

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: **PERCEPTIONS OF NEW PRINCIPAL MENTORING PROGRAMS IN A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT.**

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The principalship has changed significantly over the past 20 years. Today's principals must be effective instructional leaders, managers of large facilities, and experts at analyzing data to successfully meet the accountability demands of high-stakes testing, along with state, and federal mandates.

The primary purpose of this quantitative study was to examine how 43 first- and second-year sitting school principals perceived their mentoring experiences and the degree to which a principal mentoring program—offered by their large urban school district—was effective in building their leadership capacity. A second purpose of this inquiry was to understand these principals' perceptions of the most beneficial aspects of the mentoring program. The study used quantitative data gathered via an online questionnaire distributed during Fall 2015.

The results indicated that respondents perceived that the components of the large urban school-mentoring program were generally effective in training principal mentees to become highly-effective school leaders.

This study enriches the literature on mentoring by providing the voices of first and second year school leaders to add depth to the characteristics of successful mentoring programs.

PERCEPTIONS OF NEW PRINCIPAL MENTORING PROGRAMS IN A LARGE  
URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT.

By

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Nathaniel W. Wells, Jr., and Mary Ann Houston Wells, who encouraged me to begin this journey and continue to support me in all of my endeavors. To my supportive husband, Jeffrey, who never complained as I was going through my journey. Instead he motivates and encouraged me to write, revise, and structure my time. I love you all and appreciate the time, energy, and effort you invested in me. Throughout my childhood, my parents encouraged me to reach all of my goals and put God first, reminding me, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” To my colleagues, Martha Booros and Charlene Wright; sisters, Anissa Wells and Tiffany Alexander; and friends who continued to push and encourage me to never give up. Please know that I will continue to hold strong to your unending support and strong words of encouragement.

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## **Section 1: Introduction to the Problem and Literature Review**

Research indicates that principal turnover is a significant issue in public schools across the nation, particularly for schools in urban areas. As a principal within the large urban school district, I can recall my experience as a first year principal and how the Principal Mentoring Program was not designed with a framework or model in place focused to build the principals leadership capacity. The program was more oriented to assigning a seasoned principal to a first year principal and providing support for that person when needed. Over the years I have seen the program evolve into a more structured and beneficial program for it's instructional leaders. Over a three-year period, from 2009 to 2012, one large urban school district experienced a 49.5% rate of turnover for principals across all grade levels: elementary, middle, and high school. As a result, district leaders had to replace 107 principals between 2009 and 2012. Of the 107 principals who left, over 10% were new principals with fewer than five years of experience. When one considers the critical role that principals play in the learning process, such a high turnover rate raises concerns about the continuity of district policies, the administration of state-adopted curricula, educational leadership at the school level, and other similar areas. These concerns speak to the need for strategies designed to stop principal turnover in large urban schools and ensure that principal preparation programs are building the leadership capacity of leaders.

### **Scope of the Problem**

Studies have revealed that the demands of the principalship have changed significantly over the past 20 years. Today's principals must be effective instructional leaders, managers of large facilities, and experts at analyzing data to successfully meet

the accountability demands of high-stakes testing (Hale & Moorman, 2003). The federal mandates of the 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the emphasis on the accountability of principals have district leaders struggling to fill administrative vacancies (Baker, 2007; Nugent, 2008). The complex set of skills needed for administrative leadership positions compounds the difficulty of finding qualified applicants for districts across the nation (Nugent, 2008).

In a report conducted in 2002 by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), researchers estimated that within the next decade, approximately 40% of the current principals would be eligible for retirement. Follow-up studies by Baker (2007) and Bloom, Castagne, and Warren (2003) confirmed the finding of the NASSP and documented that in addition to a shortage of applicants to fill these positions, districts would also deal with an inability to attract qualified principal candidates to apply for vacant positions. Pijanowski, Hewitt, and Brady (2009) also attributed the principal shortage to a lack of qualified applicants, inability of districts to attract top candidates, and a lack of compensation commensurate with the demands of the job.

Nugent (2008) reported in a journal article that most teacher leaders were not interested in moving up the ladder to fill vacant administrative positions. Nugent shared that administrators have it worse, based on state and federal mandates, long hours, and lack of job security. Consequently, there's not much incentive for teachers to "move up the ladder", resulting in a shortage of viable administrative candidate (American School Board Journal, August 2008). According to the researchers, teachers believed that the position's pay and prestige did not make up for the increase in administrative responsibilities, the need to meet state and federal mandates, long hours, lack of parental

support, and the decrease in job security. Instead, they found that teachers who successfully completed leadership certification courses were opting to remain in the classroom or to pursue other leadership opportunities (Nugent, 2008).

Researchers also discovered that principals were concerned about a multitude of demands related to time management. Principals reported that decision-making, interpersonal communication, and follow through were highly stressful because of constant time constraints. Respondents also stated that managing meetings and supervising personnel were sources of anxiety. According to Holloway (2004), stress levels are high for principals, and the early years are lonely and intimidating due to the demands of multiple constituents, the pace, the various technical skills required, and feelings of isolation and inadequacy. Additionally, the increased emphasis on student learning creates an even greater need to find principals who can provide stable leadership for the schools and communities they serve. This significant demand to find new principals to take the places of those who leave puts a heavy burden on the personnel departments tasked with recruiting new employees.

As they seek to combat the challenges of filling administrative vacancies, district leaders are increasingly recognizing the need to prepare and develop their own effective school leaders (Fullan, 2009) and have begun to establish a number of leadership development programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Although English and Murphy, have debated the proper format that these leadership development programs should take (English, 2007; Murphy, 2003), it is clear that these programs must provide adequate support for new school leaders as they embark on their responsibilities (Gray, Fry, Bottom, & O'Neill (2007).

First- and second-year principals who have ongoing, sustained contact with mentors willing and able to advise them on how to be successful enjoy greater confidence in their ability to do their jobs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Caring colleagues who are willing to share their expertise and experiences through an organized mentoring program help reduce the fears of new principals. These colleagues are able to respond to myriad “how to” questions that always seem to accompany a new placement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Ferrandino (2006) also expressed the need for districts to capitalize on the experiences of their veteran principals to help bridge the learning gaps for beginning administrators. Providing support networks for beginning administrators would help prevent them from making costly mistakes that could take years to repair (Ferrandino, 2006).

### **Justification for the Research**

Since 2003, the school district under study has depended on a principal mentoring program to support newly appointed principals. In response to the critical problem of high turnover of principals, the Wallace Foundation joined with the leadership of the target district to address the problem of attrition (Wallace Foundation, 2012). This cooperative effort is significant to the study because the foundation supported an initiative designed to improve the quality and increase the sustainability of mentoring programs (Wallace Foundation, 2012).

With the high turnover rate among new principals, district leaders have raised the question of whether existing mentoring programs have had the desired impact. To date, no official studies have explored the principal mentoring program within the district. Therefore, the researcher considered this to be an area that would benefit from a targeted

study on principal preparation in the district that could add to the research that the Wallace Foundation has already conducted. Specifically, this study explored the perceptions that a group of first- and second-year principals held about the effectiveness of the district's mentoring program.

### **Principal Mentoring**

Mentoring is an approach to supporting leadership development through which a less experienced employee learns from the experiences of a veteran employee. Simon, Bloxham, and Doyle (2003) explained, "Mentoring links traditions with the future through helping the coming generation become its best" (p. 19). Mentoring relationships can take on a variety of forms and may include interactions between (a) a mature supervisor and a younger subordinate in the same business setting, (b) a new worker and an experienced colleague, or (c) peers in different organizations separated geographically. (Simon et al., 2003).

Kram (1985) described the mentoring relationship within the workplace as one that enhances career development. McKenzie (1989) provided a similar characterization, explaining that mentoring involved the process of guiding an individual's personal and career goals. The author used the metaphor of a journey to reflect on the mentoring relationship (McKenzie, 1989). Daloz (1986) viewed the mentor as a trusted guide who helped the mentee through transitions in life, and Walker and Stott (1994) defined the mentor as an individual who helped a less experienced colleague by providing personal, professional, and career guidance.

Research indicates that the mentoring process is different from counseling or coaching. McKenzie (1989), for example, observed that counseling and coaching focused on transferring the ability to perform tasks; mentoring on the other hand “is an interactive process that leads to the attainment of managerial potential” (p. vii). Emotional bonds not present in the other two types of relationships are common in interactions between mentors and mentees. The counseling relationship lasts for a short time, typically a few hours, and focuses on defining problems and outlining solutions. In a coaching relationship, however, the coach helps the protégé extend existing skills and develop new ones in a process that extends over a longer period of time. Unlike counseling and coaching, mentoring involves relationship building and has less of a task-specific focus. Mentoring relationships often last from 1 to 2 years and emphasize longer-range expertise.

Educational leaders long have recognized the increased demands that federal mandates have placed upon principals (King, 2002; Quaglia & Quay, 2003); the growing shortage of quality candidates for principal positions (Educational Research Service, 1998; Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2000); and the challenge of retaining highly-qualified principals (Johnson, 2005; Kennedy, 2002; Young, 2003). These factors have made the successful induction of new principals into the profession more critical than ever.

For over 20 years, researchers have documented the importance of high-quality professional development and assistance for newly appointed school principals through the establishment of mentoring relationships with experienced administrators that aid new leaders assuming their first assignments (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2004; Walker, 1989; Walker & Stott, 1991). These relationships, and the valuable guidance and

information they provide, can help new principals face the realities of their first principalship with some degree of confidence and competence (Crow & Mathews, 1998; Daresh, 2004; Walker, 1989; Walker & Stott, 1991).

The information provided by a mentor includes practical advice about how a new principal might deal with procedural, managerial, or technical duties like budgeting, scheduling, using technology, evaluating teachers, working effectively with parents, and completing other administrative tasks. These tasks, if not completed successfully, have the potential to cause a novice principal to feel insecure during the first few years of service. An experienced, successful administrator possesses the craft knowledge and experience needed to offer an inexperienced colleague advice and tips for a smooth transition into the new professional role. This type of mentoring traditionally can serve as a type of insurance policy to guard against losing a novice principal at the start of a new career due to a lack of experience with the fundamentals of the job (The Wallace Foundation, 2007). Such mentoring programs can come in a wide variety of formats, and some are more effective than others (The Wallace Foundation, 2007).

The findings of a report entitled *Good Principals Aren't Born—They're Mentored: Are We Investing Enough to Get the School Leaders We Need?* (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2006) suggested that every state has an urgent need for capable principals who know how to implement changes in school and classroom practices, especially in low-performing schools. Principals are in great demand, but they are in short supply. The potential pool is large, but many candidates are either unwilling or unprepared to do the work that must be done (SREB, 2006).



Even though the SREB (2006) has conducted research that supports partnerships between universities and school districts in which the two entities share the responsibilities of developing effective leaders, more principal preparation is needed. The SREB conducted a study on the best course of action for policymakers and educational leaders to take to ensure that every new principal comes to the job fully prepared to make a difference in teaching and learning. The SREB argued that quality principals develop quality schools, which produce higher student performance. The SREB also argued that the opposite is true: Poorly prepared principals lead schools nowhere, and once certified, they remain in the system for many years, obstructing school improvement. The SREB asserted that aspiring school administrators, potentially responsible for the quality of learning achieved by countless numbers of students, must learn to meet rigorous performance requirements during a challenging internship supervised by experts in the field.

A study commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) found that supply and demand for school principals is a complex issue (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2004). The NAESP's mission is to advocate and support elementary- and middle-level principals, as well as other education leaders, in their commitment to all children (NAESP, 2004). In carrying out that mission, the leaders of the organization strive to be mindful of two particularly striking findings of research: (a) children's early years in school are the most crucial to their future in the classroom, as well as in life, and (b) the key figure involved in establishing a top-quality school is the principal.

NAESP leaders have recognized their obligation to help strengthen the principalship and the profession through cooperation with the institutions that prepare school administrators (NAESP, 2004). NAESP seeks to accomplish their goals through offered counsel; constructive relationships with government bodies at all levels; and a wide range of NAESP training programs, publications, conferences, and professional meetings aimed at aiding aspiring principals in reaching their goals and helping practicing principals hone their skills (NAESP, 2004).

Recognizing the need to provide outstanding training that will lead to the success of principals, NAESP, in conjunction with Nova Southeastern University, established a mentor-training program that was in use in the NYC Leadership Academy; Jefferson County, Kentucky; Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Providence, Rhode Island; Springfield, Illinois; Springfield, Massachusetts; and St. Louis, Missouri. At the time of this study, NAESP developed the program using the six standards from a landmark NAESP document (NAESP, 2002). The LAB (educational laboratories), a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University, the Principals Leadership Network, and the U.S. Department of Education developed the report.

Principals who completed the mentor-training program participated in a three-day in-service training, during which they learned how to integrate best practices in mentoring with their own experiences. After the initial training, participants took part in a nine-month mentor-in-training internship; during which the mentor, under the guidance of a trained coach, provided guidance and support to a new mentee by engaging in effective listening and questioning strategies (NAESP, 2002).

Daresh and Playko (1997) posited that the two main tasks facing a novice principal are (a) surviving the early years and (b) becoming an educational leader. Survival centers are necessary to manage the technical side of the task, grasp the social and cultural norms of the school, and understand the leader's special role in the school. Both Barth (1990) and Duke (1998) explored school leadership challenges and the reasons that principals leave their positions. The researchers identified the following contributing factors to principal attrition: (a) sacrifices in one's personal life; (b) stress; (c) the withering array of personal interactions; (d) the politics of dealing with various constituencies; (e) the tendency of managerial concerns to supersede leadership functions; (f) fatigue; (g) lack of preparation for the realities of being a principal; (h) desire to care for others, which places demands on time and emotional energy that are sometimes impossible to meet; (i) the feeling that they can never relax or let their hair down (that they are always "on"); and a lack of support from superiors.

After interviewing successful principals, Duke (1998) concluded that the challenge was less about becoming an educational leader and more about sustaining educational leadership over time. According to Duke, (1998), the two ideas are not mutually exclusive. As many school administrators have noted, one cannot become a leader of a school if he does not survive the first few days in the principalship (Duke, 1998). Despite this fact, several individuals view the challenge of the principalship only in terms of "making it through" from one day to the next (Daresh & Playko, 1997). They tend to think only in terms of short-term skills—e.g., how to stay out of trouble or how to avoid being fired (Daresh & Playko, 1997).

According to School Leaders Network, 2014, educational leaders who sustain an effective leadership role tend to review their personal values on an ongoing basis. School Leaders Network, 2014, also asserted that successful leaders put a plan in place to reduce isolation by working with key people both inside and outside of their building.

Additionally, School Leaders Network, 2014, explained that principals can improve their leadership skills by participating in ongoing professional development, building critical components of leadership, managing time effectively, and building a system of supports. Over the years, principals must set personal professional development goals to sustain educational leadership.

Finally, School Leaders Network (2014) reported that investing in back-end results of principal retention will carry front-end pipeline investments much further. The report proposed specific solutions to reverse the current flood of leadership out of the school doors:

1. Continue to go beyond pipeline investments in leadership development;
2. Engage principals in authentic peer networks through which they can learn from other principals the art and practice of leading schools;
3. Provide one-to-one coaching support to principals beyond their first two years in the role; and
4. Revise the structure and purpose of district office principal supervisors' roles (School Leaders Network, 2014).

The authors of this report called upon decision makers and funders to value and prioritize principal retention efforts as much as they did principal pipeline development efforts,

which research has shown are essential to the success of students and schools (School Leaders Network, 2014).

The School Leaders Network (2014) cited *The KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Case Study: A Story of Investment Success* because it demonstrated the importance and success of making three key investments in the development of all levels of leadership (teacher leader, leadership team, successor leaders, and practicing principals): (a) continuous learning opportunities, (b) leaders' retreats and the KIPP school summit, and (c) individualized leadership coaching. The \$150,000 investment per principal paid off, increasing principal retention at the same KIPP campus 41.4% over typical charter leader turnover (average charter: 29%; KIPP leader: 17%). These investments not only have increased retention but also effectively leveraged leadership to have profound impacts on student achievement in schools serving populations consisting of 88% children in poverty and 95% children of color. According to the report,

- KIPP students successfully complete 4-year college at more than four times the rate of average students from low-income communities; and
- On average, KIPP students gain 1+ years of learning annually, outperforming national, state, and district averages (School Leaders Network, 2014).

**Characteristics of effective programs.** Despite the perceived value found in this perspective on mentoring, some district leaders continue to have serious reservations about the effectiveness of using professional development to assist new principals as they begin their careers as school leaders. These reservations stem from their experience with mentoring programs that fell short of the expected outcome of developing strong leaders.

Some research even indicates that such mentoring programs are only minimally effective on several different levels (Crocker and Harris, 2002).

Crocker and Harris (2002) gathered information from mentors and mentees in a principal preparation program and concluded that mentoring programs should provide mentors with extra time to spend with their mentees, perhaps by releasing the mentors from other duties. The authors also suggested that these initiatives (a) provide specific guidelines to mentors and (b) require mentors to participate in formal training that emphasizes relationship building and professional collaborative behaviors (Crocker & Harris, 2002).

Dukess (2001) concluded that successful mentoring programs needed to match mentors and mentees carefully, set clear expectations and guidelines for participants, and foster honest and trusting relationships built on confidentiality between the mentor and mentee. Dukess noted that, too often, district-mentoring programs failed to establish these characteristics of successful mentoring programs, which made it difficult for them to meet the needs of mentees and mentors.

The Wallace Foundation urged districts to improve mentoring programs for new principals and address every challenge involved in providing effective mentoring (Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010). This goal can be accomplished by creating well-functioning mentoring systems that help to prepare new school leaders to drive improvements in teaching and learning. The Wallace Foundation asserted that if programs have vague or unclear goals, insufficient focus on instructional leadership, or an overemphasis on managerial roles, new principals will not be successful in their roles. The research also concluded that if programs offer weak or nonexistent training for mentors, provide

insufficient time for mentors to provide sustained support for new school leaders, fail to collect the meaningful data needed to assess benefits or build credible cases for sustained support, or lack sufficient funding, the result is an ineffective mentoring program. With such ineffective training programs, districts will not be able to prepare new school leaders to drive improvements in teaching and learning (Orr et al., 2010).

Orr et al. (2010) asserted that most people will readily agree that districts must get mentoring right to develop effective leaders for their schools. The authors also note that to build effective mentoring programs, districts must be willing to design, or redesign, leadership preparation programs that match their leadership needs (Orr et al., 2010) examined eight urban school districts from a pool of 15 Wallace-funded sites that received funding and resources to support their leadership preparation efforts for 3 or more years. The districts ranged in size from 34 schools to more than 650 and all of the schools displayed significant school improvement needs, according to their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status. However, they varied in their leadership needs, which included time management, management of the school, parent concerns, changing student achievement based on growth or decline in student population, principal retirement and turnover, and the pressure of underperforming schools (Orr et al., 2010).

According to Orr et al., (2010), several of the eight districts formed an affiliation with one or more local universities to take advantage of their grant-funded leadership preparation efforts that led to certification. District and school personnel, university officials and faculty, and program participants and graduates conducted research during 2008, with follow-up interviews in 2009, that included eight case studies on districts' leadership preparation programs and their relationships with local universities. The

results from the study showed that districts used various consumer actions to influence the quality of locally available leadership preparation (Orr et al., 2010).

**The large urban school district's current mentoring program.** The current mentoring program applies six leadership standards from the National Association of Elementary School Principals landmark document, *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, Second Edition, (NAESP, 2008). This model is used for school principals to ensure they have skills, talent, and strengths to implement the primary goal of the school district. These standards are designed to maximize student achievement through the effective use of data analysis, resource, professional development and instructional practices. Through the creation of their professional development standards, aligned with the Educational Leadership Policy Standards (ELPS), formerly know as Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC), the National Board Standards for Principals, and Maryland indicators for effective principal leadership; they have extracted the best practices from these programs to develop a unified program for evolving and aspiring administrators, current Assistant Principals or new to the county administrators. The large urban school district under study employs a mentoring program for beginning principals that currently involve 53 mentors and 83 mentees. In the past, mentors only worked with first-year principals. An assistant superintendent made the assignments, selecting experienced principals to attend special mentor–mentee training and then matching them to new principals. Because of the increased number of new principals resulting from the high turnover rate, some mentors were assigned multiple mentees. When multiple mentees are involved, the time commitment needed for effective mentoring can make the



relationship less effective (NAESP, 2008). On the other hand, some mentors might solve this problem through group mentoring, which could prove to be even more effective than one-to-one mentoring (NAESP, 2008). The researcher acknowledges that this issue will be raised as the research questions are examined.

Selected principal mentors in the district must attend a three-day training course offered through the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), which began its first local training in the district in 2005. The Office of Professional Development recognized the importance of supporting new administrators and created a pipeline for the future through an integrated succession plan. Other subsequent trainings occurred in April 2006, November 2007, November 2010, and December 2011. To build a sustainable program, district leaders have provided an opportunity for continued training and certification for its experienced principals and administrative staff through the current project, the district's Principal Mentoring Program. In total, 91 administrators have been trained as highly-qualified mentors through the program.

The comprehensive approach offered by NAESP teaches participants the theory and methodology of mentoring and the application of learning and experience under the caring and watchful eye of trained coaches. Of the 91 trained mentors, 79 achieved national certification as mentors through the NAESP Leadership Immersion Institute, which developed the mentors' knowledge of adult learning and their techniques for helping principals develop the skills needed to become effective leaders. This program includes a 2½- day institute followed by a 9-month internship for the mentors, at the end of which they can become nationally certified principal mentors (NAESP, (2008, p. 2).

The NAESP National Mentor Certification Program offers a “win-win” opportunity for the mentors, who continuously reflect on their practice during the training, and for the aspiring principals, teacher leaders, and novice principals who experience professional growth through their interactions with the mentor. According to NAESP, the match of certified mentors with new school administrators can promote effective school leadership, positively impact student achievement, and foster academic success (NAESP, 2008).

The development of the NAESP Mentor Program began in 1998, and the initiative served its first cohort in 2003. The program incorporates strategies and standards that represent the continuously changing climate and expectations of the principalship. The ongoing support and engagement provided to NAESP-certified mentors also has ensured that their work in the field with new administrators fosters a strong comprehensive program. Ongoing feedback from mentors, protégés, and school districts has provided a large database of information that makes this program relevant; aligned with current practice, research and standards; and flexible enough to respond quickly to the needs of principals in the field (NAESP, 2008).

At the time of this study, the district assigned mentors to first- and second-year principals, as well as to members of the Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success (ALPSS), who were part of the National Principals Mentor Certification Program (NPMCP). This program requires mentors to participate in The Leadership Immersion Institute (LII). Participants explore the theoretical foundations of adult development, learning, and mentoring. Once grounded in these theoretical foundations, the participants learn various practical techniques and strategies of the mentoring relationship under the

guidance of the LII training team. The LII culminates with the celebration of Mentoring for Success (NAESP, 2013).

Upon completion of the LII, NPMCP participants transition into the Mentors-in-Training (MIT) internship component of the program. The internship component is a nine-month process of mentor–protégé engagement. The process begins with the identification and selection of a protégé who agrees to participate with the MIT. The mentor and the protégé interact each month (electronically or in person), and the mentors report their work electronically each month to the coach assigned to a cohort team of MITs.

Coaches must also be graduates of the NPMCP. The coach guides the internship activity of the team members, ensuring that the team positions itself to share valuable information (NAESP, 2013). Collaboratively, mentors and mentees share their learning experiences during the internship phase of the project. Coaches also have monthly learning sessions led by a senior coach. These coaches discuss the growth of their cohort mentors and emphasize the importance of staying abreast of current research and development activities in the field (NAESP, 2013).

The nine-month internship consists of protégé activities, professional readings, electronic discussion postings, and team interaction. The coach serves as the facilitator for the certification process and remains in active communication with each team member, either electronically or in person. This internship sets the NAESP curriculum apart from other mentor programs and facilitates a high standard of quality for communities and school improvement strategies (National Principals Mentor Training and Certification Program, 2013).

The development and selection of principals in the large urban school district is now under evaluation by The Wallace Foundation, which is gathering data to assess the effectiveness of the current initiatives. The principal mentoring program is one of the initiatives under review. District leaders are considering strategies that will help them to improve the mentoring program and develop more effective principal leaders. This study will contribute valuable data to that overall review.

### **Summary**

Because of the changing nature of the principal's role, the increased demands placed upon school leaders, and the shortage of qualified applicants for the principalship, it is more critical than ever that new principals receive every opportunity to obtain the support they need to succeed. Research indicates that school leaders can benefit from a mentoring system in which an experienced principal helps a protégé combine theory and practice with experience (Daresh, 1995; Jares, 2002; Zellmer, 2003). The mentoring of school principals is essential to provide an adequate number of qualified replacements for a rapidly aging and retiring cadre of sitting school administrators. Because relatively few of the current master teachers are interested in entering the field of administration, the success of new principals that choose the profession is essential. According to Ferrandino, (as cited in NAESP, 2002), the successful integration of new administrators into the profession is greatly enhanced by mentoring programs.

The need for a wide-base mentoring program is evident because of the continued increase in the number of qualified individuals willing to assume the responsibilities of the principalship. According to Quaglia and Quay (2003), the era of educational reform in the United States places the principalship under intense scrutiny. The literature on

effective schools has consistently shown that strong administrative leadership is required for schools to demonstrate desirable levels of student achievement (Quaglia & Quay, 2003). The level of effectiveness with which a school operates helps to determine a student's chances of academic success. A U.S. Senate Committee Report on Equal Educational Opportunity identified the principal as "the single most influential person in a school" (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 3).

Bloom and Krovetz (2001) asserted that the highest calling of exemplary leaders is to build leadership in others. They maintained that principals who engage in the act of mentoring reflect on their own practices and grow as a result. This phenomenon creates a beneficial situation for each party that is further enhanced if the mentor has been trained in effective mentoring strategies.

Gooden and Spencer (2003) reported that U.S. schools have been sharply criticized for a lack of quality and productivity when compared to international counterparts. Reformers have advocated dramatic reform initiatives. One of the recommended initiatives was to change how school administrators are trained. Part of that change, according to Gooden and Spencer (2003), should be supervised practice.

In a commentary on principal shortages, Ferrandino and Tirozzi (2000) claimed that too many schools opened in the fall of 2000 without a principal. The authors explained that in Vermont, one in every five principals retired or resigned following the end of the previous school year (1999-2000), as did 15% in the state of Washington (Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2000). The researchers further stated that in New York City, 163 schools opened in 2000 with a temporary school leader. They pled for help in stemming the outflow of seasoned administrators and buoying up the number and quality of

aspiring principals, claiming that if the shortage continues, the U.S. would “face a crucial school leadership crisis—one that [they believed would] take a toll on student achievement” (Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2000, p. 1).

Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong connection between high-quality principals and high-performing schools. Without adequate numbers of highly-qualified applicants to replace retiring principals, district leaders will have a difficult time succeeding with educational improvement activities (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Glickman, 2002; Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2004; Wallace, Engel, & Mooney, 1997). The literature on effective schools has demonstrated that, among other things, principals of effective schools are assertive, organized instructional leaders who communicate with students and staff, delegate responsibility, convey high expectations, clearly define policies, and are adept at parent and community relations (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Glickman, 2002; Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2004; Wallace, Engel, & Mooney, 1997).

In conclusion, the literature pointed out important considerations for the continued improvement of mentoring programs and further research that needs to take place. Many local and state mentoring projects have attempted to develop effective mentoring programs with varied degrees of success. However, there is a lack of research on principals’ perceptions of effective mentoring initiatives. These perspectives can add to the current knowledge base on mentoring for principals and can help to improve existing programs that are falling well short of their potential. Too often, existing state- and district-level programs result in “buddy systems” or check-list exercises that do not do nearly enough to help prepare principals to become knowledgeable and courageous

leaders that can facilitate better teaching and learning in their schools (The Wallace Foundation, 2007).

Districts should look at pre-service and in-service program models to address key issues like managing time, creating a vision with clarity, managing professional interactions (between and among adults), and combating isolation and insecurity. Finally, districts should examine how they have designed or influenced the redesign of leadership preparation programs that match their leadership needs. More research is needed on the significance of how specific program components influence leadership behaviors, performance on the job, and student outcomes. There has been very little research conducted regarding districts' designing or redesigning their mentoring programs to develop strong principal leaders (The Wallace Foundation, 2007).

### **The Purpose of the Investigation**

The review of existing literature related to the research topic led the researcher to design a study that explored the perceptions of first- and second-year principals who participated in mentoring programs in a large urban school district. The study was designed to (a) examine their mentoring experiences, (b) analyze their leadership capacity, and (c) look at beneficial aspects of mentoring program. The research utilized an online survey to collect relevant data during the 2014- 2015 school year on the respondents' views of the support offered by the district's mentoring initiative. Results of this study will add to the literature on the characteristics of district mentoring programs.

## **Section 2: Methodology**

This section presents the methodology used in this study. The discussion will include the purpose of the study, the research questions, the design and methods, sampling, and the data collection and analysis processes.

### **Purpose of the Investigation**

The primary purpose of this study was to collect data on the perceptions of sitting first- and second-year school principals who participated in the mentoring program provided by a large urban school district during years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. The mentoring program lasted two years, therefore, the target group of participants for this study were principals who were participating in either their first or second year of the mentoring program at the time of the study. The study posed specific questions regarding their mentoring experiences, their perceptions of the program's effectiveness in building leadership capacity, and their opinions concerning the most beneficial aspects of the mentoring program.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this research study:

1. What are the perceptions of sitting school principals who participated in the district's principal mentoring program regarding the overall mentoring experience?
2. What are the perceptions of sitting school principals who participated in the district's principal mentoring program regarding the effectiveness of the program in building their leadership capacity?



3. Which areas of the mentoring program do sitting principals consider to be most beneficial; what areas would principals like to see improved?

### **Study Design**

This exploratory descriptive study used a cross-sectional web-based survey to obtain participants' responses. The researcher designed the survey questions to collect data that would contribute new information about the educational process, including educational administration. According to Charles and Mertler, the nature and setting of educational research dictates that it often is nonexperimental; it is used to "(1) depict people, events, situations, conditions, and relationships as they currently exist or once existed; (2) evaluate products or processes; [and] (3) develop innovations" (Charles & Mertler, 2002, p. 30).

According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), descriptive research is a type of quantitative study that involves making careful descriptions of educational phenomena. Most educational research has a strong inclination toward discovering cause-and-effect relationships and testing new instructional methods and programs. Nevertheless, unless researchers first generate an accurate description of an educational phenomenon, as it exists, they lack a firm basis for explaining or changing it (Gall et al., 2003, p. 290).

According to Gray (2006), a cross-sectional survey is a stand-alone research technique in which the researcher collects data from selected individuals in a single time period (however long it takes to collect data from the participants). One limitation of cross-sectional studies is that in many cases, a single point in time does not provide sufficient perspective to make needed decisions. In the case of this study, the researcher

believed that due to the nature of the program and the survey items, the single administration captured perceptions that addressed the study's research questions. The researcher did not conduct any interviews during this inquiry.

### **Participants**

The study participants included 22 first-and second-year principals (elementary, middle, and high school) who had participated in the large urban school district's principal mentoring program. The researcher initially selected 43 participants with 1-2 years of experience leading schools from a list of 83 principals who were part of the mentoring program in either the 2013- 2014 or 2014- 2015 school year. The researcher chose to focus the study on current 2014- 2015 mentees who were either in their first or second year as a principal. The remaining 40 not selected from the 2013- 2014 were past their second year as principals. Of the 43 selected respondents, 22 completed the survey and were actually in the program at the time of the survey.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

**Survey instrument.** The researcher designed a survey to collect data regarding first- and second-year principals' perceptions of their mentoring experiences and the effectiveness of the district's mentoring program in building their leadership capacity. The survey also included questions on the aspects of the program that respondents considered most beneficial and areas they would like to see addressed. The researcher developed the survey instrument after an extensive examination of similar relevant questionnaires.

Using a template tool from Qualtrics, the researcher created a 30-item instrument—the Principal Mentoring Program: Principal Survey. The first section of the

survey contained six questions requesting demographic information from the respondents, including gender, ethnicity, age, years of education, and years of experience, and three questions regarding how the principals had entered the mentoring program and obtained mentors. The second portion of the survey consisted of two parts. The first section had 17 Likert-scale questions (i.e., 5=*strongly agree*, 4=*Somewhat Beneficial*, 3=*Neutral*, 2=*Somewhat Unbeneficial*, and 1=*Not at All Beneficial/Did Not Occur*) that measured the respondents' perceptions of the overall mentoring program. The second section consisted of seven items that asked respondents to indicate that aspects of the program were 5=*Strongly Beneficial*; 4 = *Somewhat Beneficial*; 3= *Neutral*; 2=*Somewhat Unbeneficial*; 1=*Not at All Beneficial/Did Not Occur*.

The researcher field-tested a draft survey with four district principals who had been in the mentoring program. They provided feedback on content and provided face validity to make sure the questions were appropriate for the research. From their feedback, no revisions were needed. The final survey is available in Appendix A.

**Data collection procedures.** The investigator contacted the 43 potential respondents via email and asked them to participate in the study. The email outlined the purpose of the study, its intended outcomes, and the potential implications for the school district. The email also stated that individuals who completed the survey in less than two weeks would have their name placed in a drawing for one of the three \$100 Visa gift cards. A link to the survey was included in the email, along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and a consent form for the participants to sign (see Appendices B, D, E, and F for the cover letter, email, and consent form). The researcher sent the first

emails during the last week of October, and another email with the survey link to the survey went out one week later.

**Analysis of results.** Because of the descriptive nature of the study, the researcher analyzed the quantitative data gathered using the Qualtrics software package and EXCEL and included computing frequencies, percentages and relations. Section 3 presents the findings from this analysis.

## **Section 3: Results, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

This section presents the results of this study about the principal mentoring program in a large urban school district, as well as a discussion about the implications of the results for the large urban school districts. The primary purpose of this study was to understand how sitting first and second year principals perceived (a) their experiences with the principal mentoring program offered by the large urban school district, (b) the effectiveness of the program in building their leadership capacity, and (c) the most beneficial aspects of the initiative.

Three research questions served as a foundational guide for this study. The following questions explored the principals' overall mentoring experience, the thoughts about leadership capacity, and the areas the respondents wanted to see improved for the next cohort of principals in the program.

1. What are the perceptions of sitting school principals who participated in the district's principal mentoring program regarding the overall mentoring experience?
2. What are the perceptions of sitting school principals who participated in the district's principal mentoring program regarding the effectiveness of the program in building their leadership capacity?
3. Which areas of the mentoring program do sitting principals consider to be most beneficial; what areas would principals like to see improved?

The study employed a web-based questionnaire—the Principal Mentoring Program: Principal Survey—to obtain the data on participants’ perceptions (see Appendix A).

### **Respondents**

Of the 43 principals who received the email and the link to the survey, 31 opened the survey. However, a total of 22 surveys were completed and usable. This represents a 51 % response rate. One of the limitations of the project was the potential for problems with generalizability due to the small sample size. The basic problem with small samples is that the smaller the sample, the less likely they are to reflect the trait distributions that exist in the population as a whole. Charles and Mertler (2002) stated the following:

Even when small samples do represent populations accurately, their size reduces the likelihood that research results based on their data will be found statistically significant. A given correlation or difference between means, for example, is more likely to be found statistically significant if obtained from a large sample; significance becomes less likely as the sample becomes smaller. (p. 154)

Charles and Mertler indicated that a minimum sample size is dependent on the type of study being conducted. They suggested that samples used in a correlational study should be no smaller than 30 participants; and for descriptive research studies, the sample should include 10-20% of the population. This study did meet the criteria. If the total population is defined as all those principals who had participated in the district’s mentoring program during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, N=83, the sample of 22 represents 26% of that group. The responding sample represented 50% of the initial 43 first- and second- year principals.

## Results

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the 22 respondents. As noted in the table, respondents were evenly split between males and females, mostly African-American/Black, had master's degrees and had 6-9 years of experience in education.

Table 1

### Demographics of Respondents

Characteristics	N (%)
Gender (N=22)	
Male	11 (50%)
Female	11 (50%)
Race/Ethnicity (N=21)	
White	6 (29%)
AA/Black	14 (67%)
Hispanic	1 (5%)
Highest degree (N=22)	
Master's (MA/MEd)	21 (95%)
Doctorate	1 (5%)
Years of experience (N=22)	
6-8 years	2 (9%)
9-11 years	20 (91%)
Years of experience as a principal (N=22)	
One year	10 (45%)
Two years	9 (41%)
Three years	3 (14%)
Years as a principal in the district (N=22)	
One year	11 (50%)
Two years	11 (50%)

Survey Question 7 asked whether the individual's participation in the program was voluntary. Ten (48%) principals responded "no" and 11(52%) responded "yes."

Table 2 presents the results of Question 8, which asked how the district matched the mentor to the mentee. As noted in the table, the majority of respondents indicated that they were not sure how they were matched with their mentor.

Table 2

How Mentor was Determined (N=21)

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Mentor selected me	5 (24%)
I selected my mentor	0
Selected each other	0
Mentor randomly assigned	4 (19%)
Prescreen	0
Not sure	12 (5%)

---

**Findings related to the research questions.** The researcher used the responses to the 17 items that asked about individuals’ general perceptions of the mentoring program to address Research Questions 1 and 2:

***Research Question One:*** What are the perceptions of sitting elementary principals who participated in the district principal mentoring program regarding the overall mentoring experience?

***Research Question Two:*** What are the perceptions of sitting elementary principals who participated in the district principal mentoring program regarding the effectiveness of the program in building their leadership capacity?

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for each of the 17 items. The top three highest rated items were A, “My mentor is committed to developing effective and productive relationships,” C, “I understand the purpose of the mentoring program,” and D, “I understand my responsibilities as a mentee.” The lowest rated item was M., “The program increased my understanding of how to create school-community partnerships.”



Table 3

## Means and Standard Deviation by Response Items: Perceptions of Mentoring Program

Item	N	M	SD
A. My mentor is committed to developing an effective and productive relationship.	22	4.2	0.612
B. I often feel that my mentor did not have enough time to devote to our mentorship.	21	3.2	1.25
C. I understand the purpose of the program.	22	4.0	0.844
D. I understand my responsibilities as a mentee.	22	3.59	1.008
E. The program is very effective.	22	3.364	1.002
F. The program needs considerable improvement.	22	3.409	1.054
G. The program is well designed.	22	3.409	0.796
H. I am very satisfied with the program.	22	3.364	0.905
I. The program has helped me focus on ISLLC standards.	22	3.545	0.905
J. The program has increased my understanding of instructional leadership.	22	3.273	1.037
K. The program increased my ability to manage all aspects of my school.	22	3.409	1.054
L. The program increased my ability to develop my staff.	21	3.286	1.146
M. The program increased my understanding of how to create school–community partnerships.	22	3.045	1.174
N. The program increased my understanding of how to lead in an ethical manner.	21	3.429	1.165
O. The program increased my ability to develop my staff.	21	3.571	0.870
P. The program increased my understanding of key policies and laws pertaining to my school.	21	3.286	1.007
Q. The program has helped me understand how to navigate the system to meet needs of my school.	21	3.667	0.966

The 17 items were mapped to a specific research question. Items A-I responded to Research Question 1, and Items J-Q were mapped to Research Question 2. The researcher tested the means for the responses to each question to determine which were significantly larger than 3.0 (the hypothesized neutral). Table 4 shows the response items related to Research Question 1, regarding the respondents' overall experience with the program, that were statistically significantly larger than 3.0. The results are based on Z-

tests comparing the respondents' average Likert responses to a hypothesized value of 3.0. The overall sample variance of the nine questions related to Research Question 1, 0.972, was used to approximate the population variance for the purposes of the Z-tests. Four response items had average scores that were statistically significantly higher than the neutral value.

Table 4

Results of the Z-Test for Items Significantly Higher Than Neutral: Overall Experience

Item	n	M	p-value
A. My mentor is committed to developing an effective and productive relationship	22	4.227	.000
C. I understand the purpose of the program	22	3.955	.000
D. I understand my responsibilities as a mentee	22	3.591	.005
I. The program has helped me focus on ISLLC standards	22	3.545	.009

Table 5 shows the items related to Research Question 2, regarding the development of leadership capacity, that were statistically significantly larger than 3.0. The results are based on Z-tests comparing the respondents' average Likert responses to a hypothesized value of 3.0. The overall sample variance of the eight questions related to Research Question 1, 1.105, was used to approximate the population variance for the purposes of the Z-tests. Two response items had average scores that were statistically significantly higher than the neutral value.

Table 5

Results of the Z-Test for Items Significantly Higher Than Neutral: Building Leadership Capacity

Item	n	M	p-value
O. The program increased my ability to develop my staff	21	3.571	.013
Q. The program has helped me understand how to navigate the system to meet the needs of my school	21	3.667	.004

**Research Question 3.** Research Question 3 asked, “Which areas of the mentoring program do sitting elementary principals consider to be most beneficial; what areas would principals like to see improved?” The seven items that asked how beneficial some aspects of the mentor program were used to address Question 3. Table 6 presents the distribution of responses to the survey items that asked individuals to indicate the extent to which they agreed that a specific feature of the mentor program was: *Strongly Beneficial, Somewhat Beneficial, Neutral, Somewhat Unbeneficial, Not at All Beneficial/Did Not Occur.*

As the results indicate, respondents considered their mentor’s knowledge of the system to be most beneficial, followed by accessibility, trusting relationship, and personal relationship with the mentor. Responses to mentor selection and mentee orientation were somewhat mixed. While the majority of respondents were neutral or tended to view these features as beneficial, the two items also had more “not at all beneficial” ratings. Respondents also felt that the mentee orientation, accessibility of my mentor, and my mentor’s coaching style were somewhat unbeneficial.

Table 6

## Percentage Distribution of Perceived Benefits of the Mentoring Program

Item	n	Not at all beneficial	Somewhat unbeneficial	Neutral	Somewhat beneficial	Strongly beneficial
A. Mentor selection	21	14.3%	0%	33.3%	19.0%	33.3%
B. Mentee orientation	22	13.6%	9.1%	9.1%	31.8%	36.4%
C. Accessibility of my mentor	22	0%	4.5%	4.5%	40.9%	50.0%
D. My personal relationship with my mentor	22	4.5%	0%	13.6%	27.3%	54.5%
E. A trusting relationship with my mentor	22	0%	0%	13.6%	36.4%	50.0%
F. My mentor's knowledge of the system	22	0%	0%	0%	22.7%	77.3%
G. My mentor's coaching style	22	4.5%	4.5%	13.6	31.8%	45.5%

### Discussion and Implications

The primary purpose of this study was to obtain perceptions of sitting first- and second-year principals who participated in the large urban school district's principal mentoring program. The key findings from this survey indicated that the mentoring program tends to be viewed more positively by mentees in areas such as the relationships they have with their mentors and in learning about the processes of the district. As the researcher, I learned that in order for principal mentoring programs to be successful, district leaders must look closely at how their principal mentoring programs are designed to meet the needs of new principals. Programs should be designed with the focus of meeting the needs for principal success. The results from this survey tell me that most of

the respondents that did not respond to the survey may not feel comfortable participating in the survey because the survey may present them in a unfavorable manner, and most respondents did not know that the mentoring program was mandatory. Even though the program follows the leadership standards, there needs to be a benchmark in place that will allow mentee's to complete a mid-year survey to give feedback on the overall mentoring experience through out the program so that mentors can be assured that they are covering the NAESP Mentor Competencies as they are mentoring first and second year principal's throughout the school year.

The results also seem to be more positive in the area of the benefits of the mentoring program. Mentees feel that having a mentor who is knowledgeable of the district and available when needed is a positive characteristic of their mentor. The results also showed that some mentees felt neutral about how mentors were assigned to mentees, and the way that mentors supported their mentees was not significant to some.

These results link to the mentoring model used in the district through the Principal Mentoring 2 1/2-day training course offered through the National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP) and followed by a 9- month internship for mentors, which is aligned to the standards mentors follow during the mentor process and which focus on the school leadership mentor competencies: An effective mentor sets high expectations for self-development in high quality professional growth opportunities, an effective mentor has knowledge of and utilizes mentoring and coaching best practices, an effective mentor is active in instructional leadership, an effective mentor respects confidentiality and a code of ethics in the mentor protégé' relationship, an effective mentor contributes to the body of knowledge as it pertains to principal and administrative

mentoring, and an effective mentor fosters a culture that promotes formal and informal mentoring relationships. The research is also supported by the literature of (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007). They state that first- year principals who have ongoing, sustained contact with mentors who are willing and able to advise them on how to be successful enjoy greater confidence related to their ability to do their jobs. The Wallace foundation, 2007, stated that the benefits of mentoring are that the mentee gains guidance and support during initiation, increased self- confidence, encouragement to take risks to achieve goals, opportunities to discuss professional issues with a veteran, and promotes networking.

The literature review indicated that to combat the challenge of filling administrative vacancies, school district leaders are increasingly recognizing the need to prepare and develop their own effective school leaders (Fullan, 2009). To this end, school districts have established, and continue to develop a number of leadership development programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Although there has been debate about the ideal nature of leadership development programs (English, 2007; Murphy, 2003), it is clear that one of the most important components of these programs is the provision of support for new school leaders as they enter into the principalship (Gray, Fry, Bottom, and O'Neill (2007).

Research indicates that first- and second-year principals who have ongoing, sustained contact with mentors willing and able to advise them on how to be successful enjoy greater confidence related to their ability to do their jobs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Caring colleagues who are willing to share their expertise and experiences through an organized mentoring program help reduce the

fears of new principals, and they can respond to a myriad of “how to” questions that always seem to accompany a new placement. Ferrandino (2006) also recommended that districts capitalize on the use of their veteran principals to help bridge the learning gaps for beginning administrators. Providing support networks for beginning administrators can help prevent new principals from making costly mistakes that take years to repair (Ferrandino,2006). The results of the present study demonstrated that respondents’ perceptions of the overall mentoring program, how mentors are determined, mentors perceptions of mentoring programs, overall experience, building leadership capacity, and perceived benefits of the mentoring program of the large urban school district’s mentoring program relates to the literature that was reviewed and supports my findings in the research.

The current mentoring program is new and had been in place only 11 years, therefore some of the leadership areas, such as developing community relations, may not have been fully developed. Another reason could be principals’ reluctance to express strong negative opinions about a mandated district program. The process of mentor matching may need to be revisited so that mentors are not changed causing inconsistency for mentees. In order to improve the mentee’s overall experience of the mentoring program district leaders may want to implement an orientation portion to the program so that mentors and mentees can have a better understanding of the Principal Mentoring Program and it’s benefits.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. First, the application on the outcomes of this study is limited to the target school district. Second, the response rate of 51% is

limited and reflects the opinions of only 22 principals. There are also limitations to the use of surveys. Data errors due to question non- responses may exist. The number of respondents who choose to respond to a survey question may be different from those who chose not to respond, thus creating bias; respondents may not feel encouraged to provide accurate, honest answers; respondents may not feel comfortable providing answers that present themselves in a unfavorable manner; respondents may not be fully aware of their reasons for any given answer because of lack of memory on the subject, or even boredom; and surveys with closed- ended questions may have a lower validity rate than other question types.

Several limitations existed within the design of the inquiry, which may have influenced the validity and reliability of the findings. First, the survey instrument may have been interpreted differently from its intended purpose. Second, the survey may have resulted in inaccurate data, since the information was self- reported and could have easily been distorted because of individuals' perceptions or recollections. The researcher should have used both quantitative and qualitative research methods when conducting the study. Conducting a mixed methods inquiry would have resulted in more robust and comprehensive evidence to support the findings. Additionally, while the researcher operated from the assumption that the volunteers had a continued interest in the mentoring process and its effect on mentees, in reality, this may not have been the case. The researcher played an active role in devising, sending, and reporting the data. Even though the researcher made every effort to do so honestly, with a minimum of bias, researcher bias is still a possibility.



Future research should have used both quantitative and qualitative research methods when conducting the study. Conducting a mixed methods inquiry would have resulted in more robust and comprehensive evidence to support the findings. Additionally, while the researcher operated from the assumption that the volunteers had a continued interest in the mentoring process and its effect on mentees, in reality, this may not have been the case.

### **Recommendations**

The Principal Mentoring program is fairly new, and an additional study gathering more data at a later time with a larger sample is merited. As a principal, I can recall my experience as a first year principal and how the Principal Mentoring Program was not designed by having a framework or model in place focused to build the principals' leadership capacity. Over the years I have seen the program evolve into a more structured and beneficial program for its instructional leaders. In order to continue to build a strong principal pipeline I would recommend that the Principal Mentoring Survey (see Appendix A) developed for this research project be administered at the completion of each training to the mentees of the cohort. I would also like to recommend that since most mentees shared that they were unsure about the mentoring selection process that the district uses, the mentoring program should also begin its sessions by clearly stating the expectations of the program to ensure that mentees understand the importance and purpose of the initiative and their responsibilities throughout the process. It is also recommended that a mid- year checklist be followed to assure that mentors are following the six standards, School Leadership Mentor Competencies and have a face- to- face with their coaches to discuss the progress of the mentoring experience and best practices. It is

also, recommended that the program look at aligning the Administrator Evaluation eight Standards used for evaluating principals to the program. These standards play a key role in evaluating principals' mid- year and at the end of the year. By aligning them with the six standards, it will allow mentors to support mentee's in building their leadership capacity. Mentee's can keep a binder pertaining to the standards and place artifacts to support the impact on their instructional programs. Additionally, leaders of the mentoring program should take great thought in the pairing of assigning mentors to mentees.

The literature also indicates that the district should consider adding an orientation piece as a part of the program, which will allow mentees to be trained on areas of concern, such as budgeting, time management, human resources, building facilities, parental involvement, establishing business partnerships, and the district. In addition, the results of the study should be benchmarked to this study. An evaluation of the perceptions of future cohort participants will provide program developers with ongoing direction for improvement of the Principal Mentoring Program. Such action would also allow for the evaluation of changes that occur to the program as it evolves. Lastly, the district should revise and administer a survey tool to the program mentors. The added information gained from their responses would give another source of information that could be valuable in making program improvements.

**Appendices**  
**Appendix A - Survey Tool**  
**Mentoring Program: Principal Survey**

**Background Information**

1. Gender:  
  
Male \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Female \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Race/Ethnicity:
  - a. Caucasian/White
  - b. African American/Black
  - c. Hispanic
  - d. Asian
  - e. American Indian/Native American
  - f. Other
  
3. Highest Degree Earned:
  - a. BA/BEEd
  - b. MA/MEEd
  - c. Doctorate
  - d. Other:
  
4. Total years' experience in education in any role: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Total years' experience as a principal: \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Years' experience as a principal in PGCPD (please check one):
  - a. one: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. two: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. three: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Was your participation in the program voluntary? (1 = No and 2 = Yes)
  
8. Which of the following describes how your mentor match was determined:
  - 1 = My mentor selected me
  - 2 = I selected my mentor
  - 3 = My mentor and I selected each other
  - 4 = My mentor and I were randomly assigned
  - 5 = My mentor and I were assigned to each other through a prescreening process

6 = I am not sure.

**9. Please respond to the following questions using the 5-point scale (5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree)**

- A. My mentor is committed to developing an effective and productive mentoring relationship.
  - B. I often feel that my mentor did not have enough time to devote to our mentorship.
  - C. I understand the purpose of the mentoring program.
  - D. I understand my responsibilities as a mentee.
  - E. The Principal Mentoring Program is very effective.
  - F. The Principal Mentoring Program needs considerable improvement.
  - G. The Principal Mentoring Program is well designed.
  - H. I am very satisfied with the Principal Mentoring Program.
  - I. The Principal Mentoring Program has helped me focus on effective leadership practices as identified by the Interstate Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.
  - J. The Principal Mentoring Program has increased my understanding of instructional leadership.
  - K. The Principal Mentoring Program increased my ability to manage all aspects of my school.
  - L. The Principal Mentoring Program increased my ability to develop my staff.
  - M. The Principal Mentoring Program increased my understanding of how to create school-community partnerships.
  - N. The Principal Mentoring Program increased my understanding of how to lead my school in an ethical manner.
  - O. The Principal Mentoring Program increased my ability to develop my staff.
  - P. The Principal Mentoring Program increased my understanding of key policies and laws that pertain to my school.
  - Q. The Principal Mentoring Program has helped me understand how to navigate the system to meet needs in my building.
10. Please rate each of the following in terms of perceived benefit:  
(5 = Strongly Beneficial; 1 = Not at all beneficial; did not occur)
- A. Mentor selection
  - B. Mentee orientation
  - C. Accessibility of my mentor
  - D. My personal relationship with my mentor
  - E. A trusting relationship with my mentor
  - F. My mentor's knowledge of the system
  - G. My mentor's coaching style

## Appendix B – E-mail to Participants

Dear Principal Mentee:

Educational leadership is more crucial than ever as demands on public schools increase incrementally. Compared to a decade ago, there are fewer educators advancing to leadership roles, although an adequate number of educators have secured additional credentials. Noting the long hours, increased responsibilities, and demands from multiple constituents; teacher leaders do not typically seek administrative openings. Administrators who have worked with mentors credit their colleagues with providing high degrees of support and rapid growth.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a study exploring the effectiveness of mentoring programs for new principals in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). This study will be conducted through a brief 15-minute survey that will be sent to you electronically.

The study will explore the perceptions of mentees. The goal is to identify key ways in which our current mentoring program can be strengthened to build the leadership practice of principals and develop a stronger principal pipeline. This information could assist school leaders such as you in developing plans for implementing initiatives.

Thank you for considering taking part in this study. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Please note that your employment status in Prince George's County Public Schools will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study. This study is confidential, and the results will be used to complete my dissertation.

Sincerely,

Patricia J. Wells

PatriciaWells1@verizon.net

(301) 437-7361

Please click on the link below for the questionnaire.

[https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV\\_0xBlljyrEppjbd](https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV_0xBlljyrEppjbd)

### **Appendix C – Mentee Reminder E-mail: Week 1**

Dear Principal:

I recently contacted you about completing a 15-minute questionnaire for my doctoral research. The research could assist our district with the redesigning of our principal mentoring program.

Your perceptions of the mentoring program and principal preparation are a valuable part of the research. I am respectfully requesting that you take part in this study by completing the online questionnaire. The questionnaire is self-explanatory. You have one week left to complete the questionnaire if you would like for your name to be entered in a drawing for one of the three \$100.00 Visa gift cards. Information from your questionnaire will be kept confidential.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional clarification, 301-437-7361. Thank you in advance for your help and timely response to this questionnaire.

Please click on the link below for the questionnaire:  
[https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV\\_0xBlljyrEppjbd](https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV_0xBlljyrEppjbd)

## **Appendix D – Mentee Reminder E-mail: Week 2**

Dear Principal:

I recently contacted you about completing a 15-minute questionnaire for my doctoral research. The research could assist our district with the redesigning of our principal mentoring program.

Your perceptions of the mentoring program and principal preparation are a valuable part of the research. I am respectfully requesting that you take part in this study by completing the online questionnaire. The questionnaire is self-explanatory. You still have one week left to complete the questionnaire if you would like for your name to be entered in a drawing for one of the three \$100.00 Visa gift cards. Information from your questionnaire will be kept confidential.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional clarification, 301-437-7361. Thank you in advance for your help and timely response to this questionnaire.

Please click on the link below for the questionnaire:  
[https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV\\_0xBlljyrEppjbd](https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV_0xBlljyrEppjbd)

### **Appendix E – Mentee Final E-mail: Week 3**

Dear Principal:

I recently contacted you about completing a 15-minute questionnaire for my doctoral research. The research could assist our district with the redesigning of our principal mentoring program.

Your perceptions of the mentoring program and principal preparation are a valuable part of the research. I am respectfully requesting that you take part in this study by completing the online questionnaire. The questionnaire is self-explanatory. You still have one week left to complete the questionnaire if you would like for your name to be entered in a drawing for one of the three \$100.00 Visa gift cards. Information from your questionnaire will be kept confidential.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional clarification, 301-437-7361. Thank you in advance for your help and timely response to this questionnaire.

Please click on the link below for the questionnaire:  
[https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV\\_0xBlljyrEppjbd](https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/preview/SV_0xBlljyrEppjbd)



## **Appendix F – Implied Informed Consent**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to obtain from sitting elementary principals who participated in the PGCPs principal mentoring program their perceptions of the experience and the effectiveness of the program in building their leadership capacity. A second purpose is to obtain these sitting principals' perceptions regarding the most beneficial aspects of the mentoring program.

### **Procedures**

For this exploratory study, you will be asked to complete a survey. The survey includes questions pertaining to benefits from the program, mentor–mentee relationships, training, and demographic questions.

### **Risk/Discomforts**

The risks for involvement in this study are minimal. Nevertheless, you may feel emotionally uneasy when asked to identify the people to whom you most often go for information. You may also feel emotionally uneasy when asked to rate how often you go to those people for information or how valuable the information is that they provide.

### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits for individual participants. It is hoped, however, that through your participation, researchers will learn more about the perceptions of mentors and mentees regarding mentoring programs.

### **Confidentiality**

All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will be reported only in an aggregate format (by reporting only combined results and never reporting individual ones). All questionnaires will be concealed, and no one other than the primary investigator listed below will have access to them.

### **Participation**

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your employment status in Prince George's County Public Schools. If you desire to withdraw, please close your Internet browser and notify the principal investigator at this e-mail address: [PatriciaWells1@verizon.net](mailto:PatriciaWells1@verizon.net). Or, if you prefer, inform the principal investigator as you leave the meeting today.

### **Questions about the Research**

If you decide to stop taking part in the study; if you have questions, concerns, or complaints; or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:

Patricia Wells, at 301-437-7361 or [PatriciaWells1@verizon.net](mailto:PatriciaWells1@verizon.net)

## **Appendix F - Implied Informed Consent (continued)**

### **Questions About Your Rights as Research Participants**

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. John Norris (mentoring professor) at 301-405-2337, Benjamin Building, jnorris@umd.edu

I have read, understood, and printed a copy of the above consent form, and I desire, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

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