NC, with his wife, Kristin, and three children, Elliot, Charlotte, and Judson, he enjoys serving in his church, reading, and spending time

outside. His contribution to this work is dedicated to the students who will benefit from the growth and development of tomorrow's educational leaders.

Focus Areas

While collaboration among scholar-practitioners was abundant throughout the disquisition process, each scholar-practitioner maintained a specific area of focus. Mr. Bryant's focus was upon human resource leadership at the district level for the beginning principal. Mrs. King's focus was upon leadership development and professional learning for beginning principals. Mr. Wilson's focus was upon collegial support in identifying perceived needs of beginning principals. Through a combination of collaboration and individual focus, the team of scholar-practitioners uncovered the topic's richness and complexity.

The Beginning Principals – Brett Wilson

I realized that my role in the disquisition team was unique in that I had not worked with any of the intervention participants in a collegial setting previously. There was an element of getting up to speed with what they already knew about each other, their superintendent, and the other disquisitioners. From the onset, I was curious about what the beginning principals would experience and how they would share these experiences. As researchers, we had identified our methods of data collection and had included them in the submission to the university's Institutional Review Board. These were designed to be objective metrics that would help prevent our misinterpretation of the findings. However, I quickly realized that the interaction with the beginning principals was not sterile and void of the typical elements of relationships. We had created agendas and times for pre-determined activities, but I was having conversations with principals, both novice and veteran, while we were fixing a cup of coffee, during the "off-the-clock" times for lunch, and the time spent packing up at the end of the session and resetting the classroom used for the initial retreat. The drive to the retreat location was approximately four hours each day for me. On day two's drive home, I grasped the importance of these non-structured interactions and how they contributed to breaking down the barriers presented by fear of evaluation. I had a conversation with a beginning principal about our shared experience of leaving the secondary mathematics classroom and the challenge of using data meaningfully in guiding an elementary school's culture. This time talking and others like it were the initial stages of establishing trust, not formally as a researcher, but authentically as a practitioner.

Between the initial retreat and the debriefing group interview, my primary interaction with the beginning principals was through email and phone correspondence about their weekly reflective videos. Sometimes this was for technical support and at other times it was for clarification on prompts or response times. There are emotional tides to the school year for beginning principals. Through the videos, I observed the exhilarating heights of successes and the career questioning that comes with disappointments and setbacks. The transcriptions were clean and could be analyzed for themes and patterns, but they lacked the body language and facial expression that offered additional insight into the emotions being felt by the beginning principals. I was encouraged to hear that the doubts and questions these novice principals were asking (a recording device) would be followed up with a contact from their assigned mentor. I reflected on the experiences I had as a first year principal and could recall similar highs and lows through the seasons of that year.

At the conclusion of the intervention, the theme that prevailed among beginning principals was the request for the support to continue. The final group interview took place at the end of the school year and there was an air of excitement that year one was complete, but there was a shared anticipation that they could continue on with the mentor support and the intentional reflective prompts. In hearing the principals talk, I heard how they recognized their own growth. They acknowledged the challenges and troubles they had experienced, but had an attitude of being ready to do it again, so that they could perhaps impact a different result. I saw them encouraged by the fact that their mentor was willing to sign on for another year. I heard them speak casually about looking forward to when they could serve as a mentor for a beginning principal. From the perspective of

someone employed outside the school district, I had witnessed the positive cycle of continuing and expanding a healthy school culture that emphasizes and values leadership.

The Mentor/Mentee Pairing – John Bryant

No relationship, personal or professional, can be fully realized, successful, long-lasting, or meaningful without chemistry. Early in the intervention design we gave careful consideration to the recruitment and pairing of mentors to mentees. As scholar-practitioners, we collectively recognized that the potential impact of mentor/mentee relationship could and would hinge on each individual's ability and willingness to connect, collaborate, and communicate.

The recruitment of veteran or retired master educators as potential mentors was the first phase. I reached out to ten potential mentor candidates to discuss our work, our intervention design, and our expectations for each mentor. These mentor candidates ranged from currently practicing principals and senior administrators in Henderson County Public Schools to retired school administrators possessing a wealth of experience and track records of effectiveness as school leaders. Narrowing the list from ten candidates to the six needed for the intervention was determined by each potential mentor's "fit" with a beginning principal. We gave weighted consideration to like leadership experience, personality types, and communication styles. While our review of each mentor profile could never be a sure-fire match for each beginning principal, our attention to the disposition of each individual pairing was as purposeful as the intervention itself.

Observing the mentor/mentee pairings in year one provided fascinating illustrations of the human dynamic. Each pair seemed to be defined a unique rhythm but

common purpose of support. The relationships were born through shared activity at the February retreat and evolved through weekly contacts and dialogue. Half of the pairs connected almost exclusively by phone; others found time to meet regularly for a meal or coffee. I was often struck by how each mentor/mentee pair created a relationship of comfort within the construct provided by the intervention design. On several occasions beginning principals would pull me aside to remark, "I can't imagine not having a mentor." Such statements were affirming and encouraging not just to the process, but to the inherent value of the relationship being developed.

As we prepared for a second cycle of support and the addition of three "new" beginning principals, two of the mentor/mentee pairings were changed. Both changes were an attempt to improve the "fit" and the chemistry of the relationship. Even though each of the year one participants had reported value and appreciation for the mentor experience, two of pairings did not reflect the same level of engagement as the remaining four. We elected to pair a newly recruited mentor with a beginning principal at the same leadership level—elementary school, and reassign a year one mentor in a similar fashion connecting two currently practicing high school principals. The beauty and flexibility of the ninety-day cycle of support had once again presented an opportunity for improvement and growth.

Even though case study of the mentor/mentee relationships is not the intended product of the research design, I have a personal interest in learning more about how each relationship formed and has evolved over time. The success of these relationships is integral to the intervention design, and I am confident that continued iterations of

beginning principal support would benefit from a deeper well of understanding about how a mentoring relationship develops day by day.

The Power of Reflective Practice – Jan King

As our disquisition team designed the intervention, we committed ourselves to including three integral, research-based components of adult learning. Foremost, we concentrated on the power of intentionally paired mentor/mentee relationships. Secondly, we constructed purposeful professional learning experiences designed for specifically for beginning principals. The third element to accelerate the competency of our novice leaders was deliberate and focused reflection. To capture their thinking, we asked each of the six beginning principals to respond to weekly prompts, submitting their ideas via video. These seventy-two entries provided a rich glimpse into the complex job of a beginning school leader.

As the improvement cycle concluded, we met with the beginning principals to get their thoughts on whether or not to continue the intervention with future first-year principals. Participants had a chance to share both verbally or in writing their thoughts on the merits of the designed support. When we attended to the topic of weekly reflections, I was pleasantly surprised by what the participants shared. Foremost, they were in unanimous agreement that the reflection prompts helped them focus and process various aspects of their leadership roles. Rather than see this is a task or assignment, which I had anticipated, they welcomed the opportunity to pause and reflect on their organizational impact. The most unexpected comments centered around a desire to not be handcuffed by time limits on the reflections, with several beginning principals stating that they felt the one-minute reflections were too restraining. One of the middle school principals added a

desire to write, saying that while the video format was fine, writing was personally cathartic. Finding support from colleagues for this request, we moved into the second year of beginning principal support with tweaks to our weekly reflection format.

Now in the second year of implementation, beginning principal support in Henderson County Public Schools continues to embrace intentional mentoring and targeted professional learning opportunities. The reflections, completed weekly by all nine novice leaders in their first or second years as a principal, have morphed into lengthier responses that are submitted either by video or in a written, electronic journal. There are no longer time limits on the response, and this has been a welcomed change for the participants. It should be noted that the six principals in the study voluntarily committed to completing the reflective prompts during their second year of leadership.

Personally, I think back to my own years as a beginning principal. I feel certain that well-crafted weekly prompts would have helped me be more deliberate in my leadership. Whether thinking through budget issues, instructional scheduling, teacher evaluation or facility management, the prompts would have given me a frame for visionary thinking rather than what, at times, felt like reactionary leadership in my early years. I was incredibly proud of the beginning principals in the study for recognizing the added value of the metacognitive process.

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BEGINNING PRINCIPALS

John M. Bryant, Ed. D.

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Western Carolina University (March 2016)

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Beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their

instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to

change. This is a problem in Henderson County Public Schools, in school systems across

the state of North Carolina, and nationwide. This problem negatively impacts beginning

principals and their respective school communities because they struggle to navigate

school leadership transitions, to sustain district initiatives, and to experience consistent

individual growth. Students and parents have a right to expect competency from a school

principal regardless of their lack of tenure, and districts must decide to be proactive in

accelerating the skills on new administrators. Effective mentoring programs can hasten

the competency of new school leaders.

Given the absence of legislation, policy, and funding for beginning principal support in

North Carolina, Henderson County Public Schools implemented a model designed to

grow the leadership capacity of beginning principals in order that the impact of their

service is maximized. The design of this purposeful intervention strategically matches beginning principals with mentors, while providing opportunities for professional growth through self-assessment, reflection, and group learning.

Using a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle of improvement science, the scholar-practitioners created a scalable model for the mentoring of beginning principals. Experiencing the hire of six new principals in one school year, which marked approximately 25% of the district's school leadership, scholar-practitioners partnered with the district to implement a structured support plan for these new administrators. Rather than leave their success to chance, Henderson County Public Schools recognized and valued the importance of investing time and resources into leadership development. It is noteworthy that, following the period of initial research, the district has continued with and expanded the model of support. The results of this research inform not only the work of the partner school district, but also the practices of the current and future leadership teams of North Carolina's 115 systems, who guide over 2,400 principals as they support more than 1.4 million students.

Keywords: beginning principals, leadership, mentoring, professional growth

CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change. One could argue that a school principal serves as the CEO his building, responsible for human resources, facilities, finances, transportation, achievement, enrollment management, community engagement, student discipline, marketing of the school, and other similar duties. An environment of high-stakes accountability and school choice compounds the pressure on principals. Rather than leave to chance the acceleration of learning for beginning principals, interventions can and should be instituted to increase the likelihood that a new principal can competently handle the many facets of the job.

The Southern Region Education Board argues that "the public has a right to high-quality school leadership *from the very first day* the new principal is on the job" (Gray, Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2007, p.9). School systems can no longer afford to ignore the glaring absence of intentional leadership development for their school administrators. Most states, including North Carolina, recognize the need to support Beginning Teachers. Often found in State Board of Education policies or even in state statute is an awareness of the importance of accelerating the growth of a beginning educator. A similar need exists for new administrators. As illustrated in Figure 1, below, the responsibilities of a school principal are expanding. This creates the potential for a performance gap, especially in beginning principals.

Figure 1: Evolution of the Principalship
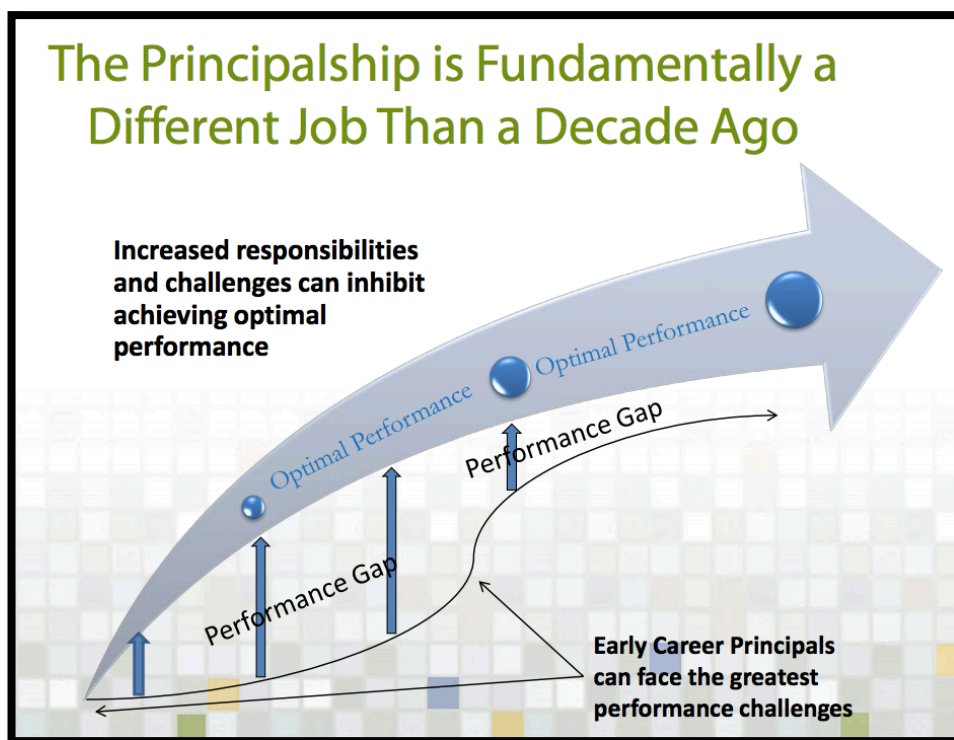
Figure 1. As the responsibilities of school principals expand, the potential for performance gaps increase, especially for beginning principals. From "Enhancing principal skills through sustainable mentoring programs" by L. M. Scott, 2012. Copyright 2012 by NAESP.

Along with increasing demands on the individual serving as the primary school leader, the scholar-practitioners are also observing a reduced amount of time working as assistant principal. The shortened pathway to the principalship sacrifices the time required to build relationships with experienced educational leaders and accounts for missed opportunities of stretching capacity with the safeguard of a veteran to provide needed support. As they look beyond the boundaries of public school systems, the scholar-practitioners witness a very different methodology employed in the modern

business world where mentoring programs exist to support the growth, retention, and continuing success of young executives. As Chronus (2012) noted, "Today, smart organizations are realizing that a workplace mentoring program can serve the employee lifecycle…in fact, 71 percent of Fortune 500 companies offer mentoring programs." However, mentoring programs in public education for beginning principals are noticeably absent. In this absence, Henderson County Public Schools, like school systems across the state, experiences inconsistent principal growth, inefficient leadership transitions, stalled district initiatives, and the challenge of retaining their most effective school leaders.

Still further, Johnson (2005) interviewed principals who had voluntarily left their principalships after serving from two to more than 10 years. Among the reasons given by principals for leaving their principalships were a sense of being isolated when dealing with challenges, a workload that sometimes seems simply not doable, and pre-service training that left them feeling unprepared for the challenges of the job.

As illustrated in Figure 2, implementing purposeful support for beginning principals is not simple. A sound program for supporting new administrators may spur conversations around funding, available personnel, and sustainability. When planning for the implementation of a program of beginning principal support, factors such as the role of the evaluation process, district commitment to the initiative and the availability and training of mentors are crucial planning factors.

Figure 2: Main Challenges to Sustainability of Beginning Principal Support

Main Challenges
These Barriers to Sustainability Need to be Aggressively Removed

Poor Organization	Mentor Cadre With Time Constraints	Incorrect or No Mentor Training	Ad Hoc Mentor Assignments	Limited or No Evaluation
•Absence of clear vision and goals •Overestimation of program requirements •Lack of integration with other professional learning programs •Absence of funding and resources •Low level of stakeholder commitment to provide either time for sitting principal mentors or funding for the program	•Over use of sitting principals when trained retired principals or other community leaders could be used	•Using mentors without recent and relevant knowledge about mentoring skill and district policies	Failure to use a matching process based on the needs of the principal and the characteristics of the mentor	•Principals' Development •Organizational Effectiveness •Mentor Selection •Mentor Training •Mentor Assignments

Figure 2. Multiple barriers impede sustainable support for beginning principals. From "Enhancing principal skills through sustainable mentoring programs" by L. M. Scott, 2012. Copyright 2012 by NAESP.

The scholar-practitioners recognized potential limitations due to school district policies designed for the confidentiality of students and staff members. There was a need to be embedded within the laboratory of practice, to leverage previously established trust and relationships, and to contribute to the improvement of the existing state of the educational setting. Superintendent of Henderson County Public Schools, David Jones, recognized a pending need for additional school leaders as multiple principals were

approaching potential retirement dates. The senior leaders of Henderson County Public Schools exhibited proactive characteristics embracing the proposed principal support intervention. Rather than accepting the *status quo* for beginning principal support, Henderson County Public Schools embraced the idea of collaborating with scholar-practitioners to address the problem, making available human and capital resources to develop and implement a formalized program of support for beginning principals.

History and Review of the Problem

The task of a school principal is complex, and this complexity is often only diminished through the lens of professional experience (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2007). The beginning principal struggles with the complexity of the job, the limits of her instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change. Beginning principals must be, at once, instructional leaders, building managers, supervisors, purchasing agents, public relations liaisons and visionaries. Further, being an effective school administrator requires sound judgment and a myriad of interpersonal and scholarly competencies. While institutions of higher education are charged with preparing leaders for the mammoth task of becoming a practicing school administrator, senior school district leaders should accept the challenge of coaching and growing the beginning principals that they have hired to lead the schools within their districts. Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, and Foleno, 2001) estimated that 60% of superintendents report either a decrease or stagnation in principal quality over previous years. Proactively addressing this problem is worthy of consideration given the rippling impact of school leadership on teacher and student success.

Since principals directly report to senior school district administrators, it is important to examine the job-embedded supports given to beginning principals. If the necessary support is not provided intentionally by district administration, beginning principal development is left to chance. Preliminary investigation indicates that beginning principals fail to receive enough job-embedded support dedicated to indoctrinating them in the ways, expectations, demands, and needs of those they serve (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson and Orr, 2007).

Intentional mentoring support provides a job-embedded layer of professional development for beginning school administrators and capitalizes on a practice that has been successful in business leadership for many years (Templeton, 2014). As defined in North Carolina law §115C Article 20 Section E, mentoring support is required for beginning teachers. No such mandate exists for new school leaders. The Southern Region Education Board (SREB) published a study that contends "mentoring helps…shape beliefs – about whole school change, students' capacities to learn, relationships with staff and community, and ethical leadership practices (Gray, Fry, Bottoms and O'Neill, 2007). While it seems like a logical support that would be broadly implemented, limited school district resource compete for prioritization. On the surface, dedicated personnel support like mentoring can be perceived to be costly, demand significant time investment, and require a deep well of expert mentors. Such perceptions are not absolutes and when the potential benefits to students and schools are considered, the contention of the Southern Region Education Board presents results that are well worth the attention to this need for professional support. The SREB study reveals compelling evidence that mentorship, when implemented purposefully, is a high-yield strategy for influencing an education

professional's philosophy on school environment, leadership principles, and solution-oriented implementation practices.

Support of principals is worthy of focused consideration given that North Carolina's 115 superintendents supervise over 2,400 practicing principals. Effective mentorship, support, and growth of principals, especially beginning principals, leads to greater student achievement, more qualified instructional staff, and aids the trickle-down effect of growing effective future leaders, those who are in direct contact with a building's effective leader. With all of the rhetoric around improving schools, the impact of effective leadership must be considered an integral part of the improvement equation.

There is a great need for direction as beginning principals attempt to implement new initiatives and affect school reform. Considering this need, research journals are filled with examination of principal behaviors that include relationship management, instructional leadership, organizational/managerial leadership styles, and management of bureaucracy and policy. In looking at the categories more closely, the scholar-practitioners found that relationship management ranges from interaction styles with teachers to the ability to work with communities in both fundraising and communicating the vision for the school. The largest component in terms of volume of research involves leading instruction. However, instructional leadership is just one of the eight standards used to evaluate North Carolina School Executives. School principals, regardless of their prior experience or the presence of ongoing support, are expected to be proficient in strategic leadership, cultural leadership, human resource leadership, managerial leadership, external development leadership, micro-political leadership, as well as instructional leadership.

State policy decisions and mandates often narrow the position of school leaders to that of one who carries out legislation and procedures established at the state or district level. Rather than simply dealing in research articles, there is a need for professionals to reflect and make decisions throughout the day. These decisions often have far-reaching impacts on students and the smaller communities in and around the school. Bond (2014) references the importance of reflection being situated in action and states that the reflection must be developed or built, garnering beginning principal attributes that can then be shaped through appropriate mentoring and training.

Given that beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change, the review of existing literature began as a research task framed around a question that the scholar-practitioners considered but eventually rejected as the focus of the work: *Which behaviors and practices do principals value as most effective in growing their school leadership capacity?* As the review of the literature progressed, the focus was changed from principal-perceived needs for support into an examination of specific types of support that had the highest likelihood of accelerating competency. Recognizing that North Carolina's public schools serve over 1.4 million students and over 170,000 teachers, there was a keen recognition that increasing leadership capacity among principals in one district could, potentially, become a model for statewide implementation. Further investigation confirmed that a focus on effective leadership and mentoring practices has the potential to impact the quality of educational services statewide (Templeton, 2014).

While an extensive body of research exists around principal practices that influence teacher leadership and instructional practice, there are minimal findings in professional journals, and practically no academic dissertations or scholarly literature rooted in action research that identify practices impacting beginning principal effectiveness. Local school districts are charged with creating optimal learning conditions for students in a results-oriented, highly accountable environment. Assisting district leaders with identifying successful practices for supporting beginning principals benefits all stakeholders.

Like many districts, Henderson County Public Schools already had some support and structures in place to support school administrators. Monthly meetings for principals and assistant principals often included professional learning opportunities, collaborative problem solving of issues impacting the district and periodic review of policies and state statutes. An annual multi-day summer leadership retreat provided in-depth learning around the district's strategic plan, communication procedures, and legal issues. The district also published for principals the cell number for each district administrator, encouraging principals to call senior leaders anytime for support. These supports are valuable and their merit is not in question. What did warrant further investigation was the level of support given to individual principals. Does a first-year principal need identical support as the veteran administrator who has been practicing for two decades? With this question in mind, differentiation of support for beginning principals became a focus for the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

A breadth of research exists on leadership development (Collins & Holton, 2004). Some of the research focuses on generic leadership development practices that can be implemented in a variety of settings from business to social organizations. Additionally, an extensive body of research also exists that solely examines educational leadership (Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010). However, when trying to identify specific practices and behaviors of educational leaders that build efficacy in others, the existing educational research tends to focus on the principal to teacher relationship. Beginning principals are tasked with addressing so much more than their relationships with staff. Beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change.

It is important to patiently reflect on the complexity, the limitations, the loneliness, and the resistance inherent in an educational leader's journey toward effectiveness and efficacy. School leaders must both acknowledge the presence of these elements and develop the skills necessary to overcome the unique challenges of each. District leaders and school communities expect school leaders to serve their respective schools with poise, expertise, and vision from day one. Ultimately, successful leadership development may hinge on an organization's commitment to the intentional support of an individual's growth and professional learning.

Finding literature that examined practices that best support beginning principal leadership proved to be challenging. The rationale and importance of teasing out these factors is simple: in order to develop highly effective leaders, district leaders need to know what specific types of support their beginning principals need to establish and

maintain successful schools. Logically, successful, veteran school administrators could mentor beginning administrators as a best practice for improving performance. But does the research support that claim? A dive into the literature revealed that there was a breadth of information around mentoring in corporate settings, pre-service administrator mentoring, and even on beginning teacher mentoring, but the research was scarcer when examining the impact of mentoring new principals. While there is clear understanding in the research around how principal and teacher behaviors impact student success, less is known about the impact of the system's chief administrators decisions on other leaders within the organization (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Research Gap
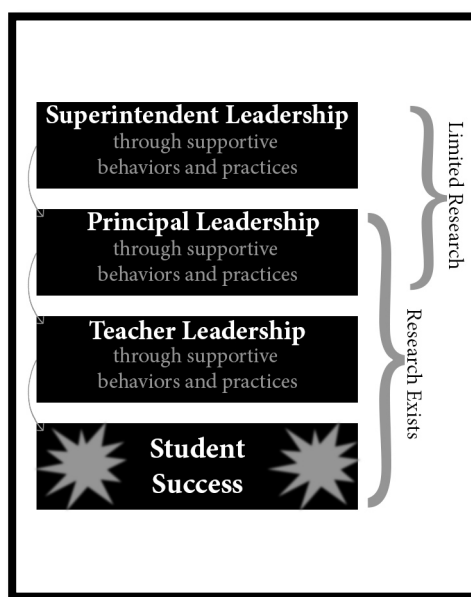
Figure 3. While an extensive body of research exists detailing the principals impact on teachers and students; however, the research is limited on how district level leadership impacts principal competency.

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), in their work entitled *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tell us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement*, gave explanation and detail to 21 leadership responsibilities significantly correlated with student achievement. Through these responsibilities, school leadership reportedly increases teacher morale, improves the working and learning conditions at schools, and ultimately increases student achievement. Such outcomes and dispositions are desired in schools across the nation. The immense impacts of effective school leadership are frequently evidenced, however, there is surprisingly little discussion about the development of leadership capacity to support these responsibilities. With the majority of professional literature focusing on the collection and analysis of which behaviors of principals having the greatest impact on student achievement, there is little research on the development of those behaviors. Begley (2006) states that self-knowledge, moral reasoning, and sensitivity to others should define leadership. There is a lack of direction in how to go about attaining these characteristics and specifically how they can best aligned to school-based leadership.

The research continues to emphasize the importance of the principal as the key to improved learning and teaching environments (Cotton, 2003). Rather than simply dealing in research articles, there is a need for professionals to reflect and make decisions throughout the day. These decisions often have far-reaching impacts on students and the smaller communities in and around the school. Professional reflection and decision-making processes, therefore, are primary targets for intervention design and development. John Bond (2011) cites both Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) in reference to reflection being situated in action. He refers to the "reservoir of knowledge, or knowing-in-practice,

and often act without conscious reflection" (p. 2). This "reservoir" must be developed or built, a principal attribute than can be shaped through appropriate mentoring and training.

Each of the articles discussed and resulting theories are shallow in addressing improvement efforts beyond labeling as effective or ineffective. The examination of the process of change is limited because the researchers are primarily concerned with a completed project, rather than assessing to make adjustments in the process. Thus, there is ripe opportunity for attention on the process itself—the intentional cycle of continuous support and development.

There is, however, a growing recognition of the need for devising support for new administrators. NAESP (2003) reported that "[e]ducators are beginning to recognize that, given the increasing complexity and importance of the principalship, school districts can no longer afford to leave novice principals alone, isolated from helpful colleagues, when solving complex problems" (p. 8). To that end, Mitgang and Gill (2012) noted that "since 2000, virtually all states have adopted new learning-centered leadership standards... Roughly half the states have, for the first time, mandated mentoring for newly hired principals" (pp. 4–5). The adoption of new leadership standards and mandated mentoring serve to sustain organizational health and engage school leaders in their own professional growth. The literature goes on to support the desire of principals, especially beginning principals, to be provided with intentional mentor support (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Given that beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change, designed mentoring support and professional development meet both the needs and desires of novice school leaders.

In North Carolina, there is no mentoring requirement for newly hired administrators. With no obligation to provide this dedicated support, few districts commit already-limited resources to this endeavor. Departing from the norm, Henderson County Public Schools' Superintendent David Jones embraced the intentionality of effective support practices and mentoring as crucial factors to the future success of the beginning principal and that of the students and staff under her leadership (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). The actual need of school systems to support novice school leaders strengthens the argument for the development of dedicated professional support, especially when coupled with theoretical perspectives.

Theoretical Considerations

This problem could be considered from multiple viewpoints. Certainly humanist and behaviorist theories are applicable, but the scholar-practitioners chose to primarily consider systems theory as they implemented the action research project. Schools operate as an open organizational system (Chance, 2009) and are influenced by both internal and external factors. Successful organizations, including schools, find benefit in making intentional investments in their employees (Bolman & Deal, 2008). While educators converse about pedagogy, the theories and best practices around teaching children, less attention is given to andragogy, the learning needs of adults.

Knowles' (1984) research around the needs of adult learners should be considered when investigating the role of local school districts in coaching beginning principals. Knowles' research acknowledges the behaviorist approach in advocating for an adult's need for social learning, task orientation, and learning that is relevant to their career. Investment in employees, and particularly in leaders, as a means of increasing

organizational effectiveness is a timely and high-leverage issue. The need for intentional support for new administrators has recently been featured in several practitioner online publications, such as the *School Leaders* Network, where the author contends that "the job is simply too complex, too poorly constructed, too isolating. School leaders lack the ongoing support and development required to maintain and foster sustained commitment" (2014). The *School Leaders* Network urges coaching and increased support for principals as not only a means to increased effectiveness, but also to reduce the economic impact of principal turnover. Similarly, author Alex Granados writes in *EducationNC* that turnover among North Carolina principals is problematic and deserving of policymakers' attention (2015).

Beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change. Mentoring as a purposeful intervention incorporates relevancy, a task-focus and personal interaction. The proposed study further aligns with adult learning needs by incorporating group learning and reflection. Andragogy must be considered in order to make the best use of findings. Considerations include:

- Share findings with superintendents, who themselves are adult learners. The North Carolina School Superintendents Association (NCSSA) has an annual orientation program for newly hired superintendents. Preliminary discussions with Jack Hoke, Executive Director of NCSSA, have centered on sharing the project as part of the NCSSA new superintendents orientation program. Mr. Hoke believes superintendents will be interested in hearing about a district model of support for new administrators.

- Share findings with institutions of higher learning that support administrative

  licensure programs. A keen awareness of adult learning theory will be a practical

  consideration when sharing the research findings with practitioner experts. It will

  be important to provide context and show relevance to their current practices. The

  findings of this study might enhance the preparedness of those seeking licensure

  to be a district superintendent.

- Share findings with local school districts. Knowledge of adult learning theory is a

  critical component of sharing results with employing local school districts. In

  addition to considering appropriate avenues for communicating the findings,

  assisting local school districts with implementation of new practices requires a

  multi-system approach of support agencies and service providers. These include

  Regional Educational Service Alliances (RESAs), regional support personnel

  employed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and the

  NCSSA.

Thus, andragogy has significant implications for making use of the research

findings. Still further, using the PDSA cycle of improvement science, these findings may

yield a scalable model for beginning principal support. In fact, the researchers have

already been invited to share this work in multiple venues.

An additional theoretical consideration is the significant body of research around

change theory and transformational leadership. Humans approach and implement change

in a variety of ways and with varying degrees of success (Langley, 2009). The notion that

there may be better ways to support effective principals than are currently being practiced

might be met with opposition. Knowing about innovative and successful practices is quite

a different matter than implementing those practices. Thus, a researcher's knowledge of

change theory is imperative in not only reviewing the existing literature but also in

considering how to best disseminate findings.

CHAPTER THREE: INTERVENTION RATIONALE

Beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change. To combat these challenges, researchers sought to identify a specific intervention that would be high-yield, affordable, and could be implemented fairly quickly.

A Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education graphic (2011) details the benefits of mentoring to each group involved in process as:

Benefits to mentees: guidance and support during initiation; increased self-confidence; encouragement to take risks to achieve goals; opportunities to discuss professional issues with a veteran; promotion of networking.

Benefits to organization: promotion of positive organizational climate; clarifies roles and expectations; may increase satisfaction and retention rates; suggests commitment and loyalty to employees.

Benefits to mentors: opportunities for professionals to strengthen their knowledge and improve communications, teaching, and coaching skills; greater collegiality among new and veteran professionals; satisfaction gained from helping newcomers to a field; enhances professional reputation for commitment.

Principals value feedback and coaching from officials within their local school districts. Some districts do not have the human resources to provide this service from currently employed district office administrators and have found that contracting with retired, highly effective principals can provide a workable solution to job-embedded coaching (Clarke & Wildly, 2011). Commitment to mentoring school leaders can be costly for a district both in real dollars and in time, but research supports effective

mentorship as one of the most valuable factors in growing effective principals (Fink &

Resnick, 2001). The NewSchools Venture Fund, a group that works with charter schools,

has some practical suggestions for ways to support new principals. The organization

believes that a three-pronged approach that includes individualized coaching, a cohort

emphasis on group problem solving, and targeted training for the needs of individual

principals is essential to principal development (NAESP, 2013). There is also evidence to

suggest that one avenue for coaching principals is for district leaders to establish

opportunities for school administrators to share best practices in a facilitated meeting.

This strategy, though not dubbed a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in the

literature, would mimic the idea of group learning by examining data and best practices

(Bush, 2009).

A synthesis of the research around mentoring and coaching principals revealed an

emerging pattern of intentionality (Ragins & Kram, 2007). This pattern became the

bedrock of the scholar-practitioner research and intervention design. In each study

reviewed, the mentoring programs being scrutinized were purposeful and had well-stated

goals, expectations, and accountability measures. While some of the feedback practices

were more informal in nature, the expectation of a feedback loop was not left to chance

(Kaufman, 2003). Additionally, feedback was a paramount component to any required

evaluative cycle or form; the mentor/coaching feedback was on-going and job-embedded.

On most occasions, it did not require a principal to be out of the school building. In the

Henderson County Public Schools study, the scholar-practitioners embraced the

emergence of mentoring and reflection as quality interventions because they are research-

based and can most often take place on-site. The intent to provide wrap around support

enabled the scholar-practitioners to design a set of interventions, adapt those interventions to the needs of the beginning principals, and create an immediate means for improvement and direct application.

Building Stronger Principals

Ask almost any practicing principal to share his hiring story, and you will hear a similar tale. Many principals recall being hired, handed keys to the building, given a few passwords or alarm codes, and told something along the lines of "Congratulations and good luck." District leaders and the local Board of Education believed the new principal was the best candidate for the position and likely trusted, at least on some surface level, that the new hire was prepared for whatever challenges may follow.

If no support program exists within the district, the new principal may experience isolation and unexpected challenges. Turnbull, Riley, and MacFarlane (2013), in a study commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, concluded that principals value the following practices:

- Coaching/mentoring – either provided directly by the superintendent or strategically provided by the district
- Professional learning opportunities – either relevant training opportunities or within-district collegial teams
- Communication – a shared vision that allows for two-way communication that are both formal and informal in structure
- Awareness loop – opportunities for principals to weigh in on the support they receive as well as what they need to be more effective

The values articulated by the Wallace Foundation provide a useful frame for developing and constructing a program of support designed to meet the needs of Henderson County Public Schools, and potentially exist as a scalable model that could be adapted by school systems across the state and the nation.

Driving Professional Learning Opportunities

Though sometimes generically attributed to central office leadership as opposed to being directly credited to superintendents, Mendels and Mitgang (2013) support the notion that principals value high-quality opportunities for professional learning as a way to grow their effectiveness. Investing in principal learning can reduce turnover and help create an informal professional network (Crippen, 2004). Some districts with strong student achievement results have policies that mandate the funding and management of professional learning opportunities for principals (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

In addition to sending principals to professional development, Los Angeles researchers have documented the merit of local school districts that allow principals to help plan the agenda for monthly group support meetings. This helps principals address timely topics and seek feedback from their colleagues and supervisor (Hentschke, Nayfack, & Wohlstetter, 2009). This supports the idea of a principal group-learning session or PLC (Bush, 2009).

When central office leaders plan professional learning opportunities for principals, it is important to make certain that the sessions are of high quality (Kaufman, 2003). Beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to

change. Beginning principals cannot afford to spend time outside of their building except on high-yield opportunities. Additionally, there must be financial consideration when planning the professional learning opportunities (Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, & Slate, 2008).

One study went so far as to claim that superintendents could directly influence the growth of teacher leadership (Wells, Maxfield, Klocko, & Feun, 2010). The study was a program evaluation of the Galileo Project at Oakland University and claimed that superintendents who participated in the program were more likely to nurture teacher leadership growth than superintendents who were not part of the Galileo Project. The study was based on perception data and superintendent subordinates had a chance to critique the practices of their supervisor. The study suggests that when models of professional growth practices exist, district staff value similar learning opportunities.

The literature concerning providing professional learning opportunities for adults points overwhelmingly to the importance of quality professional development that is relevant and task oriented (Knowles, 1984). Professional learning was recognized as not just external learning opportunities but also as within-district opportunities to learn from mentors and colleagues. This is especially important in rural districts with limited monetary resources (Salazar, 2007).

Given the intervention options, mentoring emerged as the best match for beginning principal support in Henderson County Public Schools. Beginning principals in Henderson County, like so many others across the state, were often charged with leading their respective school communities with little to no dedicated support or targeted professional learning. Their paths to professional effectiveness and efficacy were

seemingly left to chance. Dedicated mentoring combats the complexity and loneliness of the leadership journey through purposeful pairing. Dedicated mentoring extends a bridge of guidance, encouragement, and reflection to novice leaders during their period of greatest need. While additional, differentiated supports would also be implemented as a result of momentum gained during rollout, the importance and potential impact of the mentor/mentee relationship was the nucleus of the endeavor.

Context

Just south of Asheville, Henderson County Public Schools is located in the mountains of Western North Carolina along the South Carolina border. Comprised of 23 schools (13 elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools, and two innovative high schools), Henderson County Public Schools serves approximately 13,700 students and employs over 1,500 full-time faculty, staff, and support personnel.

In 2014-2015, six Henderson County schools were led by first year principals. Three more rookie principals began their leadership journeys the following year. Thus, nearly 40% of Henderson County's 23 schools were in the hands of school administrators with fewer than two years of principalship experience. This statistic is significant as "the principal's job is complex and multidimensional, and the effectiveness of principals depends, in part, on...how they allocate their time across daily responsibilities" (Rice, 2010, p. 2). Seeking immediate effectiveness and efficacy, beginning principals often struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change.

With over 25% of school system's leaders in their rookie year in 2014- 2015, Henderson County Public Schools was ripe for welcoming a beginning principal support

program designed to connect these first year principals with veteran principal mentors and targeted professional support. As Mitgang and Gill (2012) observed, "Getting pre-service principal training right is essential. But equally important is the training and support school leaders receive after they're hired" (p. 24). As a veteran educator, the superintendent of Henderson County Public Schools recognized the need to offer deeper layers of support for the beginning principals preparing to embark on their new leadership journeys.

Similarly, many North Carolina superintendents served as principals at some point in their careers. Many also assumed duties at a district central office prior to becoming a system's chief educational executive. It seems logical to frame a vision of appropriate support to beginning principals based on respective experience. In most districts, including the action-research lab of Henderson County Public Schools, it is not practical for a superintendent to be the sole-provider of support for a beginning principal. Instead, district leadership could, and we propose should, provide newly hired school leaders with purposeful mentoring and support.

Targeted Intervention

Given the absence of legislation, policy, and funding for beginning principal support in North Carolina, Henderson County Public Schools embraced the implementation of a model designed to grow the leadership capacity of beginning principals in order that the impact of their service is maximized. Recognizing that the intentionality of effective support practices and mentoring are crucial to the future success of the beginning principal and that of the students and staff under a principal's leadership, scholar-practitioners collaborated with district leaders to design an affordable

model of support (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). The design of the beginning

principal support intervention matches beginning principals with mentors, while

providing opportunities for professional growth through self-assessment, reflection, and

group learning. As NAESP (2003) noted:

> Corporations have long used mentoring—either informally or formally—as a
>
> career-development strategy in which experienced executives offer developmental
>
> assistance to their less experienced protégés...more than one third of the nation's
>
> top companies have established mentoring programs. (p. 9)

The beginning principal and mentor pairs were connected by structured trainings, regular

contact commitments, and professional reflection activities.

As the merits of the beginning principal support program were evidenced,

Henderson County Public Schools Senior Leadership began to develop a staff position

whose chief duties would be to design, coordinate, and expand leadership supports for

current and future school leaders. Ultimately, Henderson County Public Schools

Superintendent, David Jones, approved and endorsed the creation of the Director of

School Learning and Leadership Development. This senior level leadership position is

identified as a direct product of research merit and scholar-practitioner program of

support:

> We said, we are really in a position where we need to see how do we grow our
>
> own? How can we try to get those quality people and how can we help develop
>
> these? What kind of support are we getting the ones we've just put into place?
>
> Here's six, we're going to add four more. All of a sudden you're thinking, what

kind of support? What can I do to help? (D. Jones, personal communication,

September 30, 2015)

Such attention to 'grow our own' is supported by the research of Louis, Leithwood,

Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010), who found that "in higher-performing districts, central

office leaders believed in their capacity to develop more effective principals" (p. 21).

They further observed that:

> Leaders in higher-performing districts communicated explicit expectations for
>
> principal leadership and provided learning experiences in line with these
>
> expectations...gaps in principals' leadership expertise were identified through
>
> ongoing monitoring and discussion with principals about school performance and
>
> improvement plans, and through informal advising and coaching interventions. (p.
>
> 21)

Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) noted that "the district leadership challenge is to

move from oversight, from holding principals accountable at arms length [*sic*], to

providing the capacity-building support that true district-school partnerships require" (p.

vii).

Once the Henderson County Public Schools' partnership was secure, the

following Executive Summary of Intervention was shared during the research proposal

and approval process. It also served as a guiding document for the scholar-practitioner

trio and partners within the school system.

Executive Summary of Intervention

System Focus:
Henderson County Public Schools
414 4th Avenue West
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Population focus:
Six beginning principals who are mentored by six selected mentors and central office staff.

Intended outcome:
Intended outcomes will be:
- increased beginning principal efficacy,
- creation of a scalable model for beginning principal mentoring, and
- increased K-12 leadership capacity.

Provide a wrap-around system of support for beginning principals to include support from internal and external providers:
- intentional mentoring
- building instructional leadership capacity
- ensuring adequate central service support

Researchers will create a replicable program of support to include:
- a focused leadership retreat,
- web-based resources, and
- qualitative autobiographical evidence of leadership development.

Further, by sharing the results, improve the induction of beginning principals across school leadership venues.

Measures:
Beginning principal pre-assessment (before mentoring)
Beginning principal post-assessment (after mentoring)
Beginning principal self-reflections (during mentoring)
Mentor assessment (after mentoring)

Timeframe:
Using the Plan-Do-Study-Act and elements of the 90-day improvement framework, we plan to implement in the spring, summer and fall of 2015.

Guidance:
These are the boundaries of the project:
- Interventions will begin in Spring 2015 with the six leaders who are currently in their first year as principal.
- Budget constraints that must be considered. The district will use Title II funds to support this project.
- Recruitment and training of mentors.

Initial activities:
- Create survey and pilot it with principals outside the system.
- Secure internal and external mentors.
- Providing training and orientation for internal and external mentors.
- Secure a site for the leadership retreat and begin planning the agenda.
- Provide direct mentor support (3 week intervals) of beginning principals by survey topics of need.
- Train participants on creation of reflective videos.
- Progress monitor beginning principal perception data [efficacy/leadership capacity] with 1-minute video journals (3 week intervals).
- Conduct Post-Assessment of beginning principal perception data [efficacy/leadership capacity] at the conclusion of each 90-day cycle.

Potential Cycle:
Using the PLAN/DO/STUDY/ACT model (Langley, Moen, Nolan, Nolan, Norman & Provost, 2009, p. 97), complete a cycle beginning in the spring of 2015 with ongoing support post-initial intervention period.

John Daresh (2001), in *Leaders Helping Leaders*, a how-to guide for setting up a mentoring program, presents a three-phase model that includes initial planning, implementation, and evaluation. He also describes the many benefits of mentoring to potential mentors, protégés, and districts:

- Mentors report greater overall job satisfaction, increased recognition from their peers, greater opportunities for career advancement, and renewed enthusiasm for the profession.

- For protégés, benefits include increased confidence about their professional competence, the ability to see theory translated into practice, the creation of a collegial support system, and a sense of belonging. According to Daresh (2001), "Protégés learn more about their professional lives and gain more insight into their personal needs, visions, and values [from mentoring] than through any other kind of learning experience."

- School districts report higher motivation levels and job satisfaction among staff members, increased productivity, and an attitude of lifelong learning among administrators.

(*Making the Case for Principal Mentoring,* NAESP, 2003, p. 11)

Recognizing the potential benefits for all involved, the scholar-practitioners found value in utilizing Daresh's (2001) work as they constructed the program of support for Henderson County while adding a component of weekly self-reflection.

Participants

The participants in this study were limited to first year principals in Henderson County Public Schools. At the time, six of the district's 23 principals were in their first year of leading a school. Participants granted scholar-practitioners permission to use their survey results, demographic data, mentor/mentee logs, observations, and weekly reflections as part of the study. The recruited mentors, also participants in the study, granted permission to use their post-assessment results, observation logs, and weekly contact logs.

Of the six beginning principal participants, four were male and two were female. One of the six was a high school principal, three were middle school principals, and two were elementary school principals. Scholar-practitioners acknowledge that six participants represents a limited sample. Increasing the sample would have required expanding the target intervention audience beyond first year principals or expanding the scope of the project to include multiple districts. Both options were rejected.

Expanding the sample to include more than the naturally occurring number of first-year principals inside Henderson County Public Schools could have skewed the focus of the research away from beginning principals. Expanding the scope of the work to include multiple districts did not conform to cost and time restrictions. Additionally, the scholar-practitioners concluded that implementing this type of intervention required the commitment of a district's senior official, the superintendent. Mr. Jones,

Superintendent of Henderson County Schools, was committed to providing greater support for new administrators. The scholar-practitioners recognized that it would take that type of unwavering support to provide the most favorable conditions for the intervention to be successful.

Should this work be replicated or expanded by another scholar-practitioner, it is imperative to partner with a district that has a supportive superintendent. The scholar-practitioners found that support in Mr. Jones. A veteran educator with 38 years of experience, all inside Henderson County Public Schools, Mr. Jones has worked his way through the ranks. He served as a teacher, coach, principal, and district director with diverse professional responsibilities before working his way into the Assistant Superintendent position and eventually the district's top role. With Mr. Jones at the helm, the district prioritized an emphasis on leadership capacity. Mr. Jones communicated the importance of the initiative with the local board of education, and was present at organizational meetings with mentors and mentees. He set aside time in his own calendar to sit and talk with the group of beginning principals, fielding questions and instilling in them a confidence in their contribution to the district's success.

While not in the scope of this initial cycle of intervention, it should be noted that during the school year that followed this research, the district hired three more new principals, who are enrolled the evolving support structures for accelerating the growth of new building leaders. Those three new principals have joined the original six participants for professional learning opportunities, mentor/mentee meetings, and social gatherings. Superintendent Jones continues to be actively involved in all of these endeavors.

Intervention Design

Beginning principal support has been structured around the PDSA improvement framework of intentional mentoring, professional reflection, and focused professional development experiences (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Overview of the PDSA Improvement Framework

Figure 4. The PDSA framework includes four cyclical stages of improvement activities. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/pdsacycle. Copyright 2015 by Hive Research Lab.

Each beginning principal completes a self-assessment to reflect self-perceptions around each of the Executive Leadership Standards. At the conclusion of the intervention cycle, each beginning principal completes a post-assessment around the same standards. The paired mentor also completes a post-assessment survey indicating the perceived Executive Leadership competencies of their mentee. Such pre- and post-assessment data

provides a picture of professional growth and leadership capacity, while being somewhat limited by intervention period and an individual's response shift bias. "Despite the need for more data to substantiate mentoring's value in states and districts that have adopted it, there is considerable support for the belief that high-quality mentoring can provide important benefits to principals, just as it has to new entrants in many other professions" (Spiro, Mattis, & Mitgang, 2007, p. 20).

Intended Outcomes

Intended outcomes include:

- increased beginning principal efficacy,

- creation of a scalable model for beginning principal mentoring, and

- increased K-12 leadership capacity.

The scholar –practitioners intend to provide a wrap-around system of support for beginning principals to include support from internal and external providers:

- intentional mentoring

- building instructional leadership capacity

- ensuring adequate central service support

Scholar-practitioners will create a replicable program of support to include:

- a focused leadership retreat,

- web-based resources, and

- qualitative autobiographical evidence of leadership development.

Table 1 describes the current state and research goals for each intervention.

Table 1

Desired Intervention Outcomes

Intervention	Current State	Goal
Formal assignment of beginning principal mentor	The beginning principals have not been assigned a mentor.	100% (6/6) of Henderson County Public Schools beginning principals assigned to a high-quality, trained mentor who has proven leadership skills.
Mentor/mentee orientation	Since no mentors are currently assigned to beginning principals, there is no formal mentor/mentee orientation.	Dedicated "retreat-style" meeting for mentors and mentees with leadership development activities planned.
Mentor training	With no mentors assigned to beginning principals, there is no formal mentor training.	Guided mentor training activities and resources for facilitating mentor/mentee interactions.
Intentional period of mentoring	The beginning principals have not been assigned a mentor.	Individualized mentoring support for the 6 beginning principals.
Survey beginning principals to assess their perceptions of self-efficacy and leadership capacity	No data exists currently, pre-assessment to be conducted prior to intervention to serve as baseline.	20% increase in each survey category for all beginning principal participants.
Creation of free, replicable resources for strategic support of beginning principals	Minimal evidence of this type of support exists.	By June 2016, a webpage featuring beginning principal support resources will be accessible for the purpose of scaling BP support.

Mentor Identification and Involvement

With recognition and attention to the importance of the right match between the mentor and the mentee, the scholar-practitioners sought out mentors with unique insight into the culture and expectations of Henderson County Public Schools. Further, mentors were initially identified and recruited based on the following criteria:

1. Currently practicing or retired school principal, with at least five years of principal experience.

2. Successful school leadership experience with Henderson County Public Schools or another public school district.

3. Willingness to participate in the beginning principal retreat.

4. Willingness to provide weekly and "on call" mentor support to a beginning principal for at least one school year.

5. Commitment to advance the profession by donating time and expertise for a minimum of one year.

Mentor training centered around formal structures for mentor/mentee interaction, as well as dedicated ease of use. Drawn from characteristics of effective employee support systems, the mentor training framework matrix illustrates a continuum for peer coaching, peer mentoring, and executive coaching. This framework provides beginning principal mentors with and targets for each mentoring/coaching interaction, and informs the objectives outlined in the Mentor Contact expectations.

Further, a centerpiece of the mentor recruitment and identification was careful attention to the mentor/mentee pairings. An effective relationship of support would require a foundation of chemistry between both the mentor and the mentee. The nuance

of human interactions demands that consideration be given to comparable professional experiences, dispositions, and communication styles. While each of these elements exist in concrete and abstract forms, the scholar-practitioners recognized the potential influence and impact of such factors when establishing the respective pairings.

Mentors each participated in a facilitated discussion of the Mentor Training Guide, and then spent an hour paired with another mentor dissecting the matrix and beginning principal support question stems.

During the cycle of support, mentors are available for at least contact with their beginning principal each week. This contact can be in person or by phone, and is scheduled to last at least 10 minutes. While no prescribed content is to be covered in each contact, mentors were trained to utilize the support matrix and question stems to drive their interaction. Further, the content of each weekly interaction is intentional unrecorded; the only exceptions being the date, type and time of contact.

A crucial element to the Mentor/Mentee relationship is confidentiality, especially regarding mentee struggles, questions, or indecision. Beginning principals were informed early and often that the content of their mentor relationship would not be documented or discussed as part of the support framework or for research purposes.

Mentors complete a Post-Assessment on their respective beginning principal at the conclusion of the cycle of support detailing their perceptions of beginning principal competence and capacity aligned to the Executive Leadership Standards. Post-assessment data is utilized to craft ongoing and/or future support and professional development for the respective beginning principal.

Limitations of the Study

It should be noted that the study did have several limiting factors. The scholar-practitioners acknowledge that the scope of the intervention was limited by the absence of longitudinal study, the nuanced data generated by human interpersonal relationships, the relatively small sample size of participants, and the assertion that mentoring is not a singular cure-all for professional growth. The scholar-practitioners identified the influence of each of these limiting factors at the beginning of the study and further recognized that their embeddedness in the study presented a limitation, as well.

First, the study was grounded in the PDSA improvement cycle. Because it is not a longitudinal study, the scholar-practitioners are only able to measure the short-term impact of mentoring. This barrier is not exclusive to Henderson County. Spiro, Mattis, and Mitgang noted this same hurdle in 2007 stating, "Another impediment to the spread of principal mentoring has been the scarcity of data about its efficacy— for example, evidence of its impact on retention of new principals or on student learning" (p. 5). A future study could examine the long-term impact of the intervention on the subjects of this study. Do they stay in the profession? Are they successful?

A second limitation, related to the time specified time dedicated to the intervention cycle, revolves around capturing the nuances involved in any human relationship. While the scholar-practitioners do have data to support the importance and effectiveness of the intervention, it does not fully capture the essence of the mentor/mentee relationships that evolved. This notion is captured eloquently by one national educational association, asserting "effective mentoring must be understood as a process that is much more sophisticated than simply sharing craft knowledge when called

upon by organizational newcomers. It must be seen as a proactive instructional process in which a learning contract is established between the mentor and the protégé" (NAESP, 2003, pp. 10-11).

It should be noted that the size of the study sample existed as a limitation. Partnering with a single school district meant that our participant group was limited in number. While this made the research affordable and able to be accomplished in the desired time frame, a well-funded study across multiple districts could provide richer data. A larger sample would potentially help reveal trends and tease out implementation factors such as district size, potential funding streams, and availability of mentors.

The scholar-practitioners recognized that mentoring alone will not, and cannot be the only support in place for beginning principals. Therefore, the program of support included designed self-reflection for the beginning principals and targeted professional learning opportunities. Each of these elements created a fertile soil for professional growth, none exclusive of the other. Mentoring expert John Daresh (2001) cautions that people should not view the practice as a panacea that will solve all of the problems facing school leaders. "[M]entoring for school leaders," he writes, "is meant to be at least one weapon in an arsenal of activities that could assist people who take on the challenges of trying to make a difference in schools" (p. 10). School system leaders must engage a number of support practices to maximize professional growth and minimize the time required for such growth to occur. The development of effective school leaders can be accelerated when targeted support and intentional mentoring are partners in the growth journey.

The data collected, highlighted by the anecdotal responses of the beginning principal participants emphasize the value of dedicated, intentional support, despite the study limitations. The beginning principals involved in the study went on to unanimously request that the program of support continue throughout their second year of school leadership. In 2007, Gray et al., well-known for their work on leadership development, concluded, "Despite the need for more data to substantiate mentoring's value in states and districts that have adopted it, there is considerable support for the belief that high-quality mentoring can provide important benefits to principals, just as it has to new entrants in many other professions" (p. 20). Ultimately, the results of the study proved of such benefit to Henderson County that the beginning principal support program was both approved for continuation and expansion in the following school year.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

We utilized a mixed methods approach in order to capture the complexity of the interaction between leadership practices and their context within the specific educational setting. As Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) wrote, "understanding the *what* of leadership is essential; but that without a rich understanding of *how* leaders go about their work, and *why* leaders do and think what they do, it is difficult to help school leaders think about and revise their practice" (p. 8). By using mixed methods the scholar-practitioners hoped to "elucidate local processes, meanings, and contextual influences in particular settings" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 90). While issues of scalability are addressed later, fidelity through the manner of support for schools in this district was treated as the utmost concern during the time of implementation. This design included simultaneous data collection, with an emphasis on a qualitative approach while collecting quantitative data at checkpoints during the cycle of improvement and support.

As scholar-practitioners, the goal was to gather data that most accurately described the environment of leadership within the district and revealed the needs of beginning administrators. In order to reduce bias and improve interpretation of results, the scholar-practitioners chose to use triangulation between interviews, self-rating scales, and mentor ratings of the novice principals (Maxwell, 2005). By using both qualitative and quantitative data, in multiple formats, the artifacts of intervention helped to ensure meaningful feedback from which to draw conclusions and plan adjustments to future implementation of the cycles of support.

After getting permission to move forward from both Western Carolina University and from the superintendent of Henderson County Public schools, the scholar-

practitioners collected self-efficacy ratings, mentor evaluation, and narrative reflection responses to triangulate the impact of the competency improvement (Creswell, 2012). Ultimately, the quantitative data illustrates a participant's perceived growth; the qualitative data helps to demonstrate the meaningfulness of the targeted mentoring and its relative impact on the participant's capacity as a school leader. The scholar practitioners conducted a pre- and post- assessment on self-perceived efficacies involving elements from the North Carolina Executive Leadership Standards both prior to and after the completion of the support intervention. A paired samples t-test was utilized to determine any significant changes in scores as a result of the intervention. Descriptive statistics will be reported on beginning principal responses to a survey measuring their self-efficacy in executive leadership standards. Using measures of central tendency, the scholar-practitioners identified and examined patterns, with visual representations to depict assessment data.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS

The scholar-practitioners collected data throughout the cycle of intervention, always watching for necessary changes both in real-time application and under consideration of future cycles. The data were separated into categories of qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative portions were analyzed in the format of video reflections throughout the cycle, book-ended by the participant self-assessments. The analysis of data is presented as a summary of the intervention, including the themes identified from the reflective video prompts and quotations from the participants that capture the essence of the themes. The analysis of quantitative data includes a comparison of pre- and post-intervention self-ratings, descriptive statistics, and a report on levels of significance and instrument reliability.

Qualitative Study

With a limited sample, the scholar-practitioners were keenly aware of the importance of a strong qualitative component of the research to compliment potential quantitative findings. Coupling Knowles' theory of adult learning practices with more modern research around support of new principals, purposeful reflection was selected as a meaningful way to capture participants' impressions of the provided interventions.

Reflective Video Prompts. Each beginning principal was asked to complete a weekly, one-minute video journal. Participants responded to a series of 12 questions over the period of the mentoring support. These video prompts were developed to specifically address components of the principalship and with the goal of learning through reflective practices. Through this intentional effort, the beginning principals were offered a lens through which to examine their own professional growth and development (see Appendix

G). Each of these video reflections was recorded by participants and sent weekly to one

of the scholar-practitioners who was not employed by the district. The videos were

transcribed, and all scholar-practitioners had access to the transcripts. Using triple-blind

in vivo coding, the three scholar-practitioners independently sought to identify emergent

themes. The coding was completed by each of the three scholar-practitioners independent

of input from one another for the purpose of increasing objectivity. Themes were then

identified and organized based on frequency and aligned to the North Carolina Executive

Leadership standards (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes Identified in Video Reflections

Date	CU	PD	TM	II	ME	CO	PL	BF	HR
2/13/15	0	0	0	0	6*	4	2	0	0
2/21/15	3	3	5	0	0	3	0	0	0
2/28/15	4	0	5	4	0	3	0	0	0
3/6/15	4	0	2	1	6*	3	0	0	0
3/13/15	2	3	0	1	2	4	0	0	0
3/20/15	5	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
3/27/15	2	3	1	0	0	3	0	1	4
4/17/15	2	1	3	4	0	1	0	4	6*
4/27/15	6*	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
5/1/15	6*	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
5/15/15	5	0	5	1	0	2	0	0	0
5/29/15	2	1	4	3	0	3	0	0	1
Total	41	11	27	21	14	27	2	5	12
%	56.94	15.28	37.50	29.17	19.44	37.50	2.78	6.94	16.67

Note. CU – Culture; PD – Professional Development; TM – Priorities and Time

Management; II – Instruction; ME – Mentoring; CO – Collaboration; PL – Professional

Learning Community; BF – Budget and Finance; HR – Human Resources. Asterisks

indicate 100% of participants identified a specific theme on the same response date.

The quotations shared are a representative sample of the depth and breadth of

responses shared in over 72 videotaped journal entries. The scholar-practitioners selected

these particular reflections to share since they paint a vivid picture of the complexity and

potential isolation of the principalship while also showing the positive influence of a

mentor and support program as a mitigating factor.

Transcription and coding of the weekly reflective prompts revealed themes,

especially around the topics of mentoring, job complexity and appreciation for the

supports put in place for these early stage principals. Specific to mentoring, one

beginning principal shared:

> I had a situation I talked to [my mentor] about, which was parents pushing very
>
> hard to have a student move from one teacher to another. It basically had become
>
> a battle of wills between a teacher and a student and parents. [My mentor] guided
>
> me through the thought process, saying, 'What is to gain from drawing a line in
>
> the sand?' She also guided me through the conversation with the teachers, and it's
>
> been successful thus far to have moved the kid.

This collegial access to problem-solve with veteran principals was welcomed by

all of the study participants, with another beginning principal sharing, "Being assigned a

mentor that I know that I can talk to and ask any question and be there for me as a

support is huge." Yet another participant summed up the experience by saying, "My

mentor has been really great in helping me through a lot of my first year struggles as a principal. It's been a real gift and a blessing." Yet another novice principal remarked in one of the weekly video reflections that he was "able to grow through the help of a mentor." Another principal found comfort in sharing specific issues with his mentor and finding out "that a lot of the things…normal things that happen during a first year of being a principal, that those things are common occurrences in some ways." This sort of assurance from a veteran, successful principal helped allay the new leader's fears about his own competence and career trajectory. Yet another principal used one of the weekly video reflections to share his desire to create "momentum" and have "influence" the way he was witnessing that happening at his mentor's school. This response demonstrates the importance of mentors being good models for the beginning principal. But the mentor's impact is sometimes found in much more concrete examples throughout the reflections, such as when one principal shared, "One nugget of advice that I received from my mentor is on scheduling. I'm looking at my master schedule for next year, and the advice that she gave me was…great advice." Another principal shared a specific piece of advice from her mentor that helped her "just to find some sanity and piece of mind." The mentor, realizing the overwhelming nature of the role, suggested to the novice leader that she "try your best to find a time that you can just let everything go. Turn your cell phone off, don't open email, don't mess with the computer, just find some time where you're not dealing with anything with school" over a weekend or holiday. Sharing this in the weekly reflection reinforced the need to support beginning principals as they deal with the demands and complexity of their new positions. Mentoring proved effective at bolstering

the new principals even when they seem to be at low points as evidenced by this

particular beginning principals' weekly reflection:

> For somebody to give me the advice of, *"You've got to let school go for a little*
>
> *while."* That's hard for me to do because I tend to internalize everything and carry
>
> everything on my shoulders. I don't let things go. I do worry about what's going
>
> on at this school. I do worry about the perception of our school in the community
>
> and with the teachers and with the students and with the parents. It's hard to let
>
> those things go, especially for me. Sometimes it makes me wish that I was back in
>
> the gym, teaching PE, wearing shorts and a t-shirt, because then I could let it go
>
> and not carry it home with me.

In this case, the mentor realized the stress level of the mentee and wisely suggested that

the new principal not be consumed by the demands of the job. The investments of the

mentors, as revealed in the weekly reflections, contributed to the successful retention of

all six beginning principals.

In addition to mentoring, another theme in the weekly reflections was job

complexity. Without question, some of the videos revealed a strong sense of beginning

principals being overwhelmed by the job. One beginning principal stared into the camera

and sighed, "Sometimes this job gets really, really hard, especially when things are going

on that are out of your control." In response to this sense of job pressure, mentors

continued to coach and walk alongside beginning principals. This support helped those

first year administrators see past the present events of the day. One study participant

summed up such forward thinking as the ability to:

…really look at the big picture and make sure that it's not just today's events that

we're focusing on. It's the end picture. It's tomorrow. It's next year. It's the year

after, and that everything can't be accomplished now but that if we lay the

groundwork, those things can be accomplished in the future.

The job's complexity was mitigated by well-matched mentors who had the ability to help

the beginning principals move from a sense of reactionary leadership towards a more

visionary style.

Additionally, the reflections revealed that principals needed support for a variety

of technical issues, arranging from human resource management to budgeting. The issues

manifested in reflections such as, "I have a lot of staffing challenges when we look at the

exceptional child department or ESL department. Those are positions that are sometimes

really difficult to fill, and we have many of those this year." Another beginning principal,

whose school fell below the poverty threshold to receive federal funding, shared that

targeted support would be welcomed "because of loss of Title One funds that I will

experience next year. That's going to provide a challenge for my school and for my staff

as we continue to search and be creative with the ways that Title One had helped us

through the years provide personnel, provide resources, provide additional monies for

mediation for tutors so that we could have different for small group instruction and things

like that." Another beginning principal recognized the challenges of staffing when

submitted a video lamenting, "I am losing 4 math teachers. It's going to be really difficult

to find 4 quality math teachers." Yet another principal clearly saw the relationship

between budgeting and staffing when he stated, "At this point, we are looking at a career

planning allotment reduction of 2.5 teachers. We have one retiring, so I know that's how we will absorb that one. The 1.5, that's going to create a challenge."

Reflections and coding also revealed affirmation for Henderson County Public Schools' commitment to a model of support for beginning principals. Because all of the six participants were internally promoted candidates, they were aware that the program was new. Unanimously, all of the participating principals found value in the program. One principal became somewhat emotional when sharing her impressions of the kickoff meeting and the plan for the PDSA cycle. She said:

> First of all, I would just like to say thank you for this wonderful two days of collaboration. The key takeaways from the last two days and my impressions of the design[ed] support are, First, the capacity building...I think it's huge and the collaboration and the time that you've given us together to discuss different things has been tremendous. Also being assigned a mentor that I know that I can talk to and ask any question and be there for me as a support is huge.

Another principal shared a similar sentiment, offering that mentors were "people that we can trust and people who are going to be able to have the skill sets to be able to help us through a lot of different situations." In reflecting on Table 2, the scholar practitioners found evidence that themes were naturally emerging from the prompts and time spent in reflection. From appreciation of the assigned mentors to deliberate analysis of the existing culture and informal leadership in the schools, the beginning principals were acknowledging their own level of influence in school improvement efforts. One beginning principal noted she wanted to "surround myself and surround our school with people who are driven, who are willing to show initiative. It's people who really care

about kids. My style is more inclusive…" Another beginning principal stated, "I want to reach out to my leaders in the school and to have them come together." This intentional focus on school culture showed up in greater than 56% of the video reflections. While not all prompts were geared to stimulate culturally reflective responses, it is clear the beginning principals recognized the value of supporting and growing leadership within their own buildings. Additional evidences of the beginning principals' high regard for school culture are seen in phrasing that appeared in the transcripts such as, "high expectations", the school "prides itself on achievement", and we "not only pursue excellence, but achieve excellence." These themes reveal existing school cultures, but also indicate the assimilation of the new principal and continued shared responsibility for high student achievement within the district.

The scholar practitioners realize that, to some extent, the wording of the prompts swayed the content of the reflection prompts. For example, when a prompt mentioned the word "mentor," the responses tended to focus on the mentor/mentee relationship. While acknowledging this as a factor, many of the weekly reflections tended to span multiple themes, reinforcing the complexity of the job.

End of Initial PDSA Cycle Group Interviews. The scholar-practitioners conducted group interviews with beginning principals and mentor principals at the conclusion of the cycle of support. With participant permission, both focus group and individual reflections were either audio or video recorded. All recordings were transcribed verbatim using *Rev* (Audio Transcription and Document Translation), with the selected option of non-disclosure. *In vivo* coding was used with the participant transcripts to observe naturally occurring patterns (Miles et al., 2014).

The following questions were asked of the beginning principals as an open-ended focus group prompts:

1. What are your key takeaways from your 1st year as principal?

2. What suggestions do you have for future support of 1st year principals?

3. What forms of support do you desire during your 2nd year?

4. How do you describe the impact of the mentorship experience?

The following questions were asked of the mentors in open-ended focus group prompts:

1. Describe the mentorship experience (Impact on mentee? Mentor?)

2. What are your suggestions for future support of 1st year principals?

3. Tell about your willingness to serve as a mentor again in the future.

Results. Five of six beginning principals revealed the area they most felt unprepared for in the principalship involved issues of finance and the responsibilities of managing a school's budget. Only one principal indicated a concern for instructional leadership.

The scholar-practitioners watched for any naturally emerging trends between the mentee principals' narrative responses and the differences seen in their self-assessment ratings. Further, the scholar-practitioners worked to identify "combinations of antecedent and mediating variables that lead toward certain pathways" of competency improvement for beginning principals (Saldana, 2012, p. 261).

Quantitative Study

Three surveys were completed during the PDSA cycle. The surveys included both a pre- and post- assessment completed by the beginning principals as a self-rated inventory, as well as a similar rating scale completed by the mentoring principal about

the mentored principal at the conclusion of the cycle. Both the pre- and post- assessment asked participants to rate themselves on a Likert-style scale in the following areas (See Appendices A and B):

Strategic Leadership

Instructional Leadership

Cultural Leadership

Human Resource Leadership

Managerial Leadership

External Development Leadership

Micro-Political Leadership

Academic Achievement Leadership

The surveys in this intervention were designed to examine the improvement effort for evidence of the targeted mentoring as seen in an increase in the perceived competencies of the beginning principals. By completing a before and after intervention survey, the scholar-practitioners could review self-ratings, as paired samples, to examine the change in mean ratings for each individual (see Tables 3-6 and Figures 5-6). The two sets of items were developed by the scholar-practitioners in order to specifically measure competencies the mentoring was designed to support. The items listed in Q3 are the leadership standards identified by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Each principal in a North Carolina public school is rated by his or her supervisor on these standards as part of the annual evaluation process. The items listed in Q4 are common administrative practices that fall under the one or more of the leadership standards listed in Q3. The evaluation that was completed by the mentor at the conclusion of the cycle of

support was used to check for inter-rater reliability or consensus among those completing

the rating scale (Creswell, 2003). Finally, cross tabulations were calculated using

Qualtrics in order to look for relationships between survey questions.

Findings.

Table 3

Comparison of Pre and Post Self-Assessment Ratings

Standard	Leadership Type	Pre Assessment Mean	Post Assessment Mean	Difference
1	Strategic	3.50	3.14	-0.36
2	Instructional	3.33	2.57	-0.76
3	Cultural	3.83	3.29	-0.54
4	Human Resource	3.83	3.43	-0.40
5	Managerial	4.17	4.00	-0.17
6	External Development	3.50	3.43	-0.07
7	Micro-Political	3.50	3.14	-0.36
8	Academic Achievement	3.33	3.29	-0.04

Table 4

Pre-Intervention Descriptive Statistics

Standard	Leadership Type	Min	Max	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
1	Strategic	3	4	3.50	0.30	0.55
2	Instructional	2	5	3.33	1.47	1.21
3	Cultural	3	4	3.83	0.17	0.41
4	Human Resource	3	4	3.83	0.17	0.41
5	Managerial	4	5	4.17	0.17	0.41
6	External Development	3	4	3.50	0.30	0.55
7	Micro-Political	2	4	3.50	0.70	0.84
8	Academic Achievement	3	4	3.33	0.27	0.52

The scholar-practitioners noted that the pre-assessment self-rating scale was moderately consistent in terms of the beginning principals' confidence levels to do the job, but the variance level for Instructional Leadership drew attention as an element for follow-up.

Dedicated mentoring and professional learning are effective tools for deconstructing the complexity of school leadership. Beginning principals are often faced with new challenges and the ever-present danger of not knowing what they do not know.

Mentors, as veteran and successful school leaders, are afforded regular opportunities to provide guidance during times of challenge and pose reflective questions to advance the learning of novice school leaders. Beginning principals are tackling the complexity of school leadership with a partner, a second set of eyes, and a wealth of shared wisdom.

Mentoring also helps combat the loneliness of leadership. Whether a new principal is assigned to a school with an administrative team or one with no assistant principals, the fact remains that there is only one principal of a building. This lack of a true counterpart in the workplace can lead to feelings of isolation. Participants in the study indicated that mentoring was an effective way to combat loneliness. One participant shared, "My mentor has been really great in helping me through a lot of my first year struggles as a principal. It's been a real gift and a blessing…I could probably talk about a grand canyon of wisdom I've gotten from my mentor." This particular principal was fast-tracked into the principalship after having served only one year as an assistant principal. To exacerbate matters, this principal came had minimal experience inside the district, meaning the internal network of colleagues was still forming. For this participant, accessing a veteran mentor with extensive experience in the district combated isolation and loneliness. Another participant reflected on the assigned mentor's sage advice to always focus on doing what is best for students when the principal admits, "You have people on the outside who are saying and doing things that are out of your control, and it gets you down at times." This new principal was in a school less than a mile from the mentor's school. Access and availability of the mentors in this study proved to be key elements in assisting the new principals in feeling connected to support networks, including leaders in the Central Office of Henderson County Public Schools.

Open lines of communication between mentors, new principals and district leaders were evidenced in reflections as a positive attribute of the support program.

Likewise, mentoring had a constructive impact on the new principal's ability to break down resistance to change within the existing school culture. This emerged in the study as participants shared stories of the mentor's influence on communication methods and frequency, rate of implementing change, and prioritization of change. One of the participants consulted the assigned mentor about a particular student's schedule change request. The mentor asked targeted questions to help the new principal mentally process the pros and cons of such a move, and the new administrator realized the rippling impact, quipping that "multiple parties really depend on you to make big decisions that are going to impact not only one individual student but the entire school." Ultimately, by talking with the mentor about what seemed to be a minor change, the communication of the decision was improved. Another beginning principal realized quickly even the innuendo of change can result in tension at the school. This principal shared, "What I've learned over the course of this school year is that just a faint whisper of some change or some new initiative sends the adults in the building running with thoughts of where they may go and what might happen as a result. Often times, those are vast overreactions to things that may not even end up happening." This new school leader learned to rely on the assigned mentor, a retired principal with keen sense for timing, building support for a change, and communication with all stakeholders. All of the beginning principals in the study valued the advice from their mentors on appropriate strategies to be a catalyst for positive change in their schools.

Table 5

Post-Intervention Descriptive Statistics

Standard	Leadership Type	Min	Max	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
1	Strategic	2	4	3.14	1.14	1.07
2	Instructional	1	4	2.57	1.62	1.27
3	Cultural	2	5	3.29	1.57	1.25
4	Human Resource	2	4	3.43	0.62	0.79
5	Managerial	3	5	4.00	0.67	0.82
6	External Development	2	4	3.43	0.62	0.79
7	Micro-Political	2	4	3.14	0.81	0.90
8	Academic Achievement	2	4	3.29	0.90	0.95

A comparison of the Pre and Post responses to Question 3 reveal that candidates rated themselves lower on every standard. The greatest change was evident in the area of Instructional Leadership, with an initial mean rating of 3.33 and concluding mean of 2.57. For the sample of Q3 the scholar-practitioners observed an average change in self-rating of -0.3375.

Figure 5

Average Pre-Intervention Self-Ratings
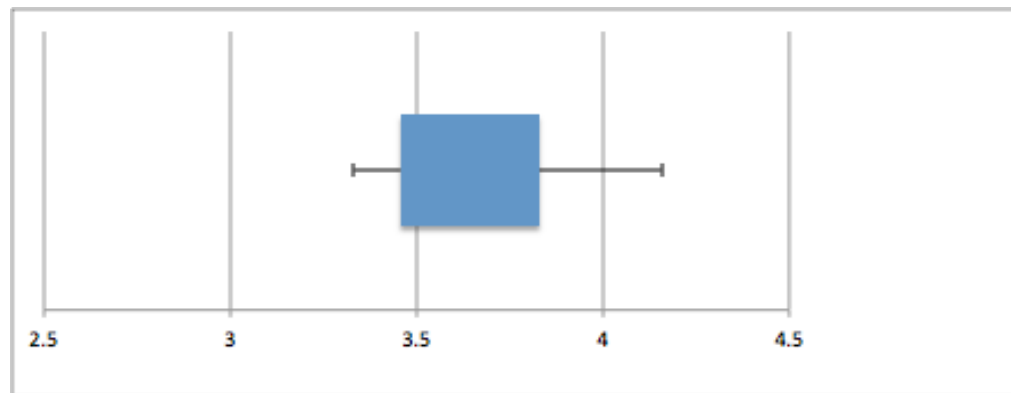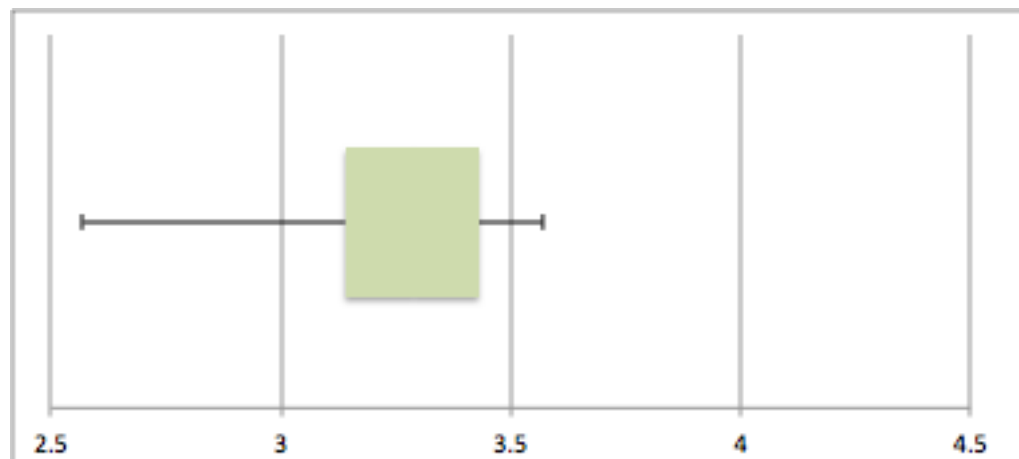

Figure 6

Average Post-Intervention Self-Ratings

As illustrated in the preceding figures, the data set shifted for each of the candidates. On the initial assessment, nearly 75% of the survey respondents rated themselves at or above 3.5 on the seven leadership standards. The post-assessment shows that nearly all of the respondents rated themselves below 3.5 on average for the standards.

Table 6

Pre- and Post-Intervention Thematic Comparison

Category	Pre-Intervention Mean	Post-Intervention Mean	Difference
Finance, Budget, Payroll, Purchasing	2.5	3.0	0.5
Curriculum and Instruction	3.33	2.71	-0.62
Communication With Parents	4.17	3.71	-0.46
Communication With Teachers	4.67	3.86	-0.81
Employee Supervision and Evaluation	4.00	3.29	-0.71
Exceptional Children (IEP meetings, placements, etc.)	3.67	3.86	0.19
Managing Student Conduct/Discipline	4.33	4.14	-0.19
Visibility in Classrooms	4.67	3.57	-1.10
Visibility at Campus Events	5.00	4.14	-0.86
Communicating Information from Principals' Meetings To Staff Members	4.00	3.71	-0.29
Creating Agendas for Meetings	4.50	3.71	-0.79
Addressing Performance Issues With Staff Members	3.50	3.29	-0.21

Category	Pre-Intervention Mean	Post-Intervention Mean	Difference
Technology	3.50	3.57	0.07
Time Management	3.67	3.14	-0.53
Communication With Central Office Partners	4.33	4.29	-0.04
Transportation/Buses	4.50	4.57	0.07
Strategic Staffing (Hiring, Job Placements, etc.)	4.00	3.71	-0.29
Data Analysis for Decision-Making	2.83	3.29	0.46
Average			-0.31

In looking for areas of statistically significant changes in self-assessment, the scholar-practitioners found noteworthy changes in strategic leadership and marginal changes in cultural leadership and communication with parents.

The scholar-practitioners did observe a decrease in the majority of self-ratings for the pre- and post-assessment completed by the beginning principals. Through comparing the reflective responses and the feedback from both novice and mentoring veteran principals, the scholar-practitioners knew that the decrease in self-ratings is not an indication that the support program lowered the beginning principals' capacity to be successful in the job. What actually occurred, through instruction and reflection, is the beginning school leaders now had a more realistic assessment of where they are and what they can and cannot do. This lowering of self-rating after instruction on a rating scale or rubric is consistent in what has been described as Response-Shift Bias. Howard (1980)

refers to the challenge presented "when the experimental intervention changes the subject's evaluation standard with regard to the dimension measured with the self-report instrument" (p. 95). While this aids in the interpretation of the self-ratings, the scholar practitioners held the objective of increasing the capacity for leadership. Continued work with these beginning principals, through additional support and intentional mentoring, went beyond the scope of this time-bound, cycle of intervention.

   Significance. The change to ratings participants assigned in the area of Strategic Leadership was statistically significant ($p = .007$, $df = 5$). The changes to ratings participants assigned in the areas of Cultural Leadership ($p = .110$, $df = 5$) and Micropolitical Leadership ($p = .105$, $df = 5$) were notable, though not statistically significant (see Table 7). Participants' perceived change in the area of Strategic Leadership is supported by evidence found in the weekly video reflections. Several comments point to this growth. One prompt for reflection asked the beginning school leaders to identify specific words of advice they would give themselves if the back on the first day of the job. An emphasis on Strategic Leadership is evident in one participant's response of, "Plan for the end of the year early. Don't wait, don't sit back and think you have plenty of time to get it done. Go ahead and plan for the end of the year, how you're going to do testing, what's going to be your schedule for testing, talking to teachers about activities after school during testing. For me, the advice would be plan early for the end of the year." A similar focus on Strategic Leadership is found in another participant's insistence that it is important to "hire a secretary. Always answer the phone with a smile on you face. Delegate more. Emails can wait. Only attend the have-to, litigious…meetings. Get in the classroom more and balance your life." Just as with

Strategic Leadership, which was statistically significant even with a small sample size,

the qualitative research bolsters the notable impact on Micro-political and Cultural

leadership standards.

Table 7

Paired Samples t-Test Results

Pair		Paired Differences							
		M	*SD*	*SE*	95% CI				
					LL	*UL*	*t*	*df*	*p*
1	Strategic Leadership	.8333	.4595	.1876	.3512	1.3155	4.443	5	.007*
2	Instructional Leadership	.1667	.6498	.2653	-.5152	.8486	.628	5	.557
3	Cultural Leadership	.6111	.7722	.3153	-.1993	1.4215	1.938	5	.110
4	Human Resource Leadership	.2778	.7354	.3002	-.4939	1.0495	.925	5	.397
5	Managerial Leadership	.1667	.6846	.2795	-.5518	.8851	.596	5	.577
6	External Development Leadership	.3333	1.2517	.5110	-.9802	1.6469	.652	5	.543
7	Micro-political Leadership	.8333	1.0328	.4216	-.25052	1.9172	1.976	5	.105
8	Academic Achievement Leadership	-.2222	.8344	.3407	-1.0979	.65347	-.652	5	.543

* *p* < .10

Instrument Reliability. In order to check for reliability of the surveys employed, composites were built using each of the leadership domains and aligning these with the principal job responsibilities identified in Q4. The alignment appears in Table 8.

Table 8

Alignment Between Professional Responsibilities in Q4 and Professional Standards

Responsibility (Q4)	Alignment to Leadership Standards	
	Standard	Descriptor
Finance, Budget, Payroll, Purchasing	5	Managerial
Curriculum and Instruction	2	Instructional
Communication with Parents	4, 7	Human Resource, Micro-political
Communication with Teachers	4, 7	Human Resource, Micro-political
Employee Supervision and Evaluation	2, 4	Instructional, Human Resource
Exceptional Children (IEP meetings, placements, etc)	2	Instructional
Managing Student Conduct/Discipline	5	Managerial
Visibility in Classrooms	2	Instructional
Visibility at Campus Events	7	Micro-political
Communicating Information Gained at Principals' Meetings with your Staff	5	Managerial
Creating Agendas for Meetings	1	Strategic
Addressing Performance	4	Human Resource

Issues with Staff Members

Technology	2	Instructional
Time Management	5	Managerial
Communication with Central Office Partners	5	Managerial
Transportation/Bus	5	Managerial
Strategic Staffing (Hiring, Job Placements, etc)	4	Human Resource
Data Analysis for Decision-Making	1, 8	Strategic, Academic Achievement

After calculating Cronbach's alpha, the scholar-practitioners discovered a low coefficient alpha value. Yurdugul (2008) references surveys with limited items and a relatively small sample size that may result in an unbiased estimate of alpha. However, the sample set of six beginning principals yielded an alpha well below .70. The scholar-practitioners are confident that this alpha is low because of the broadness of the items on the instrument. The instrument was designed by the scholar-practitioners to have principals evaluate their competencies on the North Carolina principal standards, not to be a standalone scale that measures a latent variable of leadership. It is not surprising that the correlation of relationships between the items is lower than would be in a traditional scale. Bonnett and Wright (2015) observed, "An acceptable reliability value depends on the type of application" (p. 4). The survey was built around specific leadership responsibilities experienced by and required from beginning principals in Henderson

County. The responsibilities defined do not indicate a tight or narrow construct.

According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), "[t]he concept of reliability assumes that unidimensionality exists in a sample of test items and if this assumption is violated it does cause a major underestimate of reliability" (p. 54). This lack of unidimensionality in the constructs defined under the topic of leadership aid in interpreting the low alpha level. Thus, no causal claims are being made based solely on the quantitative results of the survey data and the scholar-practitioners believe a more complete picture of the impact of the work is seen when giving weight to the qualitative findings and narrative responses. The survey employed was developed to inform district-level leaders of opportunities for targeted support, but also to guide novice principals to a lens of self-evaluation and reflection.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The scholar-practitioners entered this research keenly aware of the potential for replicating the model in other districts. Word spread quickly of the research being conducted with new principals in Henderson County Public Schools. As the PDSA cycle was concluding, the scholar-practitioners were asked to share their work at multiple North Carolina state conferences, regional professional development offerings, and with a group from Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee.

Discussion

The Western Region Education Service Alliance (WRESA), a non-profit center based in Asheville, North Carolina, hosts an annual Summer Leadership Conference. WRESA staff requested that the scholar-practitioner team conduct a half-day session for the June 2015 conference targeting beginning principals. This provided an unforeseen opportunity to capitalize on the work that had almost completed with Henderson County's beginning principals by scaling aspects of the project with additional new administrators. The scholar-practitioners received no compensation, and registration was strictly by participant choice. What materialized was an opportunity to interact with a diverse group of eager educators. Included among participants were 16 beginning principals (14 newly hired and two who had just completed their first year) representing eight North Carolina school districts; the education dean and associate dean from Lincoln Memorial University; and, the assistant executive director of the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association.

The scholar-practitioners intentionally designed the half-day session to be interactive, providing participants an opportunity to ask questions, learn from colleagues,

and discuss burning issues. Modeling effective meeting practices for adult learners (Knowles, 1984), the scholar-practitioner team used varied methods to support beginning principals. Additionally, with assistance from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the scholar-practitioners provided each participant with copies of a text for principals on school culture as well as the Standards for School Executives. The entire agenda can be viewed on online at the beginning principal support website (http://BeginningPrincipalSupport.wikispaces.com).

The opportunity to share the design of the mentoring intervention that started in Henderson County Public Schools initially became available through an invitation to present at the Western Region Education Service Alliance's (WRESA) Summer Leadership Conference. This opportunity then opened another door when the Chair of the Education Program of Lincoln Memorial University approached one member of the team to deliver a keynote address on beginning principal support. The North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association (NCPAPA) officials contracted with another team member to lead a Future-Ready Leaders session. These opportunities—to either share the imperative and best practices for supporting new administrators with educational decision makers or directly supporting new principals—serve as affirmation that the scholar-practitioners have delved into a meaningful problem of practice.

In affirmation of the designed support for beginning principals, a week after the conclusion of the WRESA Summer Leadership Conference a request was received for follow-up consideration. Based on feedback from session evaluations, the director of WRESA contacted the scholar-practitioners to request a repeat presentation of the session in 2016 for newly hired principals. The scholar-practitioners continue to seek

opportunities to speak with educational decision-makers about the responsibility of individual districts to provide structured mentoring and support programs for their beginning principals, just as they are legislatively bound to provide for beginning teachers in their districts.

The scholar-practitioners have been accepted to present the ongoing research at the April 2016 North Carolina Association of School Administrators' conference in Wilmington, NC. One of only 28 sessions selected for the conference, the theme is Visionary Leadership and they will be presenting in the Future Ready Leaders track. In addition to the three scholar-practitioners, the presenters will also include the district superintendent and two of the beginning principals featured in the study.

While this type of momentum is encouraging, there are many opportunities for further study. Should another researcher desire to move forward with a similar study, careful attention should be given to the commitments made by Henderson County Public Schools in order to create conditions for success. Replicating the study without the explicit support of district leaders puts implementation at risk.

Recommendations

It should be clearly noted that the authors of this study are not implying that support for practicing principals does not exist. Rather, the scholar-practitioners advocate for differentiated programming design to meet the unique needs of beginning school leaders. Action steps detailed in this section are intended to provide guidance for district leaders who wish to implement an intentionally designed program modeled after the study conducted in Henderson County Public Schools.

Frequent gatherings of principals happen in almost all of the school systems, but how that time is spent varies greatly. There are a variety of approaches taken by school districts as they develop beginning principal. From *laissez-faire* to dictatorial, the range is diverse. Recognizing that the beginning principal struggles with the complexity of the job, the limits of her instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change, the intentionality of effective support practices is crucial to the future success of the leader and that of the students and staff under her leadership. As the results of this study indicate, a district must carefully pair mentors. Principals in this study valued being paired with a veteran educational professional who had successful principalship experience and were available for regular and "on-call" consultations.

In Western North Carolina, two district superintendents have recognized the need for greater communication and feedback loops between district administration and beginning principals. In Burke County, the superintendent initiated a survey to principals with limited experience in order to identify areas of needed support and potential improvement. The responses from Burke County administrators aided in the development of a framework for the eventual research in Henderson County Public Schools, where that superintendent initiated greater support for beginning principals.

Ultimately, "progressive organizations give power to employees as well as invest in their development" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 149). The opportunity to study specific supports provided to beginning principals is exciting because it has the potential to yield high-impact results, informing the practices of the current and future leadership teams of our state's 115 systems, who guide over 2,400 principals as they support over 1.4 million students. Mitgang and Gill (2012) noted that:

…since 2000, virtually all states have adopted new learning-centered leadership

standards. Some states are using them to tighten principal certification rules and

compel leadership training programs either to improve or shut down. Roughly

half the states have, for the first time, mandated mentoring for newly hired

principals. (pp. 4–5)

While North Carolina has articulated school leadership standards, the state is not among

those that have required mentoring for beginning school leaders. The results of this study

provide another example of the growing evidence that beginning principal mentoring is

worthy of discussion at state leadership levels.

As the scholar-practitioners began this action-research process, the question of

Can They Row Alone? echoes as a call to action. Asking a new principal to work in

isolation is akin to asking someone to row with one oar. Equipping beginning principals

with purposeful supports of mentorship, professional learning, and reflective practice

hold the promise of increasing efficacy, reducing turnover and enhancing effectiveness.

"You don't learn how to be a principal in graduate courses," says program director Gary

Bloom of the California Leadership Academy. "You learn it on the job. So the goal

of...coaching support is to speed up the learning curve for folks and also to help them

survive the initial couple of years that are so difficult" (NAESP, 2003, p. 24). The mentor

support and professional learning experiences provided for beginning principals by

Henderson County Public Schools have accelerated the competency of the six new school

leaders, helping them not only to survive but thrive in their new roles.

Ultimately, future scholar-practitioners may further study and give attention to the

longitudinal success of beginning principal support, as well as the retention and

sustainability of beginning leaders in the current position of effectiveness. Additionally, studies conducted in diverse geographical or urban settings may yield results that would further inform scalability across districts nationwide. If the scholar-practitioners were to begin this study again in a new context, the initial concern would center on the support and ideology of the district's superintendent. With the conviction that leadership must be valued and supported, replicating this study effectively requires a commitment of the district's chief executive. Professional learning, mentorship and reflection must be seen as priorities worthy of resource commitment.

Beginning Principal Support Component. In order to support novice principals, a comprehensive beginning principal support program has been employed for the past two school years. This year, Senior Director for Human Resources John Bryant has assigned mentors within the district to eight principals in their first or second year at the helm. The assignments have been intentional, pairing administrators with others at the same grade level, giving consideration to personality and leadership styles, and activities designed to be carried out throughout the year in order to grow specific elements of leadership capacity. Mr. Jones guided his central office leadership team to be deliberate concerning the assignment of mentors for a two-fold purpose. There was a goal to not only to meet the need of the new principal, but also as an encouragement and a way to value the veteran administrator. The superintendent described this as

> …beneficial not only for the new principals, but for our mentors who will tell you they get as much out of it as the first and second year principals. It was a confirmation that you're doing a good job and we value what you do" (D. Jones, personal communication, September 29, 2015).

The activities designed to build rapport, trust, and collaboration include:

- In-depth mentor training

- Two days of off-site professional development for beginning principals (one of the days to include direct mentor support)

- Begin reflective journaling process

- Beginning principal pre-assessment process complete

- Job-embedded coaching

- Monthly visit(s) to mentee's school

- Targeted professional learning experiences

The end goal of this support is improved decision-making, an increased amount of time in professional reflection, reduced administrative turnover rate, and aided progression of district goals.

Director of School Learning and Leadership Development. When this study began, no position existed for a Henderson County Public Schools Director of School Learning and Leadership Development. The position was created to align with the district's Strategic Plan that emphasizes the importance of trained, competent school principals as integral catalysts for high student achievement. Forecasting attrition, district leadership anticipated having a growing number of early career principals. Indeed, in less than one year from the position's creation, almost 40% of the principals in Henderson County Public Schools were in their first or second year of leadership. After interviews, one of the authors of this study, Jan King, was selected as the candidate to lead this work.

Aspiring Leaders Component. This portion of the district effort addresses the potential shortage of quality school leaders and creates a pipeline of educational leaders.

Rather than waiting to see which teachers may eventually decide to enroll in a principal

preparation program and who may apply for potential openings, Superintendent Jones

described the goal to grow and develop their own applicants from the pool of quality

teachers. The trio of scholar-practitioners embraced this idea of growing an internal

pipeline of qualified leadership candidates.

In a single year, over 40 teachers in Henderson County Public Schools indicated

an interest in learning more about the responsibilities and rewards of a shift in career

toward school administration. A series of seminars focused on the North Carolina

Executive Leadership Standards was offered for these teachers, including a program

overview, informational and question/answer sessions, and district presentations. Current

principals aid in identifying educators with strong potential and the demonstration of

leadership qualities most desired by the county. Through this effort, those with the

responsibility of forecasting the arising needs and delivering the vision for the school

system are able to scout the existing talents within the district and lead the conversation

about emerging opportunities. By removing the element of happenstance, Superintendent

Jones and his leadership team are displaying more ownership and control of the

outcomes.

With purposeful attention to growing beginning and aspiring school leaders'

capacity to handle the complexity of the job, Henderson County Public Schools is

proactive in accelerating the skills of its leaders. With compelling evidence from this

study and others that effective mentoring programs can hasten the competency of new

school leaders, districts should consider a preemptive program to assist beginning

principals. Because students and parents have a right to expect competency from a school

principal regardless of their lack of tenure, districts should embrace a plan to accelerate the skills of new administrators.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Given the current emphasis on school accountability, the competition surrounding school choice, and the responsibility for each student's individual education, the stakes for school leaders have never been higher. Beginning principals, faced with such stakes, inevitably struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change. Novice school leaders deserve and require targeted, intentional support to ensure that their leadership capacity meets the increasing demand in the public education arena. The success of the public school system depends on quality educators, and this includes a caring and competent leader for every building. Parents and community members have a right to expect excellence from the very first day a new leader begins her job. This study demonstrates that purposeful supports can be effectively provided to enable novice school leaders to concentrate on their schools while simultaneously developing their own leadership potential.

School systems can no longer afford to ignore the glaring absence of intentional leadership development for their school administrators. Henderson County Public Schools Superintendent David Jones recognized this need and took action to grow building principals. But, as Gray et al. (2007) observed, "Too many [school] leaders are left to 'learn on the job.' Imagine training a surgeon that way" (p. 9). Dedicated mentoring for beginning principals may accelerate principal growth, ensure more efficient leadership transitions, sustain district initiatives, and increase the retention of highly effective school leaders. Sun MicroSystems released the results of a study concluding that "mentoring has a positive impact on mentors and mentees," and

"retention rates were much higher for mentees (72 percent)…than for employees who did not participate in the mentoring program (49 percent)" (Chronus, 2015, p. 2). The results of the Sun MicroSystems study further emphasize the importance of mentoring programs for 21st Century executive leaders, whether they lead schools or corporations.

School leaders wield influence over the direction, the innovation, and the opportunity present in their respective school communities. A beginning principal's immediate effectiveness and efficacy are critical factors to the novice leader's influence. Still further, "mentoring is an effective approach to organize, create, capture, and distribute knowledge. It supports short- and longer-term situational as well as topical learning between individuals and groups" (Chronus, 2015, p. 7). Such results and distribution of knowledge are essential tenets of sustainable and successful public school leadership.

The scholar-practitioners experienced firsthand that dedicated mentoring and professional learning for beginning principals offer avenues to accelerate principal growth, ensure more efficient leadership transitions, sustain district initiatives, and increase the retention of highly effective school leaders. Further, "those who receive high quality mentoring are much likelier than those who are unsupported to progress from problem driven to vision driven, from management focused to instructionally focused, dependent to independent, and reactive to analytical" (Gray et al., 2007, p. 20). Such results and continuous professional learning, coupled with the potential to grow visionary leaders, are the foundational pillars of successful public school experiences and the educational opportunities of generations to come.

Epilogue: A Personal Reflection from the Scholar-Practitioners

As the title page indicates, the beginning principal support intervention was completed as partial fulfillment of the doctoral degree in educational leadership from Western Carolina. However, we decided in the initial steps of this journey that we wanted to devote our energy and passion to an area of education that we fully believe makes a difference, a work that we would commit to even if we were not involved in a cohort-based education program. The insistence that beginning principals cannot and should not be asked to 'row alone' has remained the central tenet of our work.

As rookie principals, many administrators have supportive central office staff members and superintendents; however, the actual daily work of leading a school is engrossed in a reactive atmosphere. "Call us if you have any problems" and "Let us know if we can help" are very different phrases from "How can I support you?" and "What obstacles can I help remove from your personal professional growth?" We believe more districts are recognizing the need to grow the leaders responsible for overseeing the education of their children and seeking proactive solutions to the approaching deficits in the leadership pipeline.

As scholar-practitioners, we continue to experience collective pride in the efforts of our mentor and mentee participants to contribute to the growth of educational leadership in our community. The desire for scalability of our intervention is rooted in the evidence of its success, the impact on the participants, and the affirmations of district leadership. One early service administrator not served by the beginning principal support program even noted how much she wished "this had been in place when I was a first year principal." The commitment of Superintendent David Jones to our intervention, in both

time and resources, affirmed the need for beginning principal support and targeted professional learning opportunities. His commitment and resolute attention to this need took shape in the creation of a Central Office position dedicated to this very work, Henderson County's Director of School Learning and Leadership Development. This position, a direct outcropping to the intervention and its impact evidence, now serves to design, facilitate, and monitor leadership development at all levels across the school system.

All six of the first year school leaders supported by the intervention are still in their positions of school leadership and unanimously requested that the mentoring extend to the second year of their respective principalships. Each of the six mentors asked to continue as mentors in the following year of program support. The value of the intervention is evidenced in the overwhelming desire for voluntary, ongoing support and participation. The feedback from all program participants has sustained the momentum of beginning principal support and illustrated the possible impact of this model being implemented in other school districts across the state.

One of the first year principals has articulated his sincere desire to eventually serve as a mentor to a future beginning principal. After reflecting on his experience throughout our program of support, he shared his aspiration to "pay it forward" by mentoring someone else through the early years of principalship. This principal noted the "good fit" between himself and his mentor, saying the he was "asked all the right questions" to help him grow, reflect, and make better decisions. Additionally, this leader has expressed appreciation that his mentor had successful principalship experience with the same grade spans he is now serving because "she knows firsthand what my days are

like." This ongoing testimony of success, coupled with similar affirmations from other beginning principals, bolsters the argument that this program of support is worthwhile. With extensive thought and conversation dedicated to the careful crafting of mentor/mentee pairing, the right fit has created lasting relationships to benefit the individuals and the organization.

During one of the many meetings to debrief and reflect on the intervention's progress, one of the research practitioners noted that he wished there had been a similar program in place during his first year as principal. There could have been missteps prevented, anxiety eased, and a better understanding of how this mentoring relationship should function. We believe young principals will be much more likely to fill the role of a mentor, after growing in wisdom and experience, if they themselves have benefited from being mentored.

The quality and replicability of our program of intentional support for beginning principals continues to gain attention from those outside Henderson County Public Schools. Opportunities to share the program are constantly emerging. Two examples of this are the North Carolina Summer Leadership Conference and the North Carolina Association of School Administrators Conference. Officials with the Western Region Service Alliance (WRESA) have, once again, solicited our scholar-practitioner team to present at the Summer Leadership Conference in Asheville. At the NCASA conference, two of the mentored principals will be presenting with our scholar-practitioner team, sharing their affirmation of the impact of the intervention on their own growth as a school leader. These opportunities provide additional platforms to share our commitment to the

value of a beginning principal support program that provides mentorship and professional development for early stage school leaders.

As shown throughout the writing, this work is worthy of district level attention, of the investment of financial resources for which there is ever-present competition, of further research and investigation, and most importantly, for the time required for the endeavor. Often times, the line between our work as practitioners and our research as scholars has blurred, proof that Western Carolina University's choice to embrace the Carnegie model for work in Educational Leadership was wise. Work of this magnitude and meaning is possible because of Western Carolina's vision within this model, the guidance and feedback from the academic staff, and the demand for collaboration among a unique cohort of scholar-practitioners.

Time and again, the evidences of the mentoring intervention reinforce that our work has expanded leadership capacity, moved the culture of school communities in a positive direction, and has helped to solidify the future of effective school leaders in Henderson County. It is our intention that this work contributes to the body of scholarly evidence that compels additional school districts and superintendents to implement beginning principal support. As a trio of scholar-practitioners, we hold a deep conviction, bolstered by our research, that the competency of beginning principals is accelerated in districts that provide intentional and dedicated support. Intentional mentor support is a high-yield strategy to combat beginning principals' struggles with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change.

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Appendix A: Beginning Principal Pre Assessment Survey

Default Question Block

Q1. Informed Consent
Thank you for participating in this reflective exercise. We are interested in your self-perceptions during this first year of being a principal. This exercise will provide formative data to support professional development efforts for beginning principals. Information will be kept confidential, never reporting individual names.

Introduction
This study attempts to collect perception data from beginning principals.

Procedures
This questionnaire will be conducted with an online Qualtrics-created survey.

Risks/Discomforts
There is no intended risk for involvement in this study. Reflective questions may cause of a level of discomfort. Please keep in mind that the information gathered is formative in nature, will not be reflected in your evaluation, and will be used to plan appropriate support for beginning principals.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits for participants. However, your participation will help us plan appropriate support for beginning principals.

Confidentiality
All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregate format (by reporting only combined results and never reporting individual ones by name or personal identifier). The data collected will be stored in the HIPPA-compliant, Qualtrics-secure database until it has been deleted by the researchers.

Compensation
There is no compensation for participation. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Participation
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions about this study, contact one of the primary investigators: John

Bryant, Jan King, or Brett Wilson at the Department of Ed. Leadership, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723 (828-455-2972). If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you can reach the Chair of the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through WCU's Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212. You can also contact our faculty advisor, Dr. Ann Allen at 828-713-7325 if you have any other questions about this research study.

Q2.
I have read and understood the above consent form and agree to participate in this exercise.

○ Yes

○ No

Q3. How would you rate your confidence and comfort level as a leader in each of the following 21st Century Executive Leadership Standards? (as defined by the North Carolina standards for school administrators)

Strategic Leadership	
Instructional Leadership	
Cultural Leadership	
Human Resource Leadership	
Managerial Leadership	
External Development Leadership	
Micro-Political Leadership	
Academic Achievement Leadership, including Results-Orientation	

Q4. How would you rate your confidence and comfort level with your responsibilities, actions or decisions in each of the following areas?

Finance, Budget, Payroll, Purchasing

Curriculum and Instruction

Communication with Parents

Communication with Teachers

Employee Supervision and Evaluation

Exceptional Children (IEP meetings, placements, etc)

Managing Student Conduct/Discipline

Visibility in Classrooms

Visibility at Campus Events

Communicating Information Gained at Principals' Meetings with your Staff

Creating Agendas for Meetings

Addressing Performance Issues with Staff Members

Technology

Time Management

Communication with Central Office Partners

Transportation/Bus

Strategic Staffing (Hiring, Job Placements, etc)

Data Analysis for Decision-Making

Q5. What has been a primary responsibility of the principalship for which you felt the **most** under-prepared?

Q7. Please enter your User Identification Number (UID).

Q6. Please select a fictitious first name, such as Bob or Barbara, to serve as your identifying code for this survey.

Appendix B: Beginning Principal Post Assessment Survey

Default Question Block

Q1. Informed Consent
Thank you for participating in this reflective exercise. We are interested in your self-perceptions during this first year of being a principal. This exercise will provide formative data to support professional development efforts for beginning principals. Information will be kept confidential, never reporting individual names.

Introduction
This study attempts to collect perception data from beginning principals.

Procedures
This questionnaire will be conducted with an online Qualtrics-created survey.

Risks/Discomforts
There is no intended risk for involvement in this study. Reflective questions may cause of a level of discomfort. Please keep in mind that the information gathered is formative in nature, will not be reflected in your evaluation, and will be used to plan appropriate support for beginning principals.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits for participants. However, your participation will help us plan appropriate support for beginning principals.

Confidentiality
All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregate format (by reporting only combined results and never reporting individual ones by name or personal identifier). The data collected will be stored in the HIPPA-compliant, Qualtrics-secure database until it has been deleted by the researchers.

Compensation
There is no compensation for participation. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Participation
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions about this study, contact one of the primary investigators: John

Bryant, Jan King, or Brett Wilson at the Department of Ed. Leadership, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723 (828-455-2972). If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you can reach the Chair of the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through WCU's Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212. You can also contact our faculty advisor, Dr. Ann Allen at 828-713-7325 if you have any other questions about this research study.

Q2.
I have read and understood the above consent form and agree to participate in this exercise.

○ Yes

○ No

Q3. How would you rate your confidence and comfort level as a leader in each of the following 21st Century Executive Leadership Standards? (as defined by the North Carolina standards for school administrators)

Strategic Leadership	☐
Instructional Leadership	☐
Cultural Leadership	☐
Human Resource Leadership	☐
Managerial Leadership	☐
External Development Leadership	☐
Micro-Political Leadership	☐
Academic Achievement Leadership, including Results-Orientation	☐

Q4. How would you rate your confidence and comfort level with your responsibilities, actions or decisions in each of the following areas?

Finance, Budget, Payroll, Purchasing

Curriculum and Instruction

Communication with Parents

Communication with Teachers

Employee Supervision and Evaluation

Exceptional Children (IEP meetings, placements, etc)

Managing Student Conduct/Discipline

Visibility in Classrooms

Visibility at Campus Events

Communicating Information Gained at Principals' Meetings with your Staff

Creating Agendas for Meetings

Addressing Performance Issues with Staff Members

Technology

Time Management

Communication with Central Office Partners

Transportation/Bus

Strategic Staffing (Hiring, Job Placements, etc)

Data Analysis for Decision-Making

Q5. What has been the primary area of responsibility where you feel you have shown the most growth this past year? To what do you attribute that growth?

Q7. Please enter your User Identification Number (UID).

Q6. Please share the fictitious name, such as Bob or Barbara, you selected to serve as your identifying code for this work.

Appendix C: Mentor Survey of Beginning Principal

Default Question Block

Q1. Informed Consent
Thank you for participating in this reflective exercise. We are interested in your perceptions working with first year principals. This exercise will provide formative data to support future professional development efforts for beginning principals. Information will be kept confidential, never reporting individual names. **Your responses will not be shared with your mentee.**

Introduction
This study attempts to collect perception data from mentors who work with beginning principals.

Procedures
This questionnaire will be conducted with an online Qualtrics-created survey.

Risks/Discomforts
There is no intended risk for involvement in this study. Please keep in mind that the information gathered is formative in nature, will not be reflected in the mentee's evaluation, and will be used to plan appropriate support for beginning principals.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits for participants. However, your participation will help us plan appropriate support for beginning principals.

Confidentiality
All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregate format (by reporting only combined results and never reporting individual ones by name or personal identifier). The data collected will be stored in the HIPPA-compliant, Qualtrics-secure database until it has been deleted by the researchers.

Compensation
There is no compensation for participation in this specific survey. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Participation
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this study, contact one of the primary investigators: John Bryant, Jan King, or Brett Wilson at the Department of Ed. Leadership, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723 (828-455-2972). If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you can reach the Chair of the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through WCU's Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212. You can also contact our faculty advisor, Dr. Ann Allen at 828-713-7325 if you have any other questions about this research study.

Q2.
I have read and understood the above consent form and agree to participate in this exercise.

○ Yes

○ No

Q8. Please give the initials of the principal you mentored.

[   ]

Q3. How would you rate your mentee's confidence and comfort level as a leader in each of the following 21st Century Executive Leadership Standards? (as defined by the North Carolina standards for school administrators)

Strategic Leadership	[ ]
Instructional Leadership	[ ]
Cultural Leadership	[ ]
Human Resource Leadership	[ ]
Managerial Leadership	[ ]
External Development Leadership	[ ]
Micro-Political Leadership	[ ]
Academic Achievement Leadership, including Results-Orientation	[ ]

Q4. How would you rate your mentee's confidence and comfort level with your responsibilities, actions or decisions in each of the following areas?

Finance, Budget, Payroll, Purchasing

Curriculum and Instruction

Communication with Parents

Communication with Teachers

Employee Supervision and Evaluation

Exceptional Children (IEP meetings, placements, etc)

Managing Student Conduct/Discipline

Visibility in Classrooms

Visibility at Campus Events

Communicating Information Gained at Principals' Meetings with your Staff

Creating Agendas for Meetings

Addressing Performance Issues with Staff Members

Technology

Time Management

Communication with Central Office Partners

Transportation/Bus

Strategic Staffing (Hiring, Job Placements, etc)

Data Analysis for Decision-Making

Q5. What would you say has been your mentee's primary area of responsibility where he/she shown the most growth this past year? To what do you attribute that growth?

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form
Project Title: _Can We Row Alone?_

What is the purpose of this research?
       We are conducting research to examine self-perceptions during the first year of the principalship and the potential influence of mentoring programs.

What will be expected of me?
       Your involvement in this project includes the following: At the conclusion of the 90-day mentor support program, we will ask you to complete a brief interview in which you are asked about your perceptions of the mentoring program. This interview will be comprised of three open-ended questions.

How long with the research take?
       The research will span one semester with the majority of involvement being completed during a 90-day period of mentoring support.

Will my answers be anonymous?
       Your answers will be maintained confidentially, with no connection between your identity and your responses.

Can I withdraw from the study if I decide to?
       You may withdraw at any time or decline to answer any question you choose.

Is there any harm that I might experience from taking part in the study?
       There are no foreseeable risks to you for participating in this study.
How will I benefit from taking part in the research?
       There is no direct benefit for you in taking part in this research. The mentored principals may potentially experience professional and/or personal growth, which could benefit both the teachers and students within your school district.

Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns about the research?

       If you have questions about this study, contact one of the primary investigators: John Bryant, Jan King, or Brett Wilson at the Department of Ed. Leadership, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723 (828-455-2972). If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you can reach the Chair of the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through WCU's Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212. You can also contact our faculty advisor, Dr. Ann Allen at 828-713-7325 if you have any other questions about this research study.

My signature below indicates that I am at least 18 years old and consent to participate in the study.

Name_____

Signature_____Date_____

Appendix E: Pilot Study Questions

-How do you define success in the role of principal?

-What area of school administration do you believe principal preparation programs are most lacking?

-What was the primary responsibility of the principalship for which you felt most underprepared?

-On a scale of 1-10 (1 being least prepared and 10 being completely prepared) describe how well-prepared you felt in the areas of:

- Being the instructional leader in your school
- Managing the budget of your school
- Understanding the processes/procedures within the school, within the district
- Managing student conduct and discipline
- Communicating information from/to central office to the faculty at your school
- Addressing personnel issues or concerns
- Employee supervision/evaluation

-If you were assigned a veteran principal as a mentor, what qualities/characteristics do you think would be most helpful?

-What types of ongoing professional development do you think would help new principals be successful?

-Describe the Micro-political deficit at your school (ie. relationships between the school and community).

-How do you believe principals facilitate systemic change?

-Considering a system-wide perspective- How do you communicate the big picture within your school?

Appendix F: Beginning Principal Retreat 2015 Agenda

Beginning Principal Retreat 2015
Agenda
Thursday, February 12, 2015

9:30 am	Introduction and Q/A
10:00 am	7 Card Stud (JK)
10:30 am	Break
10:50 am BPs Mentors	Mr. David Jones Training with JB
11:30 am	10 Pointers from a Rookie Principal (JK)
12:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm	The Marshmallow Challenge (JK & BW)
1:40 pm	Leadership Excellence (BW)
2:40 pm	Break
3:00 pm	Dr. Carrie Tulbert, NCPOY (JK)
3:30 pm	Communication Commitment (JB)
3:50 pm	Mentors Depart
4:00 pm	Self – Assessment (BW)
4:30 pm	Debrief and Preview (JK, JB, BW)
6:00 pm	Dinner

Beginning Principal Retreat 2015
Agenda
Friday, February 13, 2015

8:00 am	Breakfast
9:00 am	Powers and Duties of the Principal (JB)
9:30 am	Laws of Leadership (JK)
10:30 am	Break
10:50 am	A Little Help from a Friend
12:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm	Laws of Leadership (BW)
2:00 pm	Video Journal Training (BW)
2:45 pm	A Toast to Change (JK)
3:00 pm	All Depart

Directions:
NCCAT is across from Western Carolina University. For GPS directions, use 276 NCCAT Drive, Cullowhee, NC 28723.

What to Bring:
- A tablet or laptop.
- If staying overnight (Beginning Principals), you will have a private room with sheets and towels provided. Hair dryers are not provided.
- Your awesomeness.

Dress:
Casual dress is appropriate and encouraged.

Appendix G: Video Reflection Prompts

February 13, 2015	Describe your key takeaway from the last two days and your impressions of the designed support being provided over the next 3.5 months.
February 20, 2015	Describe your most successful leadership moment/experience in the past week.
February 27, 2015	Finish the following sentences and briefly explain each. This week I learned… This week I wish I would have… Next week I am going to…

March 2015

March 6, 2015	Identify one "nugget" of wisdom or valuable advice that you have received in the past 3 weeks from your mentor or another effective leader. Why was this particular "nugget" or advice meaningful?
March 13, 2015	It's been a month since we viewed and discussed Maxwell's Law of the Lid. Identify and explain at least one specific thing that you have done in the past month to grow your own lid.
March 20, 2015	Reflect for a moment on the Duties and Responsibilities of the Principal as defined by state statute. What task/responsibility/ experience from your work this week stands out as the most "far removed" from the way the General Assembly has defined your duty as a school principal?
March 27, 2015	We often talk about finding the "win-win" in dealing with difficult situations. Describe a "win" you had this month. Describe a "loss". Which of these felt more significant to you? Why?
April 3, 2015	No Journal Entry Happy Spring Break!
April 10, 2015	No Journal Entry Happy Spring Break!
April 17, 2015	Reflect on a specific staffing challenge or opportunity that you have in terms of planning for next school year.
April 24, 2015	A potential employee who is interviewing for a position at your schools asks you to describe your leadership style. How do you respond?
May 1, 2015	Imagine that you are interviewed for a local news segment and the reporter asks you to describe your school in a 1-minute clip. What

would you say?

May 15, 2015	In 30 calendar days, this school year will officially come a close. What specific words of advice would you give to yourself if you could speak to yourself before your first day as a school principal?
May 29, 2015	As you prepare for the "off season", what two goals do you have for your professional leadership capacity before the next school year begins?

Appendix H: Case Study

Case Study

School district leaders across the country are currently researching and developing

succession planning strategies to address this concern. This theme begs the question:

What is your district doing today in preparation for the exit of these site-based leaders and the loss of decades of knowledge and experience?

Henderson County, under the leadership of Superintendent David Jones, has

exhibited a culture of intentional leadership development and support for recent and

future vacancies in the principalship. Located in western North Carolina, Henderson

County Public Schools has adopted the motto "Where Tomorrow Begins" and this

accurately describes the embracing of this challenge as opportunity by their senior level

leadership team.

In order to better understand the commitment and precision of efforts for growth

in the county, it is beneficial to examine the history and experience of the system's

Superintendent.   For over thirty years, Jones has served the county in positions ranging

from teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, director of auxiliary services, assistant

and then associate superintendent, and finally, superintendent. Through these

experiences, he understands fully what is asked of each employee within the system. He

also describes the benefit of being coached and mentored as he progressed through these

positions. He can describe both the support and challenge that is felt when an

experienced educator comes alongside you and asks if you have considered making the

decision to leave the classroom and take on the duties of an administrator. Mr. Jones has

demonstrated the qualities of leadership that encourage trust and confidence from staff

members. Employees of the district refer to his honesty about the challenges present in the current state of education, as well as his boldness in facing them head on. What is being done in this district is not best described by terms like programs, initiatives, or even interventions, rather an atmosphere of continual improvement has been cultivated that encourages the growth of leadership attributes. In talking to him about this climate, he replied, "I have seen how a change in principal can transform a school." "Because we believe that the principal is the most important person and the dynamics that they can positively or negatively create, we said this is something we need to value." The district's value of the role of principal is substantiated in the resources that have been committed and is further evidenced in the creation of a full-time, support position for leadership development within the district. The goal of the district is to accelerate both the effectiveness and efficacy of their beginning principals.

As the second largest school system in western North Carolina, Mr. Jones identified the need for ongoing training for current beginning principals rather than a one-shot, professional development occurrence. "To send them to a workshop and think it's going to take, that would not do it," stated Jones. Made up of 23 schools, and serving approximately 13,500 students, Henderson County Public Schools has created a two-pronged method of ensuring they are ahead of the curve for the coming leadership changes.

Beginning Principal Support:
Intentional Efforts to Grow Effective School Leaders

Theme:
Collaboration in P-12 Partnership Activities

Applicants:

Dr. Ann Allen
Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership, WCU
Program Director, MSA and PMC
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John Bryant
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Henderson County Public Schools
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Brett Wilson
Principal, Hildebran Elementary School
Burke County Public Schools
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Plan of Action and Timeline

HCPS Beginning Principal Support 2015-2016

Date:	Action:
By August 1, 2015	• Assign mentors to 1st year principals • Confirm mentor commitments for 2nd year principals • Initial mentor training
By October 15, 2015	• In-depth mentor training • Two days of off-site professional development for Beginning Principals (one of the days to include direct mentor support) • Begin reflective journaling process • Beginning principal pre-assessment process complete
Ongoing 2015-2016 school year	• Reflective journaling • Job-embedded coaching • Visit(s) to mentor's school • Targeted professional learning experiences
May, 2016	• "Partnership: Frameworks for Working Together" event at WCU.
By June 15, 2016	• Beginning principal post-assessment process complete • Year-in-Review meetings with beginning principals • Year-in-Review meetings with mentors
By June 30, 2016	• Final SUTEP grant report submitted to Associate Dean Kim Winter.

EDUCATION⬆UPDATE

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December 2014 | Volume **56** | Number **12**
Banking On a Promise

Road Tested / Surviving the First Year

Ten Pointers from a Rookie Principal

Adam B. Clemons

"Are you under a lot of stress?" A doctor asked me this question as I lay in the emergency room with stomach pain that felt like a horse had kicked me. I was a new high school principal, just two weeks on the job and in the process of selling a house and moving to a new state. So, how did I answer? "Not really."

One year later, after finishing my first year as a principal in Alabama and learning to live with what doctors diagnosed as diverticulitis, I can honestly say that Noel Coward's quote, "Work is more fun than fun," could be applied to how I feel about my job. Here are 10 pointers that helped me survive a fun and eventful first year.

1. Be a Learner Yourself

Find out what other administrators are reading and get a copy. I've heard leaders talk about *Love Works* by Joel Manby, *Start with Why* by Simon Sinek, *The Traveler's Gift* by Andy Andrews, and *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Sometimes you hit the educator's jackpot and can also get nuggets, like TED Talks, online for free.

2. Look Confident

As a dad of four, I've learned you have to stay confident even when the only thing you're certain about is your uncertainty. SLANT (sit up, lean forward, ask questions, nod your head, and track the speaker) is a great strategy to use around your superintendent, board members, and other stakeholders from whom you can learn something. Watch Amy Cuddy's TED Talk, "Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are," for tips to project confidence.

Likewise, be sure to dress for the position. Remember, sea captains wear those funny hats and generals have brass on their shoulders for a reason—people need to sense that someone is the decision maker.

3. Tell a Story

As the head of the school, you are the "communicator in chief." Communicate with your staff in a weekly e-mail. Include a kudos section, a calendar of reminders, pictures showing effective instructional practices, and a section to reinforce your vision or share data.

Schedule regular automated phone calls or send text reminders to students and parents. Use social media to post

anything from pictures of students doing good work to inspirational quotes. Apps like Everypost can help you stay consistent in your messaging.

For a more personal touch, write and mail handwritten thank-you notes. This lost art can make people feel as good as when they found out their grandma made an extra pecan pie just for them.

4. Reward Others

Reward those who do what is asked of them. Call on alumni, local businesses, politicians, and churches and tell them that for a certain donation toward an incentives program for students, you will put their logo on the school website and announce their support in your automated calls to parents and on social media.

Last year, my school received several thousand dollars in donations. Students were on cloud nine—and morale went through the roof.

5. Find a Slogan

In 1980, Ted Kennedy was asked why he was running for president. It took him several minutes to explain the *what* and the *how*, but he never answered the *why*. Political consultants still talk about the "Ted Kennedy Rule": candidates must communicate why they are running in eight words or less. It's called a slogan.

Each year, come up with a slogan for your school. Last year, we went with "Believe in the Promise of Piedmont." It became the theme of our yearbook and was talked about by community leaders. It gave stakeholders the *why* for what we do.

6. Ask How You Are Doing

Ed Koch, the former mayor of New York, would ask random New Yorkers on the street, "How am I doing?" Guess what he got? Honest answers!

Sit down with your teachers and ask them how you are doing as a principal. This question opens up lines of communication because most teachers will also inquire about how they are doing. This gives you the opportunity to reinforce their positive attributes and speak softly but truthfully about how they can improve.

Also, sit with your students at lunch and ask them how you are doing and how their classes are going. They, too, will tell you.

7. Volunteer

Some of the greatest fighting men and women in history are those who volunteered for a dangerous mission. Think of the Overmountain Men in the American Revolution, the Volunteers of Tennessee in the War of 1812, and those who joined the armed forces immediately after 9/11.

The quickest way to get ahead is to learn what those around you value. When your central office bosses say they are sending you an e-mail about an upcoming conference, that is their way of asking you to attend because they think it is valuable. Go! Not only are you helping fulfill the vision of your superiors, but you are also modeling what you would like from your teachers.

8. Seek a Team of Talent

Dorris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals* tells how Abraham Lincoln surrounded himself with those who either thought they should be the president or were highly capable of assuming the role.

Like Lincoln, surround yourself with strong administrative and teacher leadership teams. Meet weekly with your administrative team and monthly with your teacher leadership team. Go over big questions, institutional practices, and instructional strategies.

If you are not sure who to pick for your teacher leadership team, poll your teachers online, asking them which teachers they consider to be leaders, and then take the top four. The leaders of both teams will become trusted advisors and help guide your school.

9. Know Thyself

Let your staff know that you may make mistakes but you will learn from them. When you do make a mistake, humbly admit it and move on.

Follow your moral compass. My faith and family are most important to me. Every now and then, after many days at work and nights at ballgames, I ask my wife, "Are we OK?" It is a good question to ask because it gives you the personal foundation upon which to stand.

Not long ago, my 3-year-old daughter said I smelled. I asked her, "What do I smell like?" "Happiness!" she said. Her statement made my day.

10. Reward Yourself

There is nothing wrong with rewarding yourself for your hard work. When I first became an administrator in 2008, I bought a framed print of Francis Bicknell Carpenter's *First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation*. When I became a principal, I bought a large bust called *Young Lincoln* by Leonard Volk. The print reminds me to surround myself with talented people, and the bust reminds me that folks are trusting me as a leader.

And, on the occasional hard day, it is also OK to reward yourself with a Dairy Queen Blizzard just   because. ⧉

Adam B. Clemons is the principal of Piedmont High School in Alabama.

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Appendix K: Conceptual Framework

Practices that Grow and Support
Beginning Principals

Appendix L: HCPS Superintendent M.O.U.

Board of Public Education
Ervin W. Bazzle, *Chairperson*
Mary Louise Corn, *Vice Chairperson*
Lisa T. Edwards
Amy Lynn Holt
Colby Coren
Joshua D. Houston
Rick R. Wood

Henderson County Public Schools
Where Tomorrow Begins

David L. Jones
Superintendent

414 Fourth Avenue West
Hendersonville, NC 28739-4261
Phone 828.697.4733
Fax 828.697.5541 or 828.697.4738
www.hendersoncountypublicschoolsnc.org

December 17, 2014

Office of Research Administration
Western Carolina University
110 Camp Building
Cullowhee, NC 28723

RE: Institutional Review Board Request

To Whom It May Concern:

I grant permission to John Bryant, Jan King, and Brett Wilson to conduct their EdD research around Beginning Principal Support/Mentoring in Henderson County Public Schools.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

David L. Jones, Ed. S.
Superintendent

Appendix M: Beginning Principal Support WikiSpace

BeginningPrincipalSupport

Home Page

[Edit] [0] [9] [...]

Wiki Home
Recent Changes
Pages and Files
Members
[Search]

▾ All Pages
    Advice - Principal to Principal
    Home Page
    Leadership Retreat - A Sample Agenda
    Leadership Session
    Mentor Training
    Reflective Practice
    Relevant Research

Beginning Principal Support Resources

The pages linked to the left are intended to provide resources and ideas for use by district leaders as they design support for beginning principals.

Why It Matters...

Beginning principals struggle with the complexity of the job, the limits of their instructional impact, the loneliness of leadership, and the existing culture's resistance to change. This is a problem in many school systems relative to addressing these needs. This problem negatively impacts beginning principals and their respective school communities because they struggle to navigate school leadership transitions, to sustain district initiatives, and to experience consistent individual growth.

Given the absence of legislation, policy, and funding for beginning principal support, Henderson County Public Schools in Hendersonville, North Carolina devised a plan to implement a model designed to grow the leadership capacity of beginning principals in order that the impact of their service is maximized. The intentionality of effective support practices and mentoring are crucial to the future success of the beginning principal and that of the students and staff under her leadership (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). The design of this intervention matches beginning principals with mentors, while providing opportunities for professional growth through self-assessment, reflection, and group learning.

Using the 90-day cycle of improvement science, we are sharing a Plan/Do/Study/Act [PDSA] scalable model for the mentoring of beginning principals. We invite you to make use of the resources you find on this wiki, and encourage you to use the "contact us" link to contribute ideas or resources for inclusion on the site.

Ideally, we would like to see local school districts examine their policies and practices around support for their new school executives, the principals. Intentional

http://beginningprincipalsupport.wikispaces.com/Home+Page

Appendix N: BP Retreat Reflection

BP Retreat Reflection - Implementation Team

* Required

Share a paragraph or two (or three) about your takeaways from the Feb 12-13 Retreat. *

Rate your perceived effectiveness/impact of the follow BP activity: *
7 Card Stud

    1   2   3   4   5

Low ○   ○   ○   ○   ○ High

Rate your perceived effectiveness/impact of the follow BP activity: *
BPs with Mr. David Jones

    1   2   3   4   5

Low ○   ○   ○   ○   ○ High

Appendix O: NCASA Summer Leadership Agenda

2015 Summer Leadership Conference New Administrators' Session

Monday, June 29, 2015, 8:30 am—12:30 pm
followed by our keynote
presentations 1:00 pm-5:00 pm

This session purposefully seeks to enhance leadership potential and equip new school administrators. Intended for leaders who are beginning a career in school administration, the session targets the skills and practices essential for success as a principal or assistant principal. In a collaborative environment you will delve into the complexities of school leadership. Topics and strategies will emphasize the importance of communication, visibility, judgment, setting priorities, decision-making, culture and ethics.

The importance of being an instructional leader while still managing an effective campus will be a theme throughout the session.

Facilitators:

John Bryant, Senior Director for Human Resources, Henderson County Schools

Jan King, Regional Lead, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Brett Wilson, Principal, Burke County Schools

Cost: $125 New Administrators' Session (Includes Lunch)

Register at www.wresa.org

Summer Leadership Conference
Session for New Administrators

June 29, 2015   8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Description:
This session purposefully seeks to enhance leadership potential and equip new school administrators. Intended for leaders who are beginning a career in school administration, the session targets the skills and practices essential for success as a principal or assistant principal. In a collaborative environment you will delve into the complexities of school leadership. Topics and strategies will emphasize the importance of communication, visibility, judgment, setting priorities, decision-making, culture and ethics. The importance of being an instructional leader while still managing an effective campus will be a theme throughout the session.

Facilitators:
John Bryant, Senior Director for Human Resources, Henderson County Schools
Jan King, Regional Lead, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Brett Wilson, Principal, Burke County Schools

Approximate Time:	Topic or Activity:
8:30 am	**Getting Started** • Introductions • Name Tents • Goals for the Day • Activity: The Administrator Shuffle
9 am	**Better Staff = Better School** • Hiring and Retaining Irreplaceable Teachers • A Culture of Excellence
9:45 am (Break after 2nd rotation)	**One Heck of a Job Description** • Groups – "It's Kinda Like…" **Let's Chat About:** • Top 10 Issues in Education (Public School Forum) • Ethics of Excellence • Top 10 List for Successful Communications • Expectations • Ten Pointers from a Rookie Principal
11 am	**Leadership Do's & Don'ts** • Sorting It Out:
11:15 am	**Standards, Evaluation and Ethics** • What does it mean to be a school executive? • Know It and Show It: The NC Code of Ethics
11:55 am	**What it boils down to…** • Video clip: Todd Whitaker • The Road Ahead • My Take-Aways

Appendix P: Operational Definitions

For the purposes of our research, the scholar-practitioners agreed that the most fitting

meanings for these loosely constructed themes should be interpreted as indicated below:

- Mentoring: A systematic approach to supporting less experienced professionals in

  education. While there is a element of district level support, the primary focus of

  this term refers to the one-to-one assignment of a veteran administrator who offers

  feedback through listening to concerns, advice for problem-solving, and questions

  to assist in making sound decisions for the improvement of the school.

- Effectiveness: The ability to achieve specified goals. In the principalship, these

  goals include a positive movement of the school's culture, and the increase of

  student achievement scores, and teachers' instructional and leadership capacities.

- Dispositions for Leadership: These are the characteristics that are used to evaluate

  school principals in the state of NC. Included in this list are: Strategic leadership,

  Instructional leadership, Cultural leadership, Human Resource leadership,

  External Development leadership, Micro-political leadership, and Academic

  Achievement leadership.

Appendix Q: Mentor Training Guide

Beginning Principal Retreat 2015
Mentor Training Guide
Wednesday, September 30, 2015

The goals for the BP mentoring program are to:

• Provide an open atmosphere for dialogue;
• Enhance and provide motivation for job performance, creativity, and the acceptance of responsibilities with confidence;
• Provide assistance with process skills and direction toward available resources, and develop potential for professional growth and development;
• Provide a practical view and assist in focusing more sharply on particular roles and responsibilities, along with updated approaches to carrying out responsibilities;
• Develop a continuing sensitivity to social and political changes and provide practical competencies to deal with these situations; and
• Enhance the concept of the total program of the HCPS by experiencing differing situations and environments, and thus expanding the Beginning Principal's competencies.

Mentors are identified peers within the district with responsibility for maintaining regular communication with the mentee, for providing follow-up with Beginning Principal each week. The district mentoring contact [John Bryant] will provide local, individualized support to the mentoring pairs.

Characteristics of Effective Employee Support Systems

Concept	Peer Mentoring	Peer Coaching	Executive Coaching
Organizational Level	Not in individual's chain of command.	Not in individual's chain of command.	Often targets high performers.
Relationship	Trusted friend; guide; advisor, sponsor, advocate, role model.	Trusted guide; advisor; sounding board.	Trusted guide; advisor; sounding board.
Context	Creates a safe context for growth.	Helps to identify training needs and problem solving approaches with the individual.	Helps to identify training needs and problem solving approaches with the individual.
Purpose	Motivates others.	Motivates others.	Motivates others.
	Committed to providing upward support and mobility of protégés career.	Makes it possible for individual to succeed in areas where he/she is most stuck or ineffective.	May not be focused on answers but rather on inquiry; process of asking questions produces transformational insights for the executive.
Focus	Focuses on development of the individual.	Focus is on the performance of the individual for the organization in their position; specifically skills.	Focus is on helping the executive to move the organization forward. Increasing leadership/management effectiveness of individual.
Goals	Assists protégé in their connection & identification with the organization.	Commitment is for the individual and their challenges.	Commitment is for the individual and their challenges.
Responsibility	Vision builder; value shaper.	Vision builder; value shaper.	Vision builder; value shaper.
	Understands individual development needs.	Understands individual development needs.	Understands individual development needs.
	Creates	Creates learning	Creates learning

	learning opportunities.	opportunities.	opportunities.
Outcomes	Both parties develop and grow from the relationship.	Both parties develop and grow from the relationship.	Both parties develop and grow from the relationship.
References: Bell (1996), Hadden, (1997), Hargrove (1995), Wells (1997), and Witherspoon (1997).			

Mentor/BP Contact Log

Mentor Name:

_____

BP Name:

_____

Weekly Contact	Date of Contact	Phone	Personal Visit	Time of Contact
EX	*Sept 30*	*X*		*15m*
Oct 4				
Oct 11				
Oct 18				
Oct 25				
Nov 1				
Nov 8				
Nov 15				
Nov 22				
Nov 29				
Dec 6				
Dec 13				
Dec 20				

Mentor Contact Expectations:

- ✓ Be a listener first.
- ✓ Be available for contact at least once a week (by phone or in person) for 10 – 30 minutes. Ensure that at least 3 contacts are in person over the course of the mentoring support.
- ✓ Record contact on log.
- ✓ Always schedule the next contact at the conclusion of each contact.
- ✓ Use the Peer/Executive Coaching matrix to guide support.
- ✓ Use the provided question stems to facilitate dialogue.
- ✓ Offer feedback to district contact [John Bryant], as needed.