

ARE ASPIRING ADMINISTRATOR VALUES THE SAME AS THE PRINCIPALS
WHO HIRE THEM? A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ANALYZING THE VALUES AND
TRAINING EXPERIENCES OF SITTING PRINCIPALS AND ASPIRING
ADMINISTRATORS

by

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ABSTRACT

Each year, thousands of aspiring school administrators attempt to impress the sitting principal of a school in order to be rewarded with an opportunity to lead. When these future leaders interview, do they have the same priorities and values as the sitting principal who will hire them? This study investigated the possibility that there is a disconnect between how sitting principals and aspiring administrators view their leadership training experiences, as well as how they would prioritize a list of research-based best practices in school leadership. If aspiring administrators know what sitting principals value, then they can better prepare for interviews and search out leadership training opportunities to meet this demand.

Sitting principal and aspiring administrator participants in this non-experimental quantitative research study came from six school districts in Tennessee. The districts were of varying sizes, geographic location, socio-economic status of students, and deliberateness of aspiring administrator programs. A cross-sectional survey design was used for the study and was broken into two parts: first, participants were asked to answer 15 Likert-Scale questions reflecting on their experiences with leadership development and secondly, participants were asked to rank 21 research-based best practices in order from most important to least important.

After studying the descriptive data, the rankings, and hypothesis testing for each part of the survey, it was determined that there was very little evidence to support that there was a difference in the way aspiring administrators and sitting principals responded to the survey. In fact, in several cases, the two groups answered and ranked items in the

exact same way. Similarities in the responses provide insight into the specific values and priorities of the groups and gives aspiring administrators some valuable conversation points when interviewing for school leadership positions.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Epstein (2021) defines a “wicked environment” as a setting with an absence of set rules. If rules do exist, he continues, they change regularly and are difficult to predict. The schoolhouse setting meets the criteria Epstein (2021) describes in his definition. In addition to an ever-changing environment at the school level, the last three decades have seen policymakers attempt to increase achievement and raise the standard for all students by implementing a multitude of school reform projects (Day et. al, 2016). As the reform projects are navigated and supported, teachers and administrators must also balance the instructional and noninstructional requirements of their job. Principals must avoid the call to be firefighters, that is, avoid the need to put out the day-to-day fires and instead look for ways to improve instruction (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018). There are roughly 94,000 K-12 schools in the United States, with various demographics, challenges, and opportunities (Marzano et. al, 2005). Where should reform begin?

A better question might be “How can we guarantee effective education?”. Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) says great teaching must be guaranteed. John Hattie (2008) would agree that teacher efficacy is the most influential factor in a quality education for a student, but research is expanding in another crucial component: school leadership. Some have begun to argue that school leadership is the second most influential determinant of student outcomes (Leithwood et. al, 2008). It is the task of school

leadership to positively impact the millions of students that are entering the schools each day. Therefore, the importance of hiring the correct candidate cannot be overstated.

Andy Grove, former CEO and co-founder of the computer processing company Intel, was an expert at managing people and resources (Doerr, 2018). He tells the story of why he left his first company, Fairchild Semiconductor, and joined Intel by explaining Fairchild's obsession with hiring talented and credentialed personnel. He claims that his former company was brilliant with big ideas, but lacked the execution to get results. At Intel, it became less about a person's credentials and more about their behaviors/production. Jim Collins (2001) stresses the importance of getting the "who" right before the "what" right. He explains that you must get the right people into the right seats. How, then, does this connect to school leaders? This can be a complicated, but very crucial, undertaking. A candidate's credentials, unique skillsets, and experience all become factors to consider as principals select worthy candidates to join their team.

Context

Each year, thousands of aspiring school administrators attempt to impress the sitting principal of a school in order to be rewarded with an opportunity to lead. In 2021, an attempt was made to help a friend and colleague prepare for an interview to become an assistant principal. A thorough analysis of strengths and areas for improvement was conducted and sample interview questions were asked and answered. The reason for the preparation was partially due to the large applicant pool, but more importantly, it was a genuine attempt to give the school an authentic look at a great candidate. The difficulty in this scenario, however, was that both the prospective candidate and the willing mentor

had very little knowledge about the sitting principal's desires and values. Values, for this study, will be defined as "one's judgement of what is important".

Many may feel that talented school leaders have a certain "principal personality" where they are assertive, charismatic, and outgoing (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018). In his analysis of schools that are said to be effective, however, Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) found that leaders had a wide variety of personality types. Warren Bennis (2003) echoes the variation in personalities as he challenges administrators to avoid relying on their charisma or personal skills to produce meaningful change. He instead instructs leaders to engage others through a shared vision, to have a clear voice, to operate with strong morals, and to possess the ability to adapt. As an interested candidate dives deeper into school leadership research, it becomes clear that there are many levels and layers to this complicated and *wicked* profession. An organized structure to help with understanding is needed.

For starters, it is helpful to identify the modern history of leadership theory found in some of the most-cited research literature. Lee et. al (2020) conducted a study to determine the evolution of leadership theory and analyze newer research trends. In their work, they used social network analysis to determine six major clusters of leadership research that surfaced from 2008 to 2012: transformational leadership, LMX theory, implicit leadership theories, authentic leadership, charismatic leadership, and complexity leadership. From 2013 to 2017 another six clusters were identified: transformational leadership, LMX theory, implicit leadership theories, ethical leadership, multilevel theories/methods in organizations, and leadership affect/emotions. A thorough investigation of these leadership types can assist aspiring administrators in understanding

the ways leadership has evolved over the last 15 years. Once leadership types are organized and understood, an overlap of leadership types and school leadership can be studied.

There are numerous books and articles written about the impact of school leadership on student outcomes. Even deeper, there are books and articles explaining the skills, attributes, or behaviors that principals of effective schools possess. For this study, it is important to pause and define an “effective school”. Day et. al (2016) contest that there is more to an effective school than simply academic outcomes and achievement. They use the term “successful school” instead and add the need for schools to provide students with social outcomes as well (empathy, character, citizenship, love of learning, etc.). School leadership research will provide aspiring administrators with a more focused approach to preparation for the job.

With a firm grasp of leadership theory and school leadership research, the aspiring administrator would then need to study the behaviors and attributes of successful school leaders. A factor analysis found that administrators must sometimes attend to up to 21 different responsibilities that are weaved together to form the day-to-day management of a school building (Marzano et. al, 2005). Organizing a general knowledge of the tasks and responsibilities to be expected in a new position is valuable information for an aspiring administrator to use during an interview.

Unfortunately, there is an unpopular question that must be asked. Does any of this preparation matter? Ultimately, a sitting principal makes the final decision on giving an aspiring administrator an opportunity to help lead a school (Matte, J. V., 2013). The important consideration is the need to determine if the values of those who make the

decisions on a new hire align with the potential candidate. Also, do the aspiring administrators who may not have access to or knowledge of the research really know what sitting principals value in their training and leadership preparation?

The Tennessee Six, a pseudonym for a cluster of six public school districts in Tennessee, has a large and competitive surplus of aspiring administrators. All six districts utilize a formal or informal aspiring administrators/future leaders mentor program, where they attempt to cultivate “future leader efficacy”. All districts value the process of developing teacher capacity and identifying leadership qualities in their employees, and all districts have experienced some success with the hiring process of new Assistant Principals. Figure 1.1 gives basic demographic information for each participating school district and briefly describes each district’s aspiring administrator program.

District Description	Number of Schools	% Economically Disadvantaged	Description of Aspiring Administrator Program
Large, Suburban	49	3.4%	This district has a formal aspiring administrator program where job shadowing, book studies, monthly meetings with district leadership, and professional developments are available.
Medium, Rural	24	33.2%	This district has a formal aspiring administrator program where job shadowing, book studies, monthly meetings with district leadership, and professional developments are available.
Large, Suburban	50	19.8%	This district has a formal aspiring administrator program where job shadowing, book studies, monthly meetings with district leadership, and professional developments are available.

Small, Urban	13	32.4%	This district has a formal aspiring administrator program where job shadowing, book studies, monthly meetings with district leadership, and professional developments are available.
Small, Rural	8	39.7%	This district has a formal aspiring administrator program where interested teacher leaders can participate in monthly meetings with district leadership and presenters.
Small, Rural	10	25.7%	This district has an informal aspiring administrator program where interested teacher leaders can participate in leadership opportunities and job shadowing experiences.

Figure 1.1 Descriptive Information of Participating Districts

Statement of the Problem

Although the research on leadership theory, school leadership theory, and effective practices of school leaders is robust (Lee et al. 2020; Day et al., 2016; Marzano et al., 2005) there could be a disconnect and missing connection between candidates and employers. What does a sitting principal truly value when it comes to an interested applicant and does this align with the research? For any business to make successful hires, it must have a clear set of expectations for the potential candidates, and the candidates must have an unwavering understanding of the skills needed to fulfil these expectations. The same holds true for schools. If a school district wants to provide the best possible outcomes for students, sitting principals should be able to rank behaviors of successful school leaders and reflect on their own values and practice. When aspiring

administrators rank the same list of effective leadership behaviors, it would be advantageous to view some similarities in these rankings.

The chance to become an assistant principal in a crowded marketplace is a challenge for many teacher leaders. There are varying levels of content knowledge, as well as a tremendous variance in meaningful administrative experiences. For example, some schools allow teacher leaders with administrative licensure to supervise school activities, participate in Individualized Education Plan meetings, and act as principal designee when a building level administrator is out of the office. Other candidates may not have these same opportunities. There can also be a difference in the amount of education and learning that has taken place. Most states simply require a Masters' Degree in administration to hold a position in school leadership. Many candidates may have continued their education and secured an Educational Specialist Degree or a Doctoral Degree. Observing the training and leadership development of both the sitting principal, as well as the aspiring administrator, can assist in connecting the various candidates to trainings/opportunities that will assist their readiness for an open administrative position.

To overcome the missing connections, as described above, one must acknowledge and account for the following four statements. First, some school districts, as they hire first-time administrators, may not have a full knowledge or understanding of the leadership research and the research of leaders in "successful schools". Secondly, even if the research has been studied, there is no guarantee that sitting principals have values and desires that are aligned to the research. Third, there is limited verification that aspiring administrators know what the sitting principals truly value. In other words, are they

prepared to deliver what the school or sitting principal is needing? Finally, teacher leaders need a set of standards that clearly state how sitting principals rank and value the behaviors of effective school leaders and overlap with the robust research of school leadership.

Purpose of the Study

School leadership impacts every student, teacher, school, and community. Hallinger (2010) reviewed 30 years of empirical research and determined that through fostering collaboration, developing school structures, and creating positive cultures, school leaders can promote student engagement, motivation, and achievement. There is a myth in education that developing great instruction and changing student outcomes is a slow process (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018). With a focused and calculated approach, this myth can be debunked. It takes school leaders with not only the intangible character traits of strong leadership, but also the behaviors that push change forward. Because of the high stakes, it is crucial that schools make the proper selection for every leadership position. A difficulty with completing this task is the fact that the marketplace of candidates is vast, and there is a tremendous variance in quality of aspiring administrators. Many of these aspiring administrators simply “don’t know what they don’t know”. There needs to be a roadmap to help future school leaders become the candidates that our students deserve.

The purpose of this study is to help aspiring administrators, within the Tennessee Six, with a strategy to become the next success story. A thorough analysis of leadership theory research and school leadership research will support the use of a survey to administer to sitting principals. First, the survey will ask sitting principals to reflect on

the training or leadership development that most prepared them for their current position. Aspiring administrators will be asked to answer the same survey questions about their own current trainings and opportunities. A comparison of these responses from sitting principals and aspiring administrators will be helpful in looking at current leadership preparation programs for aspiring leaders. Next, sitting principals will be asked to rank a list of research-based effective practices of school leaders. Aspiring administrators will complete the same task to determine if their rankings and values align with that of sitting principals. Do their responses match what principals truly value? The following research questions will be used to guide the study.

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference between the way sitting principals and aspiring administrators value items from a list of research-based behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders?
2. Are aspiring administrators focusing on and valuing the same trainings and opportunities that sitting principals found to be most helpful in their current positions?

Hypothesis Statements

Research Q1:

H1: There will be a difference between the way sitting principals and aspiring administrators value items from a list of research-based behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders.

H0: There will be no difference between the way sitting principals and aspiring administrators value items from a list of research-based behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders.

Research Q2:

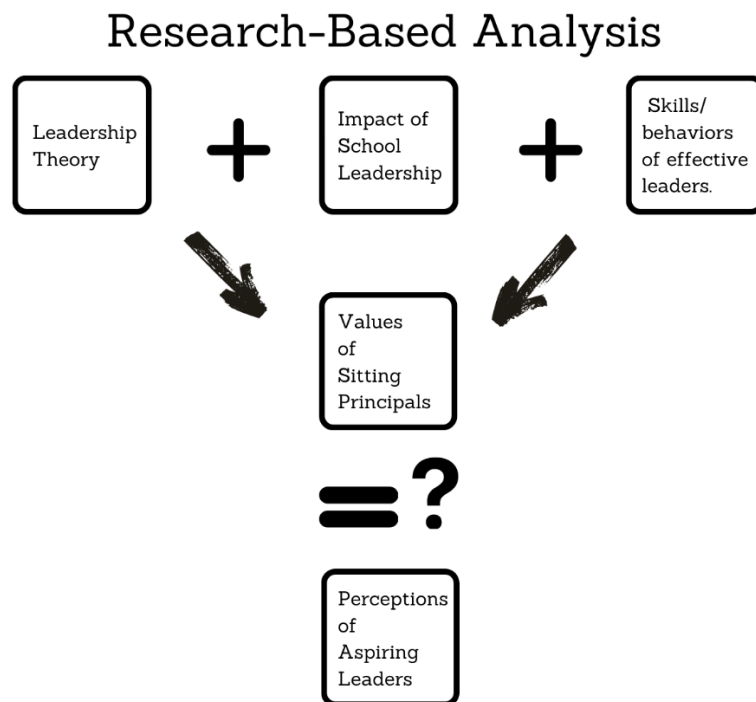
H1: There will be a difference in the trainings and opportunities sitting principals value and those on which the aspiring administrators are focused.

H0: There will be no difference in the trainings and opportunities sitting principals value and those on which the aspiring administrators are focused.

Research Approach

Marzano et. al (2005) conducted a meta-analysis, looking at 69 studies, with over 2500 schools, over 1.3 million students, and over 13,000 teachers. It was determined that there was a 0.25 correlation between leadership behavior of the principal of the school and the average academic achievement of the students in their school. These researchers give examples to help their readers understand. If a school is in the 50th Percentile in academic performance of all schools and they have a sitting principal in the 50th Percentile of leadership ability, it would be feasible that the school would remain in the 50th percentile for the tenure of this principal. But if, for instance, this school was able to hire a principal that was in the 99th percentile of leadership ability, then, based on the 0.25 correlation, this school would be expected to jump to the 72nd Percentile of academic performance. The hiring of the correct leadership for a school can change the trajectory of the students in the building. It is critical to attempt to capitalize on this correlation and assist building principals in hiring aspiring administrators who fall in the highest percentiles possible of leadership ability.

Figure 1.2 is a visual flowchart of the organization of the research. An analysis of leadership theory + impact of school leadership + behaviors/skills of effective school leaders will be used to create a survey that determines what effective school leadership behaviors that sitting school principals value in their current position. Next it will be determined if aspiring leaders' perceptions are the same as the values of the sitting principals. Finally, a list of trainings and leadership opportunities, which sitting principals found to be most effective in their development, will be analyzed and will be compared to what aspiring administrators value in their leadership development. Completing these two tasks should provide aspiring administrators with a list of behaviors that sitting principals value, as well as a list of training or leadership opportunities to help focus their leadership development.



***Use the results of the values of sitting principals that overlap with the initial research to create power/essential standards for Aspiring Administrators.

TO PRODUCE HIRES THAT TRANSFORM....



Figure 1.2 Flowchart of Research Purpose and Organization

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study there are several key terms that will be operationally defined here.

Sitting Principal: For the purposes of this study, sitting principals are defined as the lead/head administrator in a school building who plays a crucial role in hiring assistant principals.

Aspiring administrator: For the purposes of this study, aspiring administrators are defined as educators who are not currently in an administrative position and meet the following two criteria: 1) they have completed at least a masters' program and hold a valid administrator license and 2) they have the desire to interview for an administrator position.

Future Leader Efficacy: Bandura and Locke (2003, p. 87) capture the efficacy needed to become a quality leader by stating that the efficacy beliefs "affect whether individuals think in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways, how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulties, the quality of their well-being and their vulnerability to stress and depression, and the choices they make at important decision points".

Successful School: A "successful school" is a school that helps students reach both academic and social success. These schools pair high academic achievement and growth with positive social values such as citizenship, fairness, empathy, and good character (Day et. al, 2016).

School Leader efficacy: "Self-efficacy refers to perceived capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels" (Schunk, 2016, p. 58). School leader efficacy would be

the perceived capabilities to learn or perform the behaviors needed to lead successful schools.

Teacher Capacity: The belief, confidence, and skills needed to effectively instruct students (Lynch et al., 2016).

Value (verb): To consider or rate highly.

Values (noun): One's judgement of what is important.

Wicked Environment: As defined by Epstein (2021), a wicked environment is a setting with an absence of set rules. If rules do exist, they change frequently and are difficult to predict.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study can provide aspiring administrators in “The Tennessee Six” a verification that the values and rankings they have of research-based behaviors of effective school leaders align with the values and rankings of sitting principals. This should assist the aspiring administrators in having successful interviews with sitting principals and allow them to secure opportunities to join administrative teams in schools. Additionally, the study can assist aspiring administrators in focusing their leadership development on the trainings and opportunities that sitting principals found to be most helpful in their own leadership development. From these two steps, aspiring administrators in “The Tennessee Six” will be able to bridge any gaps they may have leading to the initial interview. The model and process of the collection of data in this study could become a strategy that other school districts (outside of the Tennessee Six) implement to cultivate the growth and preparation of their own aspiring administrators. Additionally, universities who prepare aspiring administrators for their first positions,

could observe data of the most effective trainings/leadership development strategies according to sitting principals. This could influence their school administration programs.

Summary

To summarize the overview of the study, it is valuable to return to the discussion of "kind" and "wicked" environments. Soyer and Hogarth (2020) give an example of playing Tennis. In tennis, although the game is complex and difficult to master, the learning of this game is "kind". One can learn the right lessons from experiences on the court and from the directions of a coach, so that the next time (in a similar situation, which happens often) they can make a better play/decision. The authors continue to explain that, unfortunately, in business and life there are rarely "kind" environments. Instead, there are multitudes of variables and changing conditions that make decision making much more difficult. You can learn a lesson from one situation, but the next situation might be so different that you cannot use what you have learned.

This connection is important because the field of education can be a "wicked environment". Each district has a different group of sitting principals and aspiring administrators, with a different set of background experiences, and a different set of abilities. The teacher leaders have different supports in their school buildings and different resources available to them. Therefore, the goal of this dissertation is not to look for the "magic formula" that will assist every school in making the perfect hires in their administrative positions. Instead, the goal will be to collect evidence and look for patterns within our limited sample. This research strives to be a possible model that districts could use to evaluate and improve their administrative hiring practices and

aspiring administrator preparation. It is a mere building block of continuous improvement. Johnson and Christenson (2020) ask researchers to treat their work as if someone will come behind it to add to it, or disagree with it, or agree with it. This research should be a valuable part of the marketplace of ideas.

As mentioned previously, this study will be a sampling from a limited number of aspiring administrators and current principals. The hope is to identify a snapshot of what sitting principals value in effective school leadership behaviors and leadership development strategies, and to create a reference for aspiring administrators. As Tim Grahl (2020) would say, you can achieve the most in your own career if you pursue an attitude of being "relentlessly helpful". The evidence and conclusions of this study will undoubtedly fail in certain situations. The goal, however, is that it could be "relentlessly helpful" to some aspiring administrators. It will be a building block for future research, where an interested candidate for an administrative job might be more comfortable during the interview process.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter consists of a review of the literature to provide an empirical foundation and context for the research topic of interest. First, the chapter reviews the literature on the most cited and trendy leadership theories in the last 20 years. Next, the chapter introduces school leadership and discusses the differences between Transformational and Instructional School Leadership. As we study further, this chapter explores what skills or attributes the research suggests for an effective school leader. Finally, the chapter will review the literature as it pertains to sitting principal and aspiring administrator training and leadership development.

The Brief Exploration of Modern Leadership Theory

Research-Based Leadership Theory

To better understand contemporary leadership theory, Lee et al. (2020) conducted a study that analyzed empirical research articles from 2008 to 2017. Citation and Co-Citation analysis was the primary method used in this study, but it also included a social network analysis and a factor analysis with multidimensional scaling. Figure 2.1 shows the organization of the study.

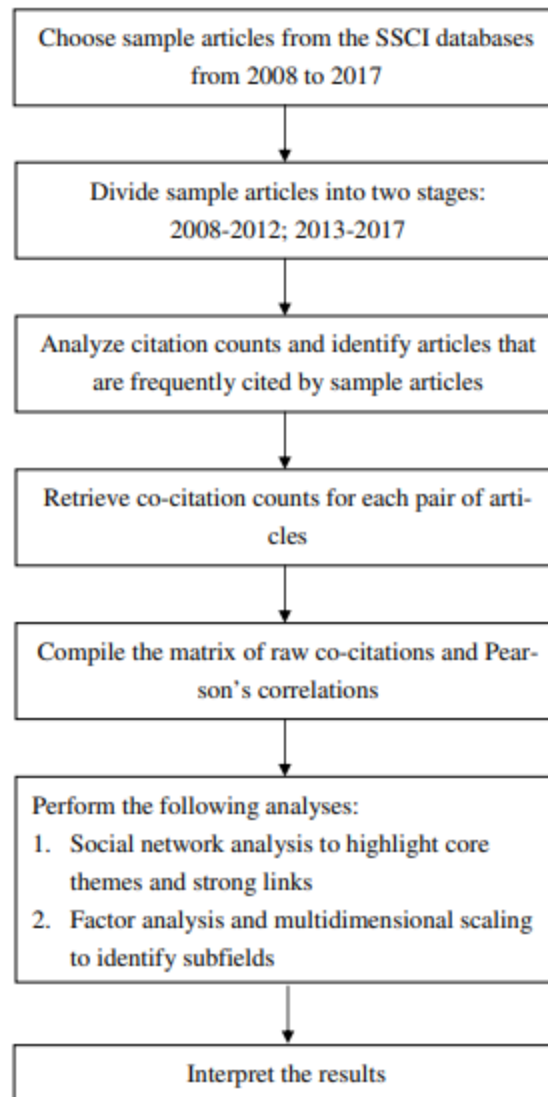


Figure 2.1 – Organization of Lee et. al (2020) study.

Through this analysis, it was determined that during the years 2008 to 2017, there were nine major clusters of leadership theory. These will be explored in detail in the sections that follow.

Transformational Leadership

George MacGregor Burns (1978) was the first to describe leadership as transactional or transformational. His insight provided a clear distinction between the two, where transactional leadership was described as exchanging one thing for another. For example, a teacher might provide candy to “lead” her students to give more correct answers, or a business owner might offer a financial bonus for great production. On the opposite end, transformational leaders often avoid the extrinsic motivation factors. Transformational leaders attempt to develop intrinsic motivation by aligning organizational goals to the goals of the individual, and by empowering their followers by sharing leadership opportunities and promoting creativity. Transformational leaders often lead in a positive and inspirational manner, where they provide engaging challenges for their followers, to empower and motivate them (Bass & Riggo, 2006).

The first studies which best highlighted the power of transformational leadership were organized to study leadership and results in the military (Bass, 1985; Boyd, 1988). As with many leadership styles that translate into other sectors, additional research showed that transformational leadership was valid in many disciplines (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002). Along with the impact on individual production across sectors, it has also been determined that transformational leadership can have a strong effect on the production of teams (Dionne et al, 2004). DeGroot et. al (2000) conducted a meta-analysis where leadership and performance were analyzed. It was concluded that the effect size on a team is roughly double the effect size on the individual alone. As schools become more and more collaborative, this transformational leadership model is valuable

research to explore, and will be a foundational topic in the following section of this chapter.

LMX Theory

LMX Theory, better known as Leader-Member Exchange Theory, occurs when leaders and followers can build direct, professional relationships, where they partner together to attack organizational goals (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Dansereau et. al (1975) first introduced LMX Theory in an attempt to describe the dyad linkage between superior and subordinate, but the way the theory is studied has changed over time. Part of the inconsistency in research is due, in large part, to the aim of each study (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Most of the early research focused on how the leader was affected by the relationships, but as time passed, more research was conducted on impact to the follower or even groups/teams (Derindag et. al, 2021). As the LMX approach evolved, researchers began to discover the way leaders can develop appropriate partnerships with their subordinates to ensure high-level employee and group performance (Northouse, 2016).

What are some of these benefits? Derindag et. al (2021) surveyed over 900 workers in Turkey's manufacturing region. It was determined through this survey that direct relationships with management limited worker burnout and intent to leave, while providing a boost to organizational citizenship behavior. This was found to be especially true in times when the company/organization was going through difficulties. Gerstner and Day (1997) conducted a meta-analysis and determined a significant positive correlation between LMX and employee satisfaction, engagement, work performance, and turnover intention. Kim et. al (2010) concluded that high quality LMX practice within an

organization could reduce the amount of envy that employees have toward one another. “Generally, a good relationship between leaders and followers benefits from having a leader who can make great working connections. Whenever leaders and subordinates have superior interaction, they feel better, achieve more, and scale up the organization” (Derindag et. al, 2021, p.34).

Implicit Leadership Theories

Schyns and Meindl (2005, p. 21) define implicit leadership theories as “the image that a person has of a leader in general, or of an effective leader.” Implicit leadership theory is a strong move away from traditional leadership research which focuses on the leader, and instead shifts the attention to the perceptions of the followers (Alabdulhadi et. al, 2017). Lord and Maher (1990) provided some clarity on this theory as they explained that leadership can only be classified as effective if the followers’ interpretations of the possible leader’s behaviors are deemed to be “leader-like”. In other words, if a group of followers do not perceive their manager’s actions to be “leader-like”, then this manager will not have the influence needed to push followers toward meeting organizational goals. Offerman et. al (1994) added to the research by determining eight probable factors for positive perception of followers: Sensitivity, Dedication, Tyranny, Charisma, Attractiveness, Masculinity, Intelligence, and Strength.

Implicit leadership theories have a substantial influence on organizations. The perceptions and relationships built through interactions between leaders and followers, solidify the idea that followers are just as important to effective leadership as the leaders themselves (Alabdulhadi et. al, 2017). Additionally, when organizations are performing extremely well or extremely poorly, implicit leadership theories tend to push followers

into giving leaders the positive or negative credit, rather than identifying additional variables or self-reflection (Meindl et. al, 1985). If followers feel that they can trust and rely on leaders within an organization, they can be influenced to meet company goals (Lord & Maher, 1990). A connection to LMX theory is clearly made here, as positive, direct relationships between leader and follower, can improve the perceptions of the followers. This, in turn, should add to increased organizational production (Alabdulhadi et. al, 2017).

Authentic Leadership Theory

A TIME/CNN poll that was distributed in 2002 revealed that 71% of those asked believed that a typical CEO of a corporation was less honest/ethical than the average person (George, 2003). In leadership positions, where trust is a vital part of success, this was a troubling statistic. Authentic leadership is the study of leaders who support and collaborate with their followers using a set of ethical values and a shared purpose of the organization (Walumbwa et al., 2008). It is important to understand that authentic leaders can have various leadership styles, but they always lead with values, purpose, and integrity, in an attempt to make the world a better place (George, 2003). Additionally, authentic leadership and its layers have been shown to help successful leaders find the missing fulfilment in their job (Blekkingh, 2015).

The benefits to followers of the authentic leader have been documented (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leaders are trusted by their followers, are transparent in their leadership practices, are self-reflective of their behaviors, and are purposeful with the environment of the workplace (Hassan & Forbis, 2011). Sagbas et al. (2021) hoped to determine the effect of authentic leadership on the job stress level of workers in the

tourism field during the COVID19 pandemic. They surveyed over 300 employees from a large hotel and determined that the dimensions of authentic leadership (self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective) did, in fact, reduce the job stress of the employees. Yousaf and Hadi (2020) surveyed 150 employees of the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited, and concluded that authentic leadership made the employees psychologically empowered, which increases their level of affective commitment. These examples were taken from the business sector, but similar results could translate into the education field (George, 2003).

Charismatic Leadership

From political leadership like John F. Kennedy to business leadership like Lee Iacocca, the American public has always been enamored with charismatic leaders (Rubin & Ullmann, 1991). Bass (1985) first defined charisma as idealized influence, and described charismatic leaders as those who could motivate their followers by using the power of their emotions. There are consistent characteristics of charismatic leaders which include high self-confidence, strong convictions, and a strong need for power (Vries et al., 1999). Along with these characteristics, many charismatic leaders seem to follow a similar pattern of leadership: they develop a strong vision, they articulate that vision to inspire followers, they build trust and the sense of expertise, and they create a perception of their uniqueness (Rubin & Ullmann, 1991). In a study of personality adjectives conducted by Atwater et al. (1991), it was chronicled that charismatic leaders were described much differently than their non-charismatic peers. They were described as dynamic, adventuresome, inspiring, enthusiastic, outgoing, zestful, sociable, insightful, imaginative, enterprising, secure, confident, wise, and competent.

The true impact of charismatic leadership on performance of the followers has seen inconsistent results in research due to the inability to clearly define the leadership style (Meslic et al., 2020). Nevertheless, research continues to view charismatic leadership from various perspectives, and there is empirical evidence to suggest that charisma can be cultivated and that charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge in leadership promotion situations (Antonakis et al., 2011). Moreover, an experimental study, conducted with sales teams who were given either A) a charismatic speech with fixed rewards described B) a standard speech with fixed rewards described or C) a standard speech with performance-based rewards described, found that those sales teams who were given a charismatic speech (group A) or performance-based rewards (group C) increased their overall performance at a rate higher than group B (Antonakis et al. 2014). This would support the notion that motivational/charismatic speeches, as well as performance-based financial incentive helps to improve production. Charismatic leaders must be careful not to become consumed with personal gain or being unwilling to adapt if their strongly convicted vision is not working, but instead use their strong personalities to motivate, inspire, and support (Rubin & Ullmann, 1991).

Complexity Leadership Theory

In most organizations there are two structures that are constantly in conflict: the operational system and the entrepreneurial system (Arena & Uhl-Bien, 2016). Under the operational system, leaders are concerned with budget, personnel, schedules, and efficiency. Within the entrepreneurial system, leaders promote innovation, creativity, and product development. From this context comes Complexity Leadership Theory, which asks leaders to have adaptability to bridge the different structures within an organization

((Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). A study looking at 30 complex organizations from the years 2007 to 2015 suggests “that what is needed in complex organizations is an adaptive response—one that involves engaging, rather than suppressing, the tension generated in the conflicting perspectives of the operational and entrepreneurial systems” (Arena & Uhl-Bien, 2016, p.25). These adaptive actions provide links between departments in an organization and powerful innovative trends occur (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009).

Organizations benefit greatly from leaders who can navigate a complex system. Morrison (2002) describes the mind shift needed to move from conventional thinking to complexity theory. In his work he explains that leaders must understand that organizational systems are changing, emerging, and infinite, as well as small changes can produce large effects. When challenges or difficulties occur, many leaders and followers do not know what to do, as their development has not trained them for leading in complexity (Uhl-Bien, 2021). Adaptive practices, however, encourage adaptive responses to the conflict and promote the collaboration of multiple groups (Arena & Uhl-Bien, 2016). Marzano et al. (2018) explain what it takes to work in a “high reliability school” where schools can overcome any challenge to provide high quality instruction. There is a noticeable connection to complexity leadership theory where school leaders are expected to promote collaboration in the complex system of a school.

Ethical Leadership Theory

Ethical leadership can be defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Researchers have long believed that

personal traits, such as integrity and character, are important to the perceptions of effective leadership among followers (Brown & Trevino, 2006). The positive aspects of ethical leadership originate from leaders who communicate high ethical standards and expectations, model ethical behavior, and explicitly use rewards and punishments to hold followers accountable (Nassif et al., 2021). Subordinates gain the ability to regulate and manage their own behaviors, as they are able to witness the rewards and punishments resulting from the behaviors of others (Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Research supports some clear benefits for ethical leadership. For example, employee perceptions of ethical leadership predict 1) perceived leader effectiveness, 2) willingness to exert extra effort on the job, 3) willingness to report problems to management, and 4) overall satisfaction with the leader (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Additionally, subordinates feel ethical leader behaviors are rooted in fairness, openness, honesty, integrity, and consideration, thus leading to increased compliance, trust, and support (Brown et al. 2005). Similar to transformational leadership, ethical leadership attempts to intrinsically motivate employees by treating them fairly and inspiring them to excel (Nassif et al., 2021). Strong ethical leadership can lead to a strong ethical culture, which has been connected to employee commitment to an organization (Trevino et al., 1998).

Multilevel Leadership Theory

As research on leadership continued to develop, an obvious gap was noticed. Within the last 10 years, there has been a noticeable increase in interest with how outcomes interconnect across the levels of an organization, and how leadership affects performance across these various levels (Kinicki et al., 2011). This research has come to

be known as multilevel leadership theory. There is a definite connection with multilevel leadership and complexity leadership, as both require systems thinking in complex and adaptive organizations (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). Multilevel leadership simply takes a more focused look at how the management levels in an organization can influence overall performance. Yammarino et al. (2005) propose some suggestions for leaders in these complex systems. They call for management to make sure goals are aligned across the multiple levels, to cascade goals from the top to the levels below, and to promote transparency and communication between levels.

What benefits would be seen with the followers/employees of a multilevel leader? First, leaders using the multilevel leadership mindset can make sure that employees are sharing philosophy, data analytics practices, and information across all of the organizational levels (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2008). Secondly, employees can easily understand and work on goals that fit within four major levels in almost every organization: individual goals, team goals, department goals, and whole organization goals (Kinicki et al., 2011). Having leaders at the organizational level interacting and making connections with each group below, becomes a powerful tool for motivation and cohesion (Yammarino et al., 2005).

Leadership Affect/Emotions

It can sometimes be difficult for leaders to manage their own emotions and the emotions of their subordinates in the face of a stressful workplace, increased goals, and tight deadlines (Humphrey, 2008). Hochschild (1979) first described emotional labor in the workplace by explaining two specific types of emotion shown by employees: the kind they outwardly show to customers and the kind they truly feel inside. Additional

research has studied the effects of emotional leaders on the workplace, with the findings suggesting that the more authentic a leader's emotions are, the more favorable their leadership is with followers (Dashborough & Ashkanasy, 2002). Moreover, spontaneous and authentic emotional displays by leaders are consistently viewed as more sincere, and have a meaningful impact on motivation and compliance (Humphrey, 2008).

Researchers have taken a deep look at this topic by studying the frequency, intensity, and variety of the emotions shown by leaders (Morris & Feldman, 1996). The leadership role, in turn, demands a skill of choosing the correct level and type of emotion for the given situation (Humphrey, 2008).

Emotional leadership has a strong connection to previous theories in this literature review. Leaders who display high levels of empathy are more authentic and ethical leaders, leading to a transformational model overall (Humphrey, 2002). Another major connection comes from studying emotional leadership using a multi-level focus.

Ashkanasy (2003) invites a look at emotions in five distinct levels: within person, between persons, interpersonal interactions, within groups, and entire organization.

Using emotional leadership across levels of an organization is ultimately used to influence the emotions of subordinates, which should hopefully improve production and performance (Humphrey, 2008).

The Leadership of Schools

Overview

As we just examined the modern history of leadership theory, Bass (1981) reminds us that the discussion of leadership is an ancient one. There are descriptions in

the works of Plato, Plutarch, and Caesar. Additionally, there is a long history of great teachers, mentors, and apprentices, who worked together in attempts to solve the problems of their times. When it comes to the leadership of schools, Whitaker (2013) asserts that both good and bad school administrators can ace their graduate school classes. He says that it is less about what school leaders know, but more about what they do. What are the behaviors and leadership styles of the best school leaders, when they are asked to lead the complex organizations of schools?

Bolman and Deal (2008) identify several key truths of organizations and there is a clear connection to schools. First, organizations are complex, where the environment and structures are constantly changing. Second, organizations are surprising, where solving one problem could actually lead to future and more difficult problems. Third, organizations are deceptive, where stakeholders or the system can act in a way to camouflage shortcomings. Finally, organizations are ambiguous, where just figuring out what the problem really is can sometimes be the biggest challenge. If you begin to examine schools as complex organizations, you can observe the challenges that principals have in leadership. This section will connect school leadership to the leadership theories we have already discussed, examine the two main leadership types in schools today, and then determine if there is research to support a merging of the two main leadership types.

Leadership Theories and Schools

Who are the variables in schools? Todd Whitaker (2013) asks this question and answers that the best principals know that their greatest assets are the quality teachers they have in their building. As mentioned previously, classroom teaching has a noticeably larger effect on student learning than any other studied factor (Leithwood et

al., 2006. Hattie, 2008). Therefore, it seems appropriate to determine which leadership theories cultivate positive interactions between teacher and administrator. In LMX theory, for example, there are three levels that researchers are interested to study: the leader, the follower, and the relationship between the leader and the follower (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). School administrators should be cognizant of their own behaviors and contributions, but should also be concerned with the relationships they are forming with their faculty and staff (Marzano et al., 2005). In a busy school day, where it is easy to fall victim to day-to-day routines, principals should lean on face-to-face interactions, as these relationships have shown to carry more weight than reward and consequence systems (Elmore, 2000). Additionally, when difficulties arise in a school and focus becomes a concern, strong relationships and emotional bonds between the faculty can help to overcome the uncertainty (Fullan, 2001).

Expanding on the relationships between teachers and administrators, it is also important to account for the trust that a faculty has in their leadership. Implicit Leadership Theory declares that leadership can only be classified as effective, if the perception of the followers deems their leader worthy of acclaim (Lord and Maher, 1990). Using LMX Theory as a support, it is true that direct and purposeful relationships between faculty and principal can improve employee perceptions (Alabdulhadi et. al, 2017). Moreover, two other leadership theories, Authentic and Ethical Leadership, can also elicit a positive emotion from employees. Brown and Trevino (2006) provided research to support that Ethical Leadership had a direct impact on 1) follower perception of the leader and 2) the employee's willingness to exert extra effort on the job. Likewise, Authentic Leaders are trusted by their employees and spend extra time focusing on the

culture of an organization (Hassan & Forbis, 2011). “Fostering a school culture that indirectly affects student achievement is a strong theme within the literature on principal leadership” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 47). Marzano et al. (2005) continue to share their meta-analysis data about the behaviors of school leaders that focus on culture: they promote cohesion among staff, they promote a sense of well-being among staff, and they develop a shared understanding of the purpose and vision of the school with staff.

In addition to the various aspects noted, the discussion of leadership theories also has specific emphasis on the passions of administrators. Whitaker (2011) gives a great analogy with the phenomenon of an ice cream truck. He explains that ice cream sales could be limited to a store or booth, but so much more passion and enthusiasm is seen with ice cream trucks. Outstanding principals, Whitaker explains, take the same approach. Instead of waiting for someone to come to them, they are out peddling their passion and enthusiasm by visiting classrooms, being visible in the hallways, and having one-on-one conversations with faculty members. Research in leadership theory supports the effect of principal enthusiasm through the studies on Charismatic and Emotional leadership (Humphrey, 2002, Rubin & Ullmann, 1991). When a leader exhibits an authentic and spontaneous show of passion, it has been proven to affect motivation and compliance from employees (Humphrey, 2008). Charismatic leaders, as well, can use their personalities to inspire, motivate, and influence (Rubin & Ullmann, 1991). When school leaders are passionate with their emotions, charismatic with their delivery, and authentic with their relationships, they can be the driving force of change in schools and help the staff have the confidence to achieve (Marzano et al., 2005).

The previous three paragraphs make it seem like the work of school leaders is easy. We are reminded, however, in Multi-Level and Complexity Leadership Theory that organizations are complex and sophisticated structures. So too, are schools. DuFour et al (2016) breaks down the role of individual teachers in a professional learning community. The individual must use vulnerability-based trust to become a valuable part of a collaborative content team. The team, in turn, becomes a small part of the grade-level and vertical content teams. Finally, the grade-level and vertical teams become a part of the entire school community. This breakdown of the collaborative team structure is a perfect example of both the multi-level format and complexity of a school organization. Great administrators, even in the difficulty of a complex system, manage their teams and keep a laser focus on the instruction in their schools (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018).

Transformational Vs. Instructional School Leadership

Much of the last few paragraphs, examining the overlap of leadership theories and school administrators, focused on the inspiring and motivating attributes of school leaders. There are two, often dichotomized, types of leadership, however, that are prevalent in today's schools: transformational leadership and instructional leadership (Day et al., 2016). Bambrick-Santoyo's (2018) work is a clear example of this split in theory as he provides his "Seven Levers" which lead to consistent student growth. They are divided into "Instructional Levers" which include data-driven instruction, instructional planning, observation and feedback, and professional development. His three "Cultural Levers" include student culture, staff culture, and managing school leadership teams. In contrast, a study looking at 149 school leaders in Norway concluded that a clear divide of these two leadership styles might be a much too simplistic way of

describing the true behaviors of school leadership (Aas & Brandmo, 2016). Whether over-simplified or over-analyzed, it is clear that these leadership styles have been researched and evaluated in many different settings.

Transformational leadership, looking through a school lens, can best be described as inspiring a vision to enhance the quality of teaching, and designing the organization to develop people and motivate their efforts (Day et al., 2016). There are various instances of positive impact in schools. For example, an international study surveyed 1415 teachers and the results indicated that a school leader's transformational leadership practices had a large influence on teacher innovation (Zainal & Mohd Matore, 2021). Similarly, Thomas et al. (2020) found that transformational leadership styles from principals contributed to the overall positive attitudes of first year teachers in elementary schools. Yet again, we see from an international study that transformational leadership has a strong impact on teacher's job satisfaction and loyalty to their schools (Dewiana, 2020). Although research on transformational research typically focuses on the individual, DeGroot et al. (2000) conducted a meta-analysis that supported a massive effect on teams as well. Thus, it can be inferred that inspirational motivation and transformational practices can successfully improve cohesion and production in organizational groups (Dionne et al., 2004).

If transformational leadership supports teacher attitude and motivation, instructional leadership provides the structures to enhance teaching and learning (Day et al., 2016). Developing a knowledge base for teaching is considered the first step a school or district must take to ensure the progress of teacher expertise (Marzano et. all, 2011). The ASCD describes instructional leadership as promoting a common school vision,

providing leadership opportunities for staff, leading a learning community, using data to inform decisions, and monitoring instruction and the curriculum taught (Fink, 2018). The important question for instructional leadership is “does it work?” Ylimaki (2007) attempted to put instructional leadership to the test in four high poverty and highly diverse schools. He found that in each school, instructional leadership positively impacted student achievement, with the main variations being administrator experience implementing the structures. Whitaker (2011) makes a point that he feels teachers do the best that they know how to do. He asserts that to be a great principal, you must “teach the teachers”. This is a direct connection to instructional leadership. Moreover, Robinson et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of quantitative empirical studies and determined that instructional leadership can have a much more powerful effect on student outcomes than transformation leadership, because it focuses on enhancing the “core business” in schools (which is teaching and learning).

Categorizing the Behaviors of Effective Leadership

Figure 2.2 uses the definitions and descriptions from the literature to categorize the 21 survey items used in this study into the two distinct leadership types.

Instructional Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Focus on Goals for Student Achievement	Building a shared vision
Establishing High Performance Expectations	Strengthening School Culture
Providing individualized teacher support and professional development	Matching Leadership Knowledge and Skills to the School Situation
Evaluating and developing teachers	Creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate
Providing instructional guidance (curriculum, pedagogy, and practice)	Establishing productive relationships with families and communities
Providing and implementing models of best practice	Empowering others to make significant decisions
Developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans	Providing organizational management skills (including personnel and budgetary matters)
Aligning resources to support the instructional program	Providing supportive working conditions in the school building
Managing data and knowledge to make good decisions	Exhibiting resiliency and adaptability
Recruiting and retaining quality teachers	
Improving high school graduation rates	
Improving college enrollment rates	

Figure 2.2 – 21 Survey Items Categorized into Instructional and Transformational

The Fusion of Instructional and Transformational Leadership

As we see in Figure 2.2, successful school leaders often display behaviors and attributes that are both instructional and transformational. In one of the most important studies on the combination of leadership styles, Lee et al. (2016) are very clear with what their data supports. “The research provides new empirical evidence of how successful principals directly and indirectly achieve and sustain improvement over time through combining both transformational and instructional leadership strategies (Lee et al., 2016, p. 222). Likewise, Marks and Printy (2003) studied the quality of instruction and achievement of students in schools where principals were practicing both instructional and transformational leadership. They found that the leadership techniques of these administrators had a direct impact on the instruction and achievement in the school. Leathwood (2012) echoes this analysis by discussing the importance of principals monitoring the wellbeing and motivation of their staff, while also focusing on the classroom instruction and student performance. Day et al.’s (2016) research was a mixed methods study where they surveyed over 600 administrators and collected qualitative data from 20 case studies. They determined that neither instructional leadership nor transformational leadership alone were sufficient enough to promote sustained school improvement. Instead, the best success was realized when administrators focused on improved school culture and working conditions for teachers, while also implementing structures, professional development, and data analysis for improved teaching and learning.

The Behaviors and Attributes of Successful School Leaders

Overview

In the previous section, behaviors of effective school leaders were categorized into transformational and instructional leadership techniques. The purpose of Figure 2.2 was to emphasize the importance of the fusion between the two leadership strategies. To support the use of these individual behaviors in a survey, however, it is important to determine if they are truly behaviors of effective school leaders. The following section will provide the literature foundation to determine if these behaviors are appropriate for inclusion in a survey about effective school leadership.

A Positive Collaborative Culture

In Figure 2.2, the survey items of “strengthening school culture” and “creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate” imply the importance of teamwork and collaboration in schools. Additionally, the survey item “matching leadership knowledge and skills to the school situation” emphasizes the idea of having important and defined roles on a team. To better understand the scope and reach of collaboration, it is valuable to look across multiple disciplines. Goodwin et al. (2018), of the US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, synthesized 60 years of military research that validates the notion that how well people work together could very well be more important than how talented they are individually on tasks. Dr. Michael Rosen et al. (2018), members of the medical community, support the importance of working collaboratively as teamwork research in healthcare has shown collaboration to assist learning and performance among team members and improve overall outcomes for

patients. Lencioni (2005), spending a career working as a business consultant, said confidently “teamwork is almost always lacking within organizations that fail, and often present within those that succeed” (p. 3). Agreeing that collaborative teams, when organized properly, positively impacts performance seems like a justifiable argument, but do collaborative teams succeed in schools?

Richard and Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, Thomas Many, and Mike Mattos (2016), who have spent much of their careers promoting collaboration inside of schools, describe collaborative teams as “members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable” (p. 12). This directly supports the survey items “focus on goals for student achievement” and “developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans”. To put simply, collaborative teamwork involves setting common goals and a taking a group responsibility that they will be accomplished. J. Richard Hackman (2011) describes collaborative teams as having two important considerations: teams will always have *more* resources than individuals, and there is hope that they will have a *diversity* of resources as well. He clarifies by explaining the diversity of resources. “Those differences provide many opportunities for members to learn from one another as they work together, thereby building an ever-larger pool of knowledge and expertise throughout the community” (Hackman, 2011, p. 27).

Two additional survey items of “building a shared vision” and “providing supportive working conditions in the school building” can also be reinforced by the collaborative team model. Bell et al. (2018) found that team members who share a mindset of the value of teamwork and support each other during the process, tend to be

much more confident and cooperative. Likewise, DuFour et al. (2016) make “defining a clear and compelling purpose” an entire chapter in their work on collaborative teams in schools. Even further research, which studied eight successful teams in various contexts, found three common skills that each group shared: they built safety, shared vulnerability, and established purpose (Coyle, 2018). Promoting common purpose, shared vision, and a supportive and safe environment are seen throughout Coyle’s (2018) book. Moreover, J. Richard Hackman (2002) studied the organizational behavior of teamwork. He determined that the personalities, behavioral styles, and attitudes of team members mattered much less than four main “enabling conditions”: a compelling direction, a strong structure, a supportive context, and a shared mindset.

Using Data to Inform Decision Making

If effective school leaders promote collaborative teams to get the most out of their individual teachers, then what other behaviors support the collaborative process? The survey items of “managing data and knowledge to make good decisions” and “aligning resources to support the instructional program” are directly tied to making data-informed decisions. Monitoring “graduation rate” and “college readiness rates” are also closely connected to collecting and using data. Bernhardt (2013) provides a framework for continuous school improvement that contains five simple questions for schools to use to reflect.

- 1) Where are we now?
- 2) How did we get to where we are?
- 3) Where do we want to be?
- 4) How are we going to get to where we want to be?

5) Is what we are doing making a difference?

Data analysis is the process schools use to answer these questions. Unfortunately, in many schools and especially those in an urban setting, organization of data, coherence, and alignment of standards can be lacking (Bryk et al, 2010).

Bernhardt (2009) defines data-driven decision-making as the process of collecting, analyzing, and using data to make decisions. A comprehensive study about what data is most likely to be used, and why schools decide to use it was summarized by Marsh, Pane, and Hamilton (2006). Their findings suggest that certain types of decisions are more likely to be informed by data than others. Across multiple studies, the authors found that district and school staff primarily use data to set improvement goals and targets. In response to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the education field began placing a large emphasis on testing as a determining factor of student learning (Boudett et al., 2005). Research supports that school leaders play an integral part in long term school improvement by supporting a culture that values and understands data analysis (Abbott & McKnight, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2008; Park & Datnow, 2009). Effective leaders utilize four major types of data to guide instructional decisions (Lange et al., 2012). These include student learning data, demographic data, school process data, and perception data. Lange et al. (2012) provide school leaders with a recommendation on ways to implement a data-informed culture. Figure 2.3 shows their work, which was inspired by Reeves (2004), and focuses on strong leadership, quality professional development, and a positive school culture.

(a) Leadership	(b) Professional Development	(c) School Culture
Develop a leadership team.	Organized over long term	Establish trust
Employ a vision for data use.	Education about data types	Cultivate collaboration
Provide accessibility to data.	Utility with data tools	Embed time and structure
	Translate data to information	
Figure 1. Antecedents of effective data usage in schools. Antecedent framework adapted from Reeves, D.B. (2004). Accountability for learning: How teachers and school leaders can take charge. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.		

Figure 2.3. Recommendation on ways to implement a data-informed culture. From

Lange, C., Range, B., & Welsh, K. (2012). Conditions for effective data use to improve schools: Recommendations for school leaders. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 7(3), 1-11.

The Value of Developing Teachers

As seen in Figure 2.3, an entire section of the model is dedicated to professional development. Regarding professional development that is effective, “the best way to provide an exceptional learning environment for students is to give them outstanding teachers. Great principals focus on students – by focusing on teachers” (Whitaker, 2013, p. 41). In the meta-analysis conducted by Marzano et al. (2005), the relative effect size on student achievement of several principal responsibilities was calculated with regards to teacher development. Monitoring and evaluating teachers effectively had an effect size of 0.27. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment had an effect size of 0.25. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment had an effect size of 0.20. For example, if the principal’s level of effectiveness in his/her knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment increased one standard deviation (from the 50th percentile to

the 84th percentile), then the effect size of 0.25 would mean that the student achievement would be expected to increase from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile.

For school leaders to develop a culture of continuous learning and improvement, they must avoid the pitfall of treating professional development as a required necessity, and instead present it as the most focused way to improve teaching and learning (Day, 2002). Pedro De Bruyckere (2018) explains that having the perfect ingredients does not guarantee that a meal (lesson) will be delicious (be preferred by students). It is “the extent to which a person possesses the necessary techniques that allow them to make the best possible use of the ingredients” (p. 1). Providing teachers with professional development where they have their needed resources could be viewed in a similar way. The ingredients for success could be present, but the techniques that a leader provides is most important for continuous improvement.

There are five possible survey items from Figure 2.2 that align with an administrator’s focus of teacher development.

- 1) Providing and implementing models of best practice
- 2) Recruiting and retaining quality teachers
- 3) Providing individualized teacher support and professional development
- 4) Evaluating and developing teachers
- 5) Providing instructional guidance.

Researchers have continuously found that a direct proportional relationship exists between teacher learning and student achievement (DiPaola & Wagner, 2018; King & Newmann 2000; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Nooruddin and Bhamani (2019) have worked as school leaders and organizers of professional development for over 16 years. They

determined that the more well equipped and properly trained a teacher is with pedagogy, content knowledge, and current educational research, the better students exhibit confidence and success in their learning. Marzano et al. (2005) give three very specific responsibilities that an effective school leader must undertake. They must collect knowledge of current research trends in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, actively help teachers with curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and ensure that teachers have the resources and professional development needed to execute the teaching and learning process. Whitaker (2013) emphasizes the importance of having the most excellent, and well-trained teachers available to improve student outcomes as he spends an entire chapter discussing the importance of hiring and retaining great teachers. In addition to improving teaching and learning, teachers also state that having an administrator recommend or encourage them to attend professional development opportunities helps to cultivate a supportive climate and lets the teacher see that their school leader is taking an interest in their career (Attebury, 2018).

School Leader Intangibles

With a focus on teacher development and support being an obvious behavior of successful administrators, Chapter 2 has examined the literature of many of the instructional and transformational leadership behaviors seen in Figure 2.2. There are five other behaviors included in Figure 2.2 that effective administrators must possess, and these could be considered personality intangibles to help improve schools.

- 1) Establishing high performance expectations
- 2) Establishing productive relationships with families and communities
- 3) Empowering others to make significant decisions

- 4) Providing organizational management skills
- 5) Exhibiting resiliency and adaptability

Foundational research in the mid 1980's attempted to study two important variables that are connected to the five behaviors above: high expectations and self-efficacy (Hillman, 1984). The researcher evaluated across three levels (students, teachers, and principals) and determined a strong trend that the more often that these groups evidenced high levels of self-efficacy and high expectations, the more likely their school was to be high achieving. Likewise, McEwan (2003) provides "7 strategies for becoming an effective instructional leader". Two of these clearly support the five intangibles seen above and are 1) setting high expectations for staff and oneself and 2) developing and maintaining positive relationships with students, staff, and parents.

Day et al. (2016) conducted an extensive empirical study on the phases of successful school improvement as lead by school administrators. During the developmental stage of improvement, they found that 18 out of the 20 schools in the study were successfully distributing significant decision making and leadership decisions to a wider group of individuals. This had a positive impact on trust and motivation in these schools. Building teacher capacity to help make decisions can be extended into the discussion of professional development as well. Stosich (2016) studied two high poverty schools and found that job-embedded support from experts and administrators, as well as direction from their immediate principal assisted teachers in converting professional development into actual strategies used in the classroom. As the teachers felt the support from school leaders and felt they had a voice in the decision-making process, their motivation for growth improved.

Research supports that if parents maintain close relationships and frequent communication with schools, they can greatly contribute to their children's school success (Arnold et al., 2008; Barnard, 2004; Houtenville & Hall, 2007). Marzano et al. (2005) discuss community and parent involvement as being a crucial factor to school success. They propose that school leaders develop quality lines of communication, solicit participation in various school activities and fundraising, and allow parents and the community to have a seat at the table, when appropriate, in the decision-making process. Parent, school, and community ties are also one of the essential supports as identified through a large empirical study conducted by Bryk et al (2010).

To manage a building's resources (which can include personnel, budget, and materials), as well as being able to adapt and regroup as needed, principals are asked to constantly work on the school culture. "Culture leaders don't succeed because of charisma but because of constancy: always being there, repeatedly, as the calm in the eye of the storm" (Bambrick-Sotoyo, 2018, p. 252). In the meta-analysis conducted by Marzano et al. (2005), the second highest effect size (0.28) for student achievement as it relates to a behavior/attribute of an administrator was "flexibility". This was defined as an administrator's ability to adapt his leadership practice to the current needs of the school. Administrators must understand the dynamics of change and be able to adjust and distribute resources as needed (Whitaker, 2013).

Becoming an Effective School Leader

Overview

The literature review, to this point in the chapter, has looked at three major themes: current leadership theory, the intersection of leadership theory and school leadership, and the behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders. To conclude the literature review, it is important to consider the training techniques of school administrators. This will give insight into the training techniques that sitting principals may have found valuable in their development as leaders, and also provide aspiring administrators an opportunity to reflect on the trainings they are currently using to prepare for becoming an administrator. This section will be organized in the following way. First, we will identify administrator perspective on the hiring and training processes of school leadership. Next, we will look at commonly used training practices for sitting administrators. And finally, we will look at training and preparation programs for aspiring administrators.

Administrator Perspective on Hiring and Training Processes

A qualitative research study was conducted with 30 administrators and interview questions were posed to determine administrator perceptions of the hiring process, as well as school leadership training (Sezer & Engin, 2021). The researchers found that administrators felt that there should be pre-service training, in-service training, advanced degree, and on-the-job training to ensure that school leaders are prepared for the job. Additionally, they felt that the hiring process should be conducted in an impartial and fair method, but that experience, degree type, competence of ability, and exam/interview scores should be considered when deciding on a hire. Mentoring and training programs,

which have been prevalent for teachers for many decades, have been very inconsistent or non-existent for administrators prior to the year 2000 (Spiro et al., 2007). In response to this concern, more and more districts, like the Milwaukee Public School District for example, began developing programs to not only recruit quality principals, but also to support and train them while they are in the job (Borsuk, 2000).

There is a concerning trend happening in principalships across the country. The US Labor Department studies are showing that 40% of administrators could soon retire due to many of them falling into the “baby boomer” age group (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). With this significant loss in principals, in the year 2000, it was estimated that as many as 42% of school districts were lacking enough quality candidates to fill vacancies (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). There is also a difficult reality regarding the training of administrators. There seems to be a multitude of personal and professional qualities needed to carry out the job of school administrator successfully (Sanfelippo & Sinanis, 2015). It was explained by saying “this is inherently one of the biggest problems facing the implementation of successful professional development for effective principals. If the educational community cannot agree on the job description of the effective principal and, in turn, the skills necessary to be effective in the position, how can “necessary” professional development opportunities become available?” (Sanfelippo & Sinanis, 2015, p. 7).

A qualitative study of 12 administrators with various levels of experience (although all had at least three years) and with various demographic of schools, concluded that administrators described needs for professional development in knowledge about management, personal development, technical proficiency, and school-

community relations (Polat et al., 2018). The researchers also determined that principals found collaboration with peers as an important factor in sustaining professional development. With some of the needs explained in this study, the next section will determine the current trends in professional development or training for sitting administrators.

Professional Development and Training for Sitting Administrators

Sitting principals often emphasize the importance of on-the-job training and leadership development based on the needs of the specific school (Zhang & Brundrett, 2010). These researchers also determined that collaboration and informal discussion with peers is also a meaningful way for administrators to grow. Administrators in the Polet et al. (2018) study mentioned publications, meetings with district leadership, a resource contact, and academic studies as the main professional development opportunities they receive as sitting principals. Additionally, they echo the Zhang and Brundrett (2010) study by encouraging the use of collegiality and using peer interaction to promote professional growth. Boerema (2011), while interviewing eight newly hired principals, found that these leaders felt most supported by using a mentor program. Mentors listened to their concerns, checked on their well-being, and gave encouragement to the work of the new leaders. A common theme noticed across the various studies is that they all seem to feature qualities of a social learning component, which means that principals experience some of the best training through social interactions with other principals (Sanfelippo & Sinanis, 2015).

In addition to some of the current supports mentioned above, many administrators attend institutes, conferences, or workshops (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). The authors

interject that although these practices might give ideas or provide an initial boost of motivation, many of the administrators feel they would learn more effectively from job-embedded training. One of these specific job-embedded programs was explained by Silver et al. (2009) and included a full-scale coaching program for new administrators. In this program, most all of the new administrators responded with a positive experience, and the personalized and individualized attention from the coaches was cited as the most beneficial component. Mentor/Coaching programs are growing in popularity because they allow beginning school leaders to acclimate to the managerial and emotional demands of the position, both of which have been linked to principal burn out (Burlingame, 1986).

Job Preparation for Aspiring Administrators

School districts are becoming more and more deliberate with providing aspiring administrators with the opportunities to develop. Rhodes et. al (2008) determined that aspiring leaders most often feel led to pursue administrative positions when they have banked leadership experiences, received support from their school or district, improved their self-confidence, and have networked with current school leaders. Districts, like the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) district for example, are offering specific trainings for future principals. MPS is arranging aspiring administrators into cohort groups to take higher education courses together, allowing teacher leaders up to eight weeks of job-shadowing of quality administrators in the district, and offering leadership institutes which will train both sitting principals and aspiring administrators (Borsuk, 2021).

Just as MPS is practicing this work today, a school district in California in the late 90's developed a comprehensive program that serves as a potential model for other

school districts. *Developing Leaders from Within* (Lovely, 1999) was developed in Capistrano, California and uses 5 basic principles in school leader development.

- 1) Give leadership duties and opportunities to aspiring administrators.
 - 2) Allow aspiring administrators varied experiences in more than one school.
 - 3) Provide professional development for aspiring administrators.
 - 4) Provide monthly meetings with a sitting principal.
 - 5) Grow the aspiring administrators who you know will help the organization flourish.
- More and more of these programs are being developed regularly.

As school districts face a potential principal shortage, they must address three main concerns: (a) high turnover rate, (b) current principals reaching retirement age, and (c) a shrinking pool of individuals seeking the principalship (Fuller, Orr, & Young, 2008). Several models for aspiring administrators have been developed to give a clear and direct path for job progression. One, established in Brevard County, FL, required that aspiring leaders obtain certain credentials as they progressed along a seven-tiered program (Morgan, 2009). The seven tiers were (1) Leadership Awareness Series for Instructional Personnel, (2) Leadership Awareness Training I, (3) Leadership Awareness Training II, (4) Assistant Principal Pool, (5) Assistant Principal Position, (6) Preparing New Principals Program (PNPP), and (7) Principal Position. Similar to this model, a program in Cambridgeshire, England attempted to attract headteachers into school leadership positions by offering them mentoring, shadowing, support groups, and goal development (Cambridgeshire County Council, 2008). With each program, the focus is on support and providing a clear path for promotion.

Summary

This literature review was organized to first give a brief history of current leadership theories across all professions. Secondly, it analyzed the overlap between those current leadership theories and current school leadership practices (with a focus on transformational and instructional leadership). There was then a brief description of the fusion of transformational and instructional leadership seen in many high performing schools and districts. Next, there was a section that examined research on the behaviors and attributes of effective school leaders. Finally, the literature review examined what it takes to become and remain an effective school leader, by examining the training, professional development, and hiring/promotion processes of school leadership.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to help aspiring administrators understand how sitting principals value the behaviors and attributes of effective school leaders. Additionally, an analysis of the training and leadership development of sitting principals, should assist the aspiring administrators in knowing which experiences most prepared the principals for their current position. Data gathered from participants will alert school districts to any possible disconnects between aspiring administrators and sitting principals, in both the ranking of effective school leader practices and the value put on certain leadership development practices. This chapter gives information regarding the non-experimental, quantitative study design used within this study.

Restatement of the Problem

The applicant pool for aspiring administrators is vast, with discrepancies in education, leadership experiences, and research-based skills. A candidate enters an interview with a perception of both the behaviors/attributes needed to lead a successful school and which of these behaviors/attributes are most important for success. There is no guarantee that the perceptions of the candidate are aligned to the values of the sitting principal. Moreover, a candidate feels prepared for the new position as they have focused their preparation energy on trainings and leadership development provided by their school, district, or university. Which of these trainings or experiences were most valuable to the sitting principal? Could an aspiring administrator focus on the survey

data of sitting principals to determine where they should best spend their leadership development time?

To address the problem, the researcher will focus on three key statements that will drive the research questions. First, sitting principals and aspiring administrators should have a robust understanding of leadership theory, school leadership, and the behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders, and be able to rank their importance based on their own values and experiences. Secondly, with limited time available for leadership development, sitting principals and aspiring administrators should have a firm grasp of the most effective training and leadership development techniques available to them. Finally, if we hope to connect schools with high-quality aspiring administrators, there needs to be an alignment between the values and beliefs of sitting principals and those of administrative candidates applying for leadership positions.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study:

1. Is there a difference between the way sitting principals and aspiring administrators value items from a list of research-based behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders?
2. Are aspiring administrators focusing on and valuing the same trainings and opportunities that sitting principals found to be most helpful in their current positions?

Research Design and Procedures

This non-experimental quantitative study utilizes a cross-sectional survey design. It is classified as non-experimental because the independent variable is not manipulated,

and the groups are not randomly selected (Johnson & Christenson, 2020). Non-experimental research is common in the nursing, medical, social science, and education fields, where the ethics of manipulating variables is a concern (Connelly, 2016). Cross-sectional survey research is a flexible and adaptive design that is used to collect data on knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, intentions, and respondent opinions (Sedgwick, 2014).

The site of this study is six school districts in the state of Tennessee, all of which have a formal or informal aspiring administrator development program. In general, this study is focused on two main groups of individuals: 1) current sitting principals in K-12 public schools and 2) current teacher leaders who are participants in the district's aspiring administrator program or who are recognized as quality aspiring administrators by their sitting principal. The researcher is aiming to study the perceptions and values of the sitting principal and aspiring administrator groups in two areas of interest: leadership development and priorities of effective school leadership practices. A survey will be created using valid and reliable items from previously established surveys, and will be released via email to sitting principals and aspiring administrators, respectively. A two-week response time for each group will be requested for completion of the survey.

Figure 3.1 shows the organization of the survey.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT DESIGN

A single survey with two distinct areas of interest.

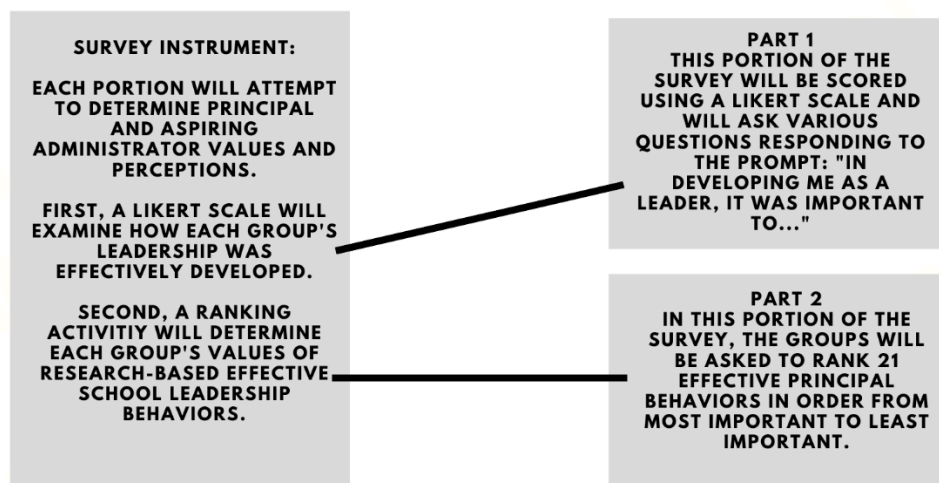


Figure 3.1: Survey Design and Organization.

Once the data is secured from the surveys, it will be entered into SPSS for statistical testing. A quantitative approach will be used to address the research questions using the responses from each group of participants. The results will be initially reported with basic descriptive statistics, which will allow the researcher to analyze and discuss similarities and differences seen between the descriptive statistics of each group. Additionally, for the first portion of the survey, a two-sample t-test will be employed to

determine if the importance/value of the various leadership development strategies for aspiring administrators was different than the importance/value of the various leadership development strategies for sitting principals. In other words, are the perceptions of aspiring administrators about what is valuable leadership training the same as the sitting principals, who can vouch for what has helped them the most?

For the second part of the survey, participants will be asked to rank 21 behaviors of effective school leaders in order of importance. Patterns and trends will be examined using the descriptive data, and hypothesis testing will be used on the ranking of each item. This data will help to determine if there was a significant difference between the ranking by aspiring administrators and that of sitting principals.

The goal is to determine if there are leadership training activities that sitting principals valued as helpful, that aspiring administrators are not perceiving to be as valuable. Also, do aspiring administrators and sitting principals differ in how they prioritize effective leadership behaviors in schools?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical rationale for this study is supported by the following design. Figure 3.2 depicts the empirical supports for the research.

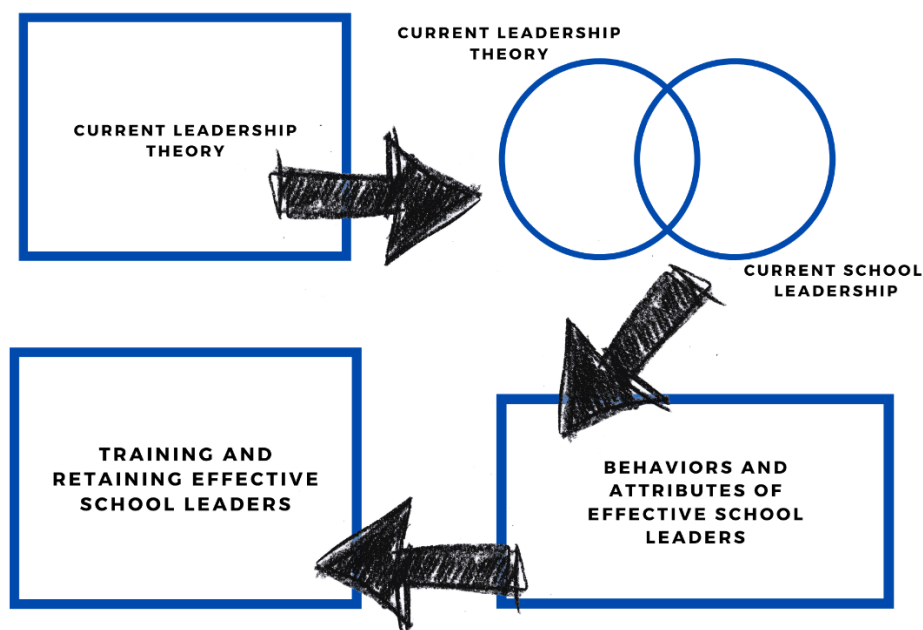


Figure 3.2: Theoretical Support of the Research Design

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Lee et al. (2020) conducted a study that analyzed empirical research articles from 2008 to 2017. Citation and Co-Citation analysis was the primary method used in this study, but it also included a social network analysis and a factor analysis with multidimensional scaling. These leadership theories greatly shaped movements in school leadership, so an analysis of the overlap between leadership theories and school leadership is appropriate. At first glance, school leadership seems to segregate into instructional leadership and transformational leadership, but more and more research is beginning to show the value of a fusion between the two styles (Lee et al., 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003; Leathwood, 2012). Marzano et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis to help describe the impact that effective school leader behaviors can have on student achievement. Several other studies, books, and articles supported this claim as

well (Abbott & McKnight, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2008; Park & Datnow, 2009; DuFour et al., 2016, Coyle, 2018; Nooruddin and Bhamani, 2019). Finally, it is important to analyze the training and leadership development of the sitting principal and the aspiring administrator, in hopes to meet the goal of helping administrative candidates get an opportunity to successfully lead schools.

The survey instrument used in this study utilized parts of two previously used and vetted surveys. These parts were found to be valid and reliable when previously used, and we have supported their use with the review of literature. Part 1 of the survey used in this study, was taken from a dissertation study by Julie Vincent Matte (2012). The validity of her instrument was determined prior to the beginning of her study as it was “based on the leadership development concepts identified from a literature review of succession planning, leadership development, and self-efficacy” (Matte, 2012, p. 83). The reliability was verified after the study was concluded by using a Cronbach’s Alpha Test. One additional step will be taken to validate Part 1. Matte (2012) used the survey to question sitting administrators only. Because this study planned to use the survey with aspiring administrators as well, the researcher utilized an expert panel to review the appropriateness of the survey for aspiring administrators. This group of experts consisted of three panelists, in upper leadership, from one of the school districts included in the study. These three panelists work closely with their district’s aspiring administrators, and help to train/prepare those hoping to become administrators. Figure 3.3 shows the criterion used by the researcher to vet the appropriateness of questions to be used for the aspiring administrators. The results of this process can be seen in Appendix C.

<p>Step 1:</p> <p>Each of the three experts will review each survey item individually and simply answer “yes” or “no” to each one given the following prompt: “Would this Likert-scaled statement appropriately capture an aspiring administrator’s perception of the given training or leadership preparation technique presented in the survey item?”</p>	<p>Step 2:</p> <p>The researcher will review each individual item of the survey and tabulate the “yes” and “no” responses from each of the experts.</p>	<p>Step 3:</p> <p>If any item from the survey receives 2 out of 3 “no” responses, then the item will be removed from the survey.</p>
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Figure 3.3. Criteria Used for Vetting Part 1 of the Study’s Survey

The items from Part 2 of the survey instrument were taken directly from a survey administered by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) in 2010. The NAESP survey was an effort to poll then-current administrators on the department of education’s attempt to define effective school leadership and therefore develop an evaluation measure. Sitting administrators were asked to “Please select the school leadership practices or benchmarks that should be considered among the multiple measures as part of a principal evaluation process (check all that apply):” NAESP then provided the administrators with research-based school leadership behaviors for which to

choose. The use of each part of this survey will assist the researcher in answering the research questions, for which the study is designed.

Participants

This study takes place in six public school districts in Tennessee. The school districts are of various sizes with various student demographics. There are 161 total schools in these six districts and the districts serve an estimated 129,000 students. Each school district has their own formal or informal aspiring administrator program, where teacher leaders can gain knowledge and experiences in administration. Each school employees a sitting principal, and each school has differing numbers of aspiring administrators on their staffs.

The potential participants in this study will be the sitting principals at these 161 schools, as well as the aspiring administrators, as provided by each school or district. No participation from students, community members, or teachers (holding only a bachelor's degree) will be needed in this study.

Data Collection Procedures

At the launch of the study, the researcher will combine Part 1 and Part 2 of the survey to be used in the study and create an anonymous Qualtrics Online Survey to make collecting data and uploading it to SPSS most efficient. The following steps will be followed regarding distributing the survey.

1. The researcher will craft an introduction letter that will serve as the body of the email to the sitting principals.
2. Proper permission will be requested from the six participating school districts with all required IRB paperwork provided.

3. The researcher will collect email addresses from each of the sitting principals of each school in the six school districts in Tennessee. This will be collected from district or school websites.
4. Participants will be given a copy of all necessary IRB paperwork, including informed consent forms.
5. The initial email will be sent to all sitting principals with a two-week timeframe of receiving responses. On the sitting principals' survey, there will be a place for principals to provide the email addresses and names of aspiring administrators in their building.
6. The researcher will collect the email addresses of the aspiring administrators and send the same email and Qualtrics Online Survey to the aspiring administrators. There will be a two-week response window for this group as well.
7. All survey data will be collected and uploaded to SPSS for analysis.

The purpose of the two-part survey is for the researcher to gain insight into participants' priorities/values of 21 behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders, as well as the value they put on various leadership development experiences. All participants are sitting principals or aspiring administrators in one of the six participating school districts, and survey questions asked of all participants are included in Appendix A. The survey data will be recorded on the researcher's password protected computer and will remain anonymous by using the Qualtrics Online Survey platform.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analytic process for this study will be based on methods for a quantitative research approach informed by Field (2018). All survey responses from the Qualtrics Online Survey will be collected and uploaded into the SPSS Statistical Analysis program for organization of the quantitative data. Initially, descriptive statistics will be collected from the surveys with a main focus on the mean rankings of each of the 21 behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders and the means of the Likert Scale responses for the perceptions of leadership development experiences. Figure 3.4 shows the interpretation of the average Likert Scale responses for the perceptions of leadership development experiences from sitting principals and aspiring administrators.

Range of Mean Score	Response	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree	Not Important
1.50 – 2.49	Disagree	Very Little Importance
2.50 – 3.49	Neutral	Neither Unimportant nor Important
3.50 – 4.59	Agree	Important
4.50 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Important

Figure 3.4: Interpretation of Mean Likert Scale Responses to Survey

After the descriptive statistics are collected from the surveys of both the sitting principals and the aspiring administrators, outputs from the SPSS program will be included in Chapter 4 of the study. The researcher will interpret and analyze the results and write a narrative explaining any patterns, consistencies, or inconsistencies in the data.

After a thorough analysis of the descriptive statistics, the researcher will perform hypothesis testing, comparing the means of the responses of the two groups (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators). These T-Tests will look to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the mean responses of the sitting principals and those of the aspiring administrators. Outputs from these tests will be downloaded from the SPSS program and placed in Chapter 4 of the study. Interpretation and narrative from these results will be included.

Summary

This non-experimental, quantitative study is designed to determine if there is a difference between the priorities/values of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on both behaviors of effective school leaders and leadership development experiences. Participants are sitting principals and aspiring administrators in six public school districts in Tennessee. These districts are of various sizes and demographics. The quantitative research design will gather data from a two-part Qualtrics Online Survey, administered to participants via email. An analysis of the data will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

This research study was developed to measure the priorities and perceptions of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. The design included a Likert Scale component to gauge the perceptions of each group during their leadership development. Additionally, participants (both sitting principals and aspiring administrators) were asked to rank a set of 21 research-based practices in order from most important to least important.

The purpose of the research study was to determine whether and to what extent differences in the perceptions and priorities exist between sitting principals and aspiring administrators. Investigations of demographic data such as gender of the participant, years of experience, type of school, and type of district were also included in the data. The results of this research study were intended to provide meaningful information to sitting principals, aspiring administrators, district leadership who develop aspiring administrator programs, and universities who train aspiring administrators.

Research cited in Chapter 2 provides evidence that sitting principals value professional publications, meetings with district leadership, and mentor programs as being some of the most effective professional development opportunities for professional growth (Zhang & Brundrett, 2010; Polet et al., 2018; Boerema, 2011). Additionally, Sanfelippo and Sinanis (2015) found that social interactions were an important part of principal growth and improvement across multiple studies. Similarly, Rhodes et. al (2008) determined that aspiring administrators felt most confident in their growth when they had banked leadership experiences, received support from their school or district,

and had networked with current school leaders. This research study sought to determine if some of these similarities found in the literature would also be reflected in the survey results from a sample of sitting principals and aspiring administrators.

Participants in this research study come from six school districts in Tennessee. The districts were of varying sizes, geographic location, socio-economic status of students, and deliberateness of aspiring administrator programs. There is a total of 154 schools in these six school districts, and the results from the participating sitting principals and aspiring administrators will be analyzed in the remainder of this chapter.

Survey Distribution and Participation

After gaining permission to administer the survey from the six school districts described in Chapter 1, the school email addresses were collected from school or district websites for each of the sitting principals of the district schools. Table 4.1 organizes the number of surveys distributed, via anonymous link, as well as the number of surveys that were submitted/returned for participation.

Table 4.1
Percentage of Sitting Principals Responding to the Survey of the Study

Total number of Schools in the Six School Districts	Total number of sitting principals who received the survey link.	Total number of sitting principals who responded to the survey.	Percentage of sitting principals who responded to the survey.
154	154	55	35.71%

As part of the survey link for sitting principals there was a question that allowed the email addresses of high-quality aspiring administrators to be shared with the researcher. Table 4.2 organizes the total number of email addresses that were shared with the researcher, as well as how many of these aspiring administrators responded to the survey for participation.

Table 4.2
Percentage of Aspiring Administrators Responding to the Survey of the Study

Total number of aspiring administrator emails that were shared by the sitting principals.	Total number of aspiring administrators who received the survey link.	Total number of aspiring administrators who responded to the survey.	Percentage of aspiring administrators who responded to the survey.
86	86	41	47.67%

With this study, the researcher attempted to choose a sample of school districts in Tennessee of varying sizes and demographics. The gender of the participant, years of experience, type of school in which the participant works, and the description of the district where the participant works, were all demographic information that was collected from the survey. The following four tables, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6, display the breakdown of the responses collected.

Table 4.3

Type of School Where Participants Work

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 High School (Grade 9 – 12)	13	21.64	12	29.27
2 Middle Grades	11	20.00	9	21.95
3 Elementary School	25	25.45	15	36.59
4 Other	6	10.91	5	12.20
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.4

Gender of Participants

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Male	28	50.91	17	41.46
2 Female	26	47.27	24	58.54
3 Prefer not to say	1	1.82	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.5

Administrative Experience of Participants

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Over 15 years	20	36.36	2	4.88
2 10 to 15 years	12	21.82	0	0.00
3 5 to 9 years	18	32.73	3	7.32
4 1 to 4 years	5	9.09	5	12.20
5 I have not worked in administration	0	0.00	31	75.61
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.6
Description of District Where Participants Work

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Large Urban	3	5.45	2	4.88
2 Medium Urban	3	5.45	5	12.20
3 Large Suburban	20	36.36	15	36.59
4 Medium Suburban	12	21.82	7	17.07
5 Large Rural	3	5.45	0	0.00
6 Medium Rural	8	14.55	5	12.20
7 Small Rural	4	7.27	6	14.63
8 Prefer not to answer	2	3.64	1	2.44
Total	55	100	41	100

Part 1 of Survey: Likert-Scale Results

Descriptive Analysis

In part one of the survey, participants were asked to respond to 15 Likert-Scale questions. The responses were:

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Somewhat Agree
- 3 Neither Agree or Disagree
- 4 Somewhat Disagree
- 5 Strongly Disagree

From the selections, a mean value response could be calculated for each question, for both sitting principals and aspiring administrators. The closer the mean value is to 1.00, the more strongly a group agreed with the statement. Alternatively, the closer the mean value is to 5.00, the more strongly a group disagreed with the statement. Results and a comparison between the two groups can be seen in the following tables.

Likert Scale Question 1:

In developing me as a leader, it is important to be told by others that I possess leadership qualities.

Table 4.7

Survey Question 1 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	Sitting Principal		Aspiring Administrator	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	24	43.64	20	48.78
2 Somewhat Agree	22	40.00	16	39.02
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	7	12.73	3	7.32
4 Somewhat Disagree	1	1.82	2	4.88
5 Strongly Disagree	1	1.82	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	10

Table 4.8

Survey Question 1 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	1.78	0.87	0.75	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	4.00	1.68	0.81	0.66	41

In response to question 1, both aspiring administrators and sitting principals responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at very high percentages. (83.64% for sitting principals and 87.80% for aspiring administrators) The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.68) than it was for sitting principals (1.78).

Likert Scale Question 2:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that other people in the district influenced me to pursue an administrative position.

Table 4.9

Survey Question 2 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	Sitting Principal		Aspiring Administrator	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	21	38.18	15	36.59
2 Somewhat Agree	24	43.64	18	43.90
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	5	9.09	1	2.44
4 Somewhat Disagree	3	5.45	5	12.20
5 Strongly Disagree	2	3.64	2	4.88
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.10

Survey Question 2 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	1.93	1.01	1.01	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	5.00	2.05	1.15	1.31	41

In response to question 2, aspiring administrators and sitting principals responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at similar percentages. (81.82% for sitting principals and 80.49% for aspiring administrators) The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for sitting principals (1.93) than for aspiring administrators (2.05).

Likert Scale Question 3:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that I was recruited for an administrative position.

Table 4.11

Survey Question 3 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	11	20.00	8	19.51
2 Somewhat Agree	19	34.55	27	65.85
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	13	23.64	1	2.44
4 Somewhat Disagree	9	16.36	4	9.76
5 Strongly Disagree	3	5.45	1	2.44
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.12

Survey Question 3 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	2.53	1.14	1.30	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	5.00	2.10	0.91	0.82	41

In response to question 3, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a higher percentage rate than sitting principals (85.36% for aspiring administrators and 54.55% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (2.10) than for sitting principals (2.53).

Likert Scale Question 4:

In developing me as a leader, it is important that I am a part of a district-groomed (i.e. specifically trained) pool of potential administrators.

Table 4.13

Survey Question 4 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	6	10.91	9	21.95
2 Somewhat Agree	12	21.82	13	31.71
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	14	25.45	4	9.76
4 Somewhat Disagree	13	23.64	9	21.95
5 Strongly Disagree	10	18.18	6	14.63

Table 4.14

Survey Question 4 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	3.16	1.26	1.59	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	5.00	2.76	1.39	1.94	41

In response to question 4, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a higher percentage rate than sitting principals (53.66% for aspiring administrators and 32.73% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (2.76) than for sitting principals (3.16).

Likert Scale Question 5:

In developing me as a leader, it is important that I participated in activities that are aligned to a specific set of standards, found in a leadership preparation program.

Table 4.15

Survey Question 5 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	13	23.64	21	51.22
2 Somewhat Agree	23	41.82	13	31.71
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	13	23.64	2	4.88
4 Somewhat Disagree	5	9.09	4	9.76
5 Strongly Disagree	1	1.82	1	2.44
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.16

Survey Question 5 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	2.24	0.97	0.94	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	5.00	1.80	1.06	1.13	41

In response to question 5, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a higher percentage rate than sitting principals (82.93% for aspiring administrators and 65.46% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.80) than for sitting principals (2.24).

Likert Scale Question 6:

In developing me as a leader, it is important that I develop a set of competencies or skills before assuming an administrative position.

Table 4.17

Survey Question 6 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	29	52.73	31	75.61
2 Somewhat Agree	21	38.18	8	19.51
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	2	3.64	0	0.00
4 Somewhat Disagree	3	5.45	1	2.44
5 Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.44
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.18

Survey Question 6 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	4.00	1.62	0.80	0.64	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	5.00	1.37	0.82	0.67	41

In response to question 6, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” at a higher percentage rate than sitting principals (75.61% for aspiring administrators and 52.73% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.37) than for sitting principals (1.62).

Likert Scale Question 7:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that leadership skills were modeled during my leadership training.

Table 4.19

Survey Question 7 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	30	54.55	33	80.49
2 Somewhat Agree	23	41.82	6	14.63
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	1	1.82	1	2.44
4 Somewhat Disagree	0	0.00	1	2.44
5 Strongly Disagree	1	1.82	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.20

Survey Question 7 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	1.53	0.71	0.50	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	4.00	1.27	0.63	0.39	41

In response to question 7, aspiring administrators and sitting principals responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at very high percentage rates. (95.12% for aspiring administrators and 96.37% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.27) than for sitting principals (1.53).

Likert Scale Question 8:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that I participated in guided practice while working on my leadership skills.

Table 4.21

Survey Question 8 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	19	34.55	25	60.98
2 Somewhat Agree	22	40.00	15	36.59
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	7	12.73	1	2.44
4 Somewhat Disagree	5	9.09	0	0.00
5 Strongly Disagree	2	3.64	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.22

Survey Question 8 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	2.07	1.08	1.16	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	3.00	1.41	0.54	0.29	41

In response to question 8, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a higher rate than sitting principals. (97.57% for aspiring administrators and 74.55% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.41) than for sitting principals (2.07).

Likert Scale Question 9:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that I participated in simulated situations during my leadership training.

Table 4.23

Survey Question 9 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	19	34.55	29	70.73
2 Somewhat Agree	19	34.55	11	26.83
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	9	16.36	1	2.44
4 Somewhat Disagree	5	9.09	0	0.00
5 Strongly Disagree	3	5.45	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.24

Survey Question 9 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	2.16	1.16	1.34	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	3.00	1.32	0.52	0.27	41

In response to question 9, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a higher rate than sitting principals. (97.56% for aspiring administrators and 69.10% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.32) than for sitting principals (2.16).

Likert Scale Question 10:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that I was given opportunities to participate in real-life administrative situations during my leadership training.

Table 4.25

Survey Question 10 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	34	61.82	33	80.49
2 Somewhat Agree	15	27.27	7	17.07
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	2	3.64	1	2.44
4 Somewhat Disagree	2	3.64	0	0.00
5 Strongly Disagree	2	3.64	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.26

Survey Question 10 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	1.60	0.98	0.97	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	3.00	1.22	0.47	0.22	41

In response to question 10, both aspiring administrators and sitting principals responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a high percentage. (97.56% for aspiring administrators and 89.09% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.22) than for sitting principals (1.60).

Likert Scale Question 11:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that I was supported when I made mistakes during my leadership training.

Table 4.27

Survey Question 11 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	45	81.82	38	92.68
2 Somewhat Agree	9	16.36	3	7.32
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00
4 Somewhat Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00
5 Strongly Disagree	1	1.82	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.28

Survey Question 11 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	1.24	0.63	0.40	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	2.00	1.07	0.26	0.07	41

In response to question 11, both aspiring administrators and sitting principals responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a high percentage. (100.00% for aspiring administrators and 98.18% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.07) than for sitting principals (1.24).

Likert Scale Question 12:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that assessments of my leadership skills were made during my leadership training.

Table 4.29

Survey Question 12 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	24	43.64	31	75.61
2 Somewhat Agree	24	43.64	8	19.51
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	5	9.09	1	2.44
4 Somewhat Disagree	2	3.64	1	2.44
5 Strongly Disagree	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.30

Survey Question 12 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	4.00	1.96	1.39	1.93	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	4.00	1.37	0.88	0.77	41

In response to question 12, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” at a higher percentage than sitting principals. (75.61% for aspiring administrators and 43.64% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.37) than for sitting principals (1.96).

Likert Scale Question 13:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that activities assigned during my leadership training were based on my needs.

Table 4.31

Survey Question 13 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	13	23.64	18	43.90
2 Somewhat Agree	26	47.27	19	46.34
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	4	7.27	4	9.76
4 Somewhat Disagree	11	20.00	0	0.00
5 Strongly Disagree	1	1.82	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.32

Survey Question 13 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	2.29	1.09	1.19	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	3.00	1.66	0.65	0.42	41

In response to question 13, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a higher percentage than sitting principals. (90.24% for aspiring administrators and 70.91% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.66) than for sitting principals (2.29).

Likert Scale Question 14:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that feedback was given to me about my performance during my leadership training.

Table 4.33

Survey Question 14 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	Sitting Principal		Aspiring Administrator	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	37	67.27	33	80.49
2 Somewhat Agree	13	23.64	8	19.51
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	2	3.64	0	0.00
4 Somewhat Disagree	2	3.64	0	0.00
5 Strongly Disagree	1	1.82	0	0.00
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.34

Survey Question 14 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	1.49	0.87	0.76	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	2.00	1.20	0.40	0.16	41

In response to question 14, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” at a higher percentage than sitting principals. (80.49% for aspiring administrators and 67.27% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (1.20) than for sitting principals (1.49).

Likert Scale Question 15:

In developing me as a leader, it was important that I was coached or mentored by the outgoing administrator whose position I filled.

Table 4.35

Survey Question 14 Results for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principal</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrator</u>	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 Strongly Agree	11	20.00	8	19.51
2 Somewhat Agree	15	27.27	17	41.46
3 Neither Agree or Disagree	16	29.00	11	26.83
4 Somewhat Disagree	5	9.09	3	7.32
5 Strongly Disagree	8	14.55	2	4.88
Total	55	100	41	100

Table 4.36

Survey Question 15 Means and Variance (Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators)

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Dev.	Variance	Count
Sitting Principal	1.00	5.00	2.71	1.29	1.66	55
Aspiring Administrators	1.00	5.00	2.37	1.03	1.06	41

In response to question 15, aspiring administrators responded “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” at a higher percentage than sitting principals. (60.97% for aspiring administrators and 47.27% for sitting principals). The mean response agreeing to the statement was higher for aspiring administrators (2.37) than for sitting principals (2.71).

The following data will show a ranking of means of the Likert Score responses for each question in the survey. This data will be divided by sitting principals and aspiring administrators and will provide insight into which statements these respective groups found to be most valuable during their leadership training.

Table 4.37

Mean Ranks of Likert Scale Statements for Sitting Principals

	Rank	Mean
Question 11	1	1.24
Question 14	2	1.49
Question 7	3	1.53
Question 10	4	1.60
Question 6	5	1.62
Question 1	6	1.78
Question 2	7	1.93
Question 12	8	1.96
Question 8	9	2.07
Question 9	10	2.16
Question 5	11	2.24
Question 13	12	2.29
Question 3	13	2.53
Question 15	14	2.71
Question 4	15	3.16

Question 11, which focused on being supported through mistakes, was easily the highest ranked mean value in the survey as rated by sitting principals. The mean value of 1.24 shows that nearly all sitting principals marked this item as one that they were strongly in agreement with, leaving little to no ambiguity regarding its significance. Sitting principals ranked Question 4, which asked about the importance of being groomed for an administrator position through a district pool of aspiring leaders, as the least important statement.

Table 4.38

Mean Ranks of Likert Scale Statements for Aspiring Administrators

	Rank	Mean
Question 11	1	1.07
Question 14	2	1.20
Question 10	3	1.22
Question 7	4	1.27
Question 9	5	1.32
Question 6	6	1.37
Question 12	6	1.37
Question 8	8	1.41
Question 13	9	1.66
Question 1	10	1.68
Question 5	11	1.80
Question 2	12	2.05
Question 3	13	2.10
Question 15	14	2.37
Question 4	15	2.76

Similar to the sitting principal survey, Question 11, focusing on being supported when mistakes were made during leadership training, was easily the highest ranked mean value in the survey given to aspiring administrators. Question 14, which involved receiving feedback during leadership development, was the second most important leadership training according to the future administrator group. Aspiring administrators ranked Question 4, “it was important that I was a part of a district-groomed (i.e. specifically trained) pool of potential candidates”, as the least important statement.

Table 4.39

Comparison of Mean Ranks for Sitting Principals and Aspiring Administrators

	<u>Sitting Principals</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrators</u>	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Question 11	1	1.24	1	1.07
Question 14	2	1.49	2	1.20
Question 7	3	1.53	4	1.27
Question 10	4	1.60	3	1.22
Question 6	5	1.62	6	1.37
Question 1	6	1.78	10	1.68
Question 2	7	1.93	12	2.05
Question 12	8	1.96	6	1.37
Question 8	9	2.07	8	1.41
Question 9	10	2.16	5	1.32
Question 5	11	2.24	11	1.80
Question 13	12	2.29	9	1.66
Question 3	13	2.53	13	2.10
Question 15	14	2.71	14	2.37
Question 4	15	3.16	15	2.76

When comparing the mean rankings of the aspiring administrators and the sitting principals, both groups ranked questions 11, 14, 7 and 10 in their top 4 (most important), and questions 3, 15, and 4 in their bottom 3 (least important). Question 2, “it is important that other people in the district influenced me to pursue an administrative position”, was valued more by sitting principals (ranked 7th) than with aspiring administrators (ranked

12th). Question 9, “it was important that I participated in simulated administrative situations during my leadership training, was valued more by aspiring administrators (ranked 5th) than with sitting principals (ranked 10th). Question 5, although not in the group of most important or least important discussed above, also had a notable distinction as both sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked this question in the exact same place (11th most important).

Hypothesis Testing for Likert-Scale Questions

An independent Samples T-test was completed on each individual Likert-Scale question (questions 1 through 15) of the survey given to both sitting principals and aspiring administrators. The goal of this test was to determine if there were any leadership training activities that the sitting principals valued in a different way than the aspiring administrators. Because of interest in only a potential difference in the mean responses of the two groups, a focus on the p-value of the two-sided test is appropriate. Additionally, with each test, an F-test, Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance, will be used to determine if equal variances can be assumed for that particular question. Table 4.40 shows the results of the testing on each Likert-scale question of the survey.

Table 4.40

Independent Samples T-test for Individual Likert Scale Questions

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	two - sided p	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Lower	Upper
Question 1	Equal Variance Assumed	.012	.914	-.204	71	.839	-.041	.203	-.447	.364
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			-.203	67.208	.840	-.041	.205	-.450	.367
Question 2	Equal Variance Assumed	.125	.725	-.950	71	.345	-.253	.267	-.785	.278
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			-.956	70.764	.343	-.253	.265	-.782	.275
Question 3	Equal Variance Assumed	6.351	.014	1.588	71	.117	.394	.248	-.101	.888
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.562	62.236	.123	.394	.252	-.110	.897
Question 4	Equal Variance Assumed	2.194	.143	1.679	71	.097	.529	.315	-.099	1.156
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.694	70.990	.095	.529	.312	-.094	1.151
Question 5	Equal Variance Assumed	1.031	.313	1.656	71	.102	.389	.235	-.079	.364
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.679	70.722	.097	.389	.232	-.073	.851
Question 6	Equal Variance Assumed	.217	.643	1.398	71	.167	.255	.182	-.109	.619
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.415	70.896	.162	.255	.180	-.104	.614

Table 4.40 (Continued)

Independent Samples T-test for Individual Likert Scale Questions

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	two - sided p	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Lower	Upper
Question 7	Equal Variance Assumed	2.264	.137	1.434	71	.156	.247	.172	-.097	.591
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.411	62.297	.163	.247	.175	-.103	.598
Question 8	Equal Variance Assumed	6.520	.013	3.753	71	<.001	.737	.196	.345	1.128
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			3.603	47.511	<.001	.737	.205	.326	1.148
Question 9	Equal Variance Assumed	15.479	<.001	3.922	71	<.001	.843	.215	.414	1.272
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			3.740	43.754	<.001	.843	.225	.389	1.298
Question 10	Equal Variance Assumed	13.586	<.001	2.325	71	.021	.471	.200	.072	.871
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			2.238	42.531	.031	.471	.211	.046	.896
Question 11	Equal Variance Assumed	5.933	.017	1.244	71	.217	.158	.127	-.095	.412
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.180	40.607	.245	.158	.134	-.113	.430
Question 12	Equal Variance Assumed	.042	.838	1.628	71	.108	.351	.215	-.079	.780
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.625	69.096	.109	.351	.216	-.080	.781

Table 4.40 (Continued)

Independent Samples T-test for Individual Likert Scale Questions

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	two - sided p	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Lower	Upper
Question 13	Equal Variance Assumed	8.071	.006	2.634	71	.010	.572	.217	.139	1.006
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			2.540	50.436	.014	.572	.225	.120	1.025
Question 14	Equal Variance Assumed	10.448	.002	1.794	71	.077	.295	.164	-.033	.623
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.711	44.000	.094	.295	.172	-.052	.642
Question 15	Equal Variance Assumed	.927	.339	1.397	71	.167	.376	.269	-.161	.913
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.382	65.541	.172	.376	.272	-.167	.920

Gathering an overview of the hypothesis testing found in Table 4.40, only 4 out of the 15 Likert Scale questions showed a statistically significant difference using a 95% confidence interval. The results of each of these four questions will be further explained in the next four paragraphs.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean responses of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on question 8, which prompted “it is important that I participated in guided practice while working on my leadership skills”.

Levene's test for equality of variance was found to be violated for this question's analysis, $F = 6.520$, $p = .013$. The homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed, and therefore a t-statistic accounting for this violated assumption was computed. There was a significant difference between the mean responses of sitting principals ($M = 1.53$, $SD = .825$) and aspiring administrators ($M = 1.28$, $SD = .647$); $t(47.511) = 3.603$, $p = <.001$. This would suggest that aspiring administrators valued participating in guided practice while working on their leadership skills at a significantly different and higher rate than sitting principals.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean responses of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on question 9, which prompted "it was important that I participated in simulated situations during my leadership training". Levene's test for equality of variance was found to be violated for this question's analysis, $F = 15.479$, $p = <.001$. The homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed, and therefore a t-statistic accounting for this violated assumption was computed. There was a significant difference between the mean responses of sitting principals ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.218$) and aspiring administrators ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .530$); $t(43.754) = 3.740$, $p = <.001$. This would suggest that aspiring administrators valued participating in simulated situations while working on their leadership skills at a significantly different and higher rate than sitting principals.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean responses of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on question 10, which prompted "it was important that I was given opportunities to participate in real-life administrative situations during my leadership training". Levene's test for equality of variance was

found to be violated for this question's analysis, $F = 13.586$, $p = <.001$. The homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed, and therefore a t-statistic accounting for this violated assumption was computed. There was a significant difference between the mean responses of sitting principals ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 1.147$) and aspiring administrators ($M = 1.21$, $SD = .469$); $t(42.531) = 2.238$, $p = .031$. This would suggest that aspiring administrators valued being given opportunities to participate in real-life administrative situations while working on their leadership skills at a significantly different and higher rate than sitting principals.

Lastly, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean responses of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on question 13, which prompted "it was important that activities assigned during my leadership training were based on my needs". Levene's test for equality of variance was found to be violated for this question's analysis, $F = 8.071$, $p = .006$. The homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed, and therefore a t-statistic accounting for this violated assumption was computed. There was a significant difference between the mean responses of sitting principals ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.163$) and aspiring administrators ($M = 1.69$, $SD = .655$); $t(50.436) = 2.540$, $p = .014$. This would suggest that aspiring administrators valued having activities assigned during their leadership training that were specifically designed for their needs at a significantly different and higher rate than sitting principals.

It must be noted that running fifteen individual tests on the questions presented to participants in the Likert-Scale portion of the survey increases the risk of a Type 1 error occurring in this set of data. Additionally, for the four questions that were found to be statistically significant, equality of variance could not be assumed. Therefore, to help

more confidently answer research question 2, an additional independent Samples T-test was completed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the mean of the total composite responses of the sitting principals (Group 2) and the mean of the total composite responses of the aspiring administrators (Group 1) to the Likert Scale questions found in part one of the survey. The group statistics for this test can be found in Table 4.41, and the significance test can be seen in Table 4.42.

Table 4.41

Group Statistics Independent Samples T-Test for Overall Likert Composite

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error
Mean				
Aspiring Administrators	37	27.676	12.005	1.974
Sitting Principals	39	24.795	6.088	.975

Table 4.42

Independent Samples T-test for the Average Mean Composites of all 15 Questions

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	two - sided p	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Lower	Upper
Overall- Likert Scale Questions	Equal Variance Assumed	4.351	.040	1.330	74	.188	2.881	2.167	-1.437	7.198
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.309	52.736	.196	2.881	2.201	-1.535	7.296

Because the significance of 0.040 in the Levene's Test for the Equality of Variance is below 0.05, the equal variance for this data cannot be assumed. As a result, the final statistical output was adjusted using SPSS to reflect this uncertainty with regards to homogeneity of variance. The results of this test will be used to assist in Research Question 2 of this study, "Are aspiring administrators focusing on and valuing the same trainings and opportunities that sitting principals found to be most helpful in their current positions?" The null hypothesis for this question was "There will be no difference in the trainings and opportunities sitting principals value and those on which the aspiring administrators are focused." With an interest in determining if there is a difference between these means only, the two-sided p-value will be used. A two-sided p-value of .196 is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between the means of the composite responses of these two groups on the Likert-scale portion of the survey. This would suggest that when the data is viewed with a holistic approach, there is not enough evidence to say that sitting principals and aspiring administrators differ in the ways they valued their leadership training.

Part 2 of Survey: Ranking the 21 Behaviors Results

Descriptive Data

In the second part of the survey, sitting principals and aspiring administrators were asked to rank 21 best practice activities of school leaders in order from most important (1) to least important (21). The descriptive data will be used to look for patterns and irregularities. If the mean of one of the behaviors from the sitting principal

responses is noticeably different than the responses of the aspiring administrators, hypothesis testing will be conducted to look for statistical significance.

Table 4.43

Mean Ranking of 21 Best Practices of School Leaders – Sitting Principals

	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Var.	Count
1. Strengthening school culture	1.00	9.00	3.20	2.30	5.31	54
2. Building a shared vision	1.00	18.00	4.57	4.07	16.58	54
3. Establishing high performance expectations	1.00	19.00	4.96	4.10	16.81	54
4. Strong focus on goals for stud. achievement	1.00	15.00	5.15	2.94	8.64	54
5. Recruiting and retaining quality teachers	1.00	17.00	8.22	4.69	21.99	54
6. Exhibiting resiliency and adaptability	1.00	20.00	8.69	5.12	26.22	54
7. Creating opp. for teacher collaboration	2.00	18.00	9.09	3.55	12.60	54
8. Providing supportive working environment	1.00	20.00	9.24	4.94	24.44	54
9. Individualized teacher support and PD	3.00	19.00	9.67	3.84	14.74	54
10. Managing data to make decisions	3.00	19.00	10.70	3.97	15.76	54
11. Matching leadership skills to situation	2.00	19.00	10.78	4.91	24.06	54
12. Establishing relationships with community	1.00	20.00	11.00	4.74	22.44	54
13. Evaluating and developing teachers	2.00	19.00	11.06	3.96	15.72	54
14. Providing instructional guidance	1.00	20.00	12.26	4.11	16.93	54
15. Empowering others to make decisions	1.00	19.00	12.57	4.75	22.54	54
16. Aligning resources to support instruction	2.00	19.00	13.85	4.32	18.68	54
17. Providing a model for best practice	6.00	19.00	13.91	3.75	14.05	54
18. Providing organizational management skills	3.00	21.00	16.52	4.57	20.84	54
19. Developing school improvement plans	2.00	21.00	16.91	4.34	18.82	54
20. Improving high school graduation rates	8.00	21.00	18.39	3.21	10.31	54
21. Improving college enrollment rates	16.00	21.00	20.26	1.29	1.67	54

There were four important behaviors, according to sitting principals, where the mean ranking was below 6.00. These were strengthening school culture, building a shared vision, establishing high performance expectations, and having a strong focus on goals for student achievement. There were four behaviors that were clearly the least important, according to sitting principals. These behaviors had means over 16.00 and were providing organizational management skills, developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans, improving graduation rates, and improving college enrollment rates.

Aspiring administrators were also asked to rank the 21 best practice behaviors.

Table 4.44

Mean Ranking of 21 Best Practices of School Leaders – Aspiring Administrators

	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Var.	Count
1. Strengthening school culture	1.00	13.00	3.76	2.92	8.53	41
2. Building a shared vision	1.00	21.00	4.39	3.57	12.77	41
3. Establishing high performance expectations	1.00	18.00	6.46	4.63	21.42	41
4. Strong focus on goals for stud. achievement	1.00	18.00	7.02	5.18	26.85	41
5. Recruiting and retaining quality teachers	1.00	21.00	7.83	5.17	26.73	41
6. Individualized teacher support and PD	2.00	17.00	7.85	4.19	17.59	41
7. Matching leadership skills to school situation	1.00	21.00	9.27	4.86	23.61	41
8. Exhibiting resiliency and adaptability	1.00	19.00	9.61	6.05	36.63	41
9. Providing supportive working environment	1.00	19.00	9.80	5.68	32.30	41
10. Establishing relationships with community	1.00	20.00	9.98	4.98	24.80	41
11. Creating opp. for teacher collaboration	3.00	21.00	10.29	4.84	23.43	41
12. Evaluating and developing teachers	4.00	18.00	10.49	3.72	13.86	41
13. Managing data to make decisions	5.00	19.00	11.27	3.60	12.93	41

Table 4.44 (continued)

Mean Ranking of 21 Best Practices of School Leaders – Aspiring Administrators

	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Var.	Count
14. Empowering others to make decisions	2.00	20.00	12.29	4.86	23.62	41
15. Providing instructional guidance	2.00	20.00	12.51	3.58	12.79	41
16. Aligning resources to support instruction	3.00	19.00	14.17	4.17	17.41	41
17. Providing a model for best practice	6.00	20.00	14.44	3.62	13.12	41
18. Providing organizational management skills	3.00	21.00	16.29	5.13	26.30	41
19. Improving high school graduation rates	2.00	21.00	16.66	4.29	18.37	41
20. Developing school improvement plans	8.00	20.00	17.15	3.34	11.15	41
21. Improving college enrollment rates	4.00	21.00	19.46	3.12	9.76	41

There were two clear important behaviors, according to aspiring administrators, where the mean ranking was below 6.00. These were strengthening school culture and building a shared vision. There were four behaviors that were clearly the least important, according to aspiring administrators. These behaviors had means over 16.00 and were providing organizational management skills, improving high school graduation rates, developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans, and improving college enrollment rates.

Table 4.45

Comparison of Mean Ranks for 21 Best Practice Behaviors

	<u>Sitting Principals</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrators</u>	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Strengthening school culture	1	3.20	1	3.76
Building a shared vision	2	4.57	2	4.39
Establishing high performance expectations	3	4.96	3	6.46
Strong focus on goals for student achievement	4	5.15	4	7.02
Recruiting and retaining quality teachers	5	8.22	5	7.83
Exhibiting resiliency and adaptability	6	8.69	8	9.61
Creating opportunity for teacher collaboration	7	9.09	11	10.29
Providing supportive working environment	8	9.24	9	9.80
Individualized teacher support and PD	9	9.67	6	7.85
Managing data to make decisions	10	10.70	13	11.27
Matching leadership skills to school situations	11	10.78	7	9.27
Establishing relationships with community	12	11.00	10	9.98
Evaluating and developing teachers	13	11.06	12	10.49
Providing instructional guidance	14	12.26	15	12.51
Empowering others to make decisions	15	12.57	14	12.49
Aligning resources to support instruction	16	13.85	16	14.17
Providing a model for best practice	17	13.91	17	14.44
Providing organizational management skills	18	16.52	18	16.29
Developing school improvement plans	19	16.91	20	17.15
Improving high school graduation rates	20	18.39	19	16.66
Improving college enrollment rates	21	20.26	21	19.46

Sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked the same first five important behaviors, and the averages of the means placed these behaviors in the same order for both groups. Sitting principals valued “creating opportunity for teacher collaboration” (7th most important behavior) more than aspiring administrators (11th most important behavior). Aspiring administrators valued “individualized teacher support and professional development” (6th most important behavior) more than sitting principals (9th most important behavior). Both sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked “developing strategic school improvement plans”, “improving high school graduation rates”, and “improving college enrollment rates” as the three least important behaviors from the list of 21.

Hypothesis Testing for Ranking 21 Best-Practice Behaviors

When studying the comparison chart in Table 4.45, many of the mean ranking values for the sitting principals were very similar to the mean ranking values of the aspiring administrators. The best example of the similarity can be found with the item “Empowering others to make a significant decision” where the sitting principals’ average ranking was 12.57 and the aspiring administrators’ average ranking was 12.49. Table 4.46 shows the difference in mean rankings of sitting principals and aspiring administrators, ranked in order from largest difference to smallest difference.

Table 4.46

Difference in Mean Ranks for 21 Best Practice Behaviors, Ordered Largest to Smallest

	Sitting Principal Mean	Aspiring Admin Mean	Diff.
Strong focus on goals for stud achievement	5.15	7.02	1.87
Individualized teacher support and PD	9.67	7.85	1.82
Improving high school graduation rates	18.39	16.66	1.73
Matching leadership skills to school situations	10.78	9.27	1.51
Establishing high performance expectations	4.96	6.46	1.50
Creating opportunity for teacher collaboration	9.09	10.29	1.20
Establishing relationships with community	11.00	9.98	1.02
Exhibiting resiliency and adaptability	8.69	9.61	.92
Improving college enrollment rates	20.26	19.46	.81
Evaluating and developing teachers	11.06	10.49	.57
Managing data and knowledge to make decisions	10.70	11.27	.57
Providing supportive working environment	9.24	9.80	.56
Strengthening school culture	3.20	3.76	.56
Providing/implementing model for best practice	13.91	14.44	.53
Recruiting and retaining quality teachers	8.22	7.83	.39
Aligning resources to support instruction	13.85	14.17	.31
Providing instructional guidance	12.26	12.51	.25
Developing strategic school improvement plans	16.91	17.15	.24
Providing organizational management skills	16.52	16.29	.21
Building a shared vision	4.57	4.39	.18
Empowering others to make significant decisions	12.57	12.49	.08

When considering research question 1, “Is there a difference between the way sitting principals and aspiring administrators value items from a list of research-based behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders?”, Table 4.46 was an important visual representation of the differences in where sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked their research-based behaviors/attributes. As seen in the table, there was never a distance more than 1.87. This means that sitting principals and aspiring administrators never ranked an item (on average) more than 2 places away in their respective rankings. This descriptive data suggested that there was very little difference in where sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked their research-based behaviors/attributes.

To verify this conclusion, hypothesis testing was conducted 21 times to determine if any single item had a statistically significant difference in mean ranking of sitting principal and aspiring administrator responses. Only one single item was found to have a statistically significant difference. Table 4.47, Table 4.48, and Table 4.49 will display the hypothesis testing conducted on the top 3 behaviors/attributes with the highest difference in mean ranking between the sitting principals and aspiring administrators.

1. Strong focus on goals for student achievement (mean difference of 1.87)
2. Individualized teacher support and PD (mean difference of 1.82)
3. Improving high school graduation rates (mean difference of 1.73)

It should be noted that the differences in mean values seen in the tables of the hypothesis testing will be slightly different than those listed in Table 4.46. To complete the hypothesis testing, surveys that were not completed in their entirety were removed to

calculate from a pure sample. Therefore, the N value for both groups, sitting principals and aspiring administrators, was slightly lower in the hypotheses testing process.

Table 4.47

Independent Samples T-test for “Strong Focus on Goals for Student Achievement”

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	two - sided p	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Lower	Upper
Strong Focus on Goals for Student Achieve- ment	Equal Variance Assumed	17.674	<.001	-1.616	70	.111	-1.692	1.047	-3.781	.396
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			-1.691	60.852	.096	-1.692	1.001	-3.694	.309

The independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean ranking of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on the item, “Strong focus on goals for student achievement”. Levene’s test for equality of variance was found to be violated for this question’s analysis, $F = 17.674$, $p = <.001$. The homogeneity of variances cannot be assumed, and therefore a t-statistic accounting for this violated assumption was computed. There was not found to be a significant difference between the mean rankings of sitting principals ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 2.955$) and aspiring administrators ($M = 7.03$, $SD = 5.363$); $t(60.852) = -1.691$, $p = .096$. This would suggest that aspiring administrators and sitting principals did not differ significantly on where they ranked the item “Strong focus on goals for student achievement”.

Table 4.48

Independent Samples T-test for “Individualized teacher support and PD”

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	two - sided p	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Lower	Upper
Individ- ualized Teacher Support and PD	Equal Variance Assumed	.024	.877	2.299	70	.024	2.345	1.020	.311	4.379
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			2.303	68.468	.024	2.345	1.018	.313	4.377

Likewise, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean rankings of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on the behavior/attribute, “Individualized teacher support and PD”. This question’s analysis passed Levene’s test for equality of variance, $F = .024$, $p = .877$. The homogeneity of variances can be assumed, and therefore the t-statistic computed using this assumption was used for analysis. There was a significant difference between the mean responses of sitting principals ($M = 10.24$, $SD = 4.265$) and aspiring administrators ($M = 7.90$, $SD = 4.352$); $t(70) = 2.299$, $p = .024$. This would suggest that aspiring administrators ranked “individualized teacher support and PD” at a significantly different and higher ranking than sitting principals.

Table 4.49

Independent Samples T-test for “Improving high school graduation rates”

		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	two - sided p	Mean Diff.	Std. Err. Diff.	Lower	Upper
Improving high school graduation rates	Equal Variance Assumed	2.329	.131	1.507	70	.136	1.422	.944	-.460	3.304
	Equal Variance Not Assumed			1.536	69.714	.129	1.422	.926	-.424	3.268

Finally, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean ranking of sitting principals and aspiring administrators on the item, “Improving high school graduation rates”. This item’s analysis passed Levene’s test for equality of variance, $F = 2.329$, $p = .131$. The homogeneity of variances can be assumed, and therefore the t-statistic computed using this assumption was used for analysis. There was not found to be a significant difference between the mean rankings of sitting principals ($M = 17.91$, $SD = 3.467$) and aspiring administrators ($M = 16.49$, $SD = 4.382$); $t(70) = 1.507$, $p = .136$. This would suggest that aspiring administrators and sitting principals did not differ significantly on where they ranked the item “Improving high school graduation rates”.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 contains data specifically designed to compare the perceptions/responses of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. The first part of the survey data came from the responses of 15 Likert Score questions/prompts, and

hypothesis testing was conducted on each question. Only 4 questions from the total of 15 were found to have statistically significant differences from the responses of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. When hypothesis testing was conducted on the overall mean composites of responses from the 15 questions, there was found to be no statistical significance in the way sitting principals responded and the way aspiring administrators responded. Therefore, through the analysis of this quantitative data, there is very little evidence that sitting principals and aspiring administrators answered questions/prompts about their leadership training in a meaningfully different way.

The second part of the survey asked sitting principals and aspiring administrators to rank 21 research-based items, from a provided list, in order from most important to least important. In looking at the descriptive data of this set, sitting principals and aspiring administrators had their top five behavior/attributes ranked in exact same order. They also listed the same three behaviors/attributes as their least important items. In looking at an overview of the mean rankings, the average ranking of every behavior/attribute item for sitting principals was within a 2.00 difference of where aspiring administrators ranked that same item. When hypothesis testing was conducted on the three behaviors/attributes with the largest differences in mean rankings, only one item (individualized teacher support and PD) was found to have a statistically significant difference in where it was ranked. Aspiring administrators valued this item more than sitting principals. With the fact that only one item in the list of 21 was found to be ranked significantly different by sitting principals and aspiring administrators, there remains very little evidence that sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked this list of 21 items in a meaningfully different way. The closeness of mean responses for

each of the behaviors/attributes and the comparison of rankings, found in the descriptive data, supports this statement as well.

Sitting principals and aspiring administrators answered both parts of the survey in a very similar way. There does not appear to be the possible disconnect between the values and priorities of these two groups, as proposed as a question in Chapter 1. The following chapter will provide additional discussion, context, and implications for this research. If sitting principals and aspiring administrators are answering the same way, there is value in looking at exactly how they answered.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

During the first three chapters, this work outlined the dynamic relationship between a sitting principal at a public school and an aspiring administrator who intends to interview and be considered for an administrative position. It began with an overview of leadership styles found in all facets of business, entrepreneurship, schools, and other organizations (Lee et al., 2020). Then, the study looked more closely at school leadership and the impact of the fusion of instructional and transformation leadership (Lee et al., 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003; Leathwood, 2012). Next, it was important to determine which school leadership behaviors were most effective to improve student achievement. Finally, research was studied to determine which leadership trainings sitting principals and aspiring administrators found to be most valuable (Zhang & Brundrett, 2010; Polet et al., 2018; Boerema, 2011; Rhodes et al., 2008). Although research exhibited overlap between aspiring administrator and sitting principal perception, it was important to attempt to determine if there was a disconnect between the priorities and values of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. Why were some aspiring administrators having such a difficult time performing well in interviews to join administrative teams?

In thinking about this question, the purpose of this study became to determine if there was a difference between the perceptions and values of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. If aspiring administrators understand what sitting principals value and can identify any areas where these two groups of educators may differ on

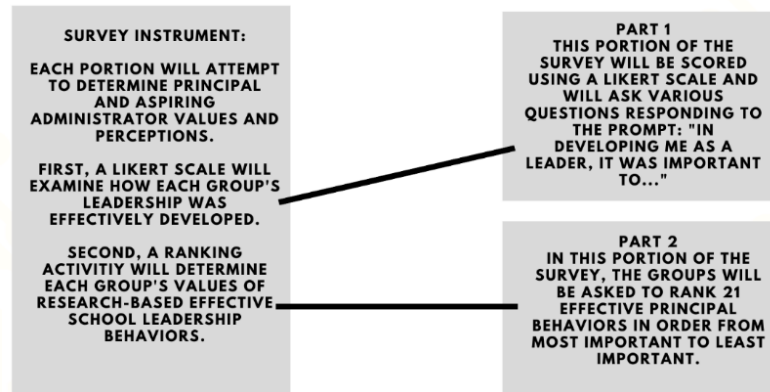
perception, then aspiring administrators could better prepare for interviews and be better equipped to become effective school leaders.

A research-based, two-part survey grounded this work and provided the data needed to analyze the perceptions of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. First, the initial part of the survey utilized was derived from published work by Matte (2012). The validity and reliability of her instrument were determined prior to the beginning of her study and was noted to align with the context of this study as was articulated in chapter 3. The 21 items to be ranked in Part 2 of the survey instrument were taken directly from a survey administered by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) in 2010. These effective school leadership behaviors were also supported through the research presented in Chapter 2. As shown in Chapter 3, Figure 5.1 displays the organization of the cross-sectional survey instrument used in this non-experimental quantitative study.

Figure 5.1 *Survey Design and Organization*

SURVEY INSTRUMENT DESIGN

A single survey with two distinct areas of interest.



Summary of Results

The review of research and leadership theories previously discussed supported a possible universal understanding of effective school leadership (Zhang & Brundrett, 2010; Polet et al., 2018; Boerema, 2011; Rhodes et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2020). It appeared from the theoretical and empirical evidence that it would be logical for aspiring administrators and sitting principals to share similar priorities in their leadership training and the ranking of the behaviors of effective school leaders. As the previous research suggested, this study found that there were very few components of the survey found to

have significant differences in the perceptions and values of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. A breakdown of each part of the survey can be found in the next two paragraphs.

Research Question 1: “Is there a difference between the way sitting principals and aspiring administrators value items from a list of research-based behaviors/attributes of effective school leaders?”, was answered using Part 2 of the survey (Appendix B). Of the 21 items that each group ranked as a response to the survey, there was only one survey item where statistical significance was found in difference of the mean rankings. In fact, each item ranked by sitting principals was ranked within two places, on average, of the responses of the aspiring administrators. This means that both groups seemed to prioritize these items in a very similar way. The item found to be statistically significant, having individualized support and professional development for teachers ($p = .024$), was valued more highly by aspiring administrators than by sitting principals. With aspiring administrators currently serving in a classroom teacher or academic coach role at their school, it was logical that they would value individualized support and professional development. Sitting principals still ranked this item in their top 10 most important, but it was not ranked as high as the ranking of the aspiring administrators.

Looking closely at the descriptive data (resulted displayed in Table 4.45), sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked the same five items from the list as most important, as well as the same three items from the list as least important. Of the five items at the top of each ranking list, sitting principals and aspiring administrators prioritized these in the exact same order as well. This was clear evidence disputing the

fact that there might be a disconnect between the priorities and values of sitting principals and aspiring administrators in relation to a list of 21 best-practice items.

Research Question 2: “Are aspiring administrators focusing on and valuing the same trainings and opportunities that sitting principals found to be most helpful in their current positions?”, was answered using Part 1 of the survey (Appendix A). Of the fifteen Likert-scale questions asked to both sitting principals and aspiring administrators, there were only four questions where a statistically significant difference was discovered between the mean responses of the two groups. These were Question 8 ($p < .001$), Question 9 ($p < .001$), Question 10 ($p = .031$) and Question 13 ($p = .014$). In order to examine the overall effect of possible differences between the groups, comparisons were made considering the mean composite scores for each group (Table 4.42). The results of this comparison found that there were no statistically significant differences ($p = .121$) in the ways the groups answered the prompts. For further evidence, when ranking the means of the responses to the fifteen questions as seen in Table 4.39, the aspiring administrators and the sitting principals had several leadership training experiences that they ranked with the exact same level of importance.

These results suggest that discerning where sitting and aspiring administrators disconnect from one another on these values and priorities may not be as easy to anticipate. If aspiring administrators are struggling to perform well in interviews and secure administrative opportunities, there must be additional research questions or hypotheses to be considered.

Discussion

The purpose of this study originated from the researcher's personal experience in helping an aspiring administrator colleague prepare for an interview to become an assistant principal. The results of this empirical study indicate that there is no significant difference in the perceptions, values, and rankings of sitting and aspiring principals with regards to leadership training and the prioritization of effective school leadership behaviors. However, the data pointed out some variations that are worthy of exploring in greater detail. With the similarity in responses from these groups noted, further reflection on their specific responses can be very valuable to three distinct groups of people: aspiring administrators, school district leadership, and education departments at the College/University level.

Aspiring Administrators

As aspiring administrators are preparing to interview to become school leaders, it is critical for them to understand the importance of their leadership preparation. Developing Leaders from Within (Lovely, 1999), a program mentioned in chapter two, focused on five major principles.

- 1) Give leadership duties and opportunities to aspiring administrators.
- 2) Allow aspiring administrators varied experiences in more than one school.
- 3) Provide professional development for aspiring administrators.
- 4) Provide monthly meetings with a sitting principal.
- 5) Grow the aspiring administrators who you know will help the organization flourish.

These principles were seen in other research-based studies/programs (Morgan, 2009; Borsuk, 2021; Rhodes et al., 2008), and supported the questions asked in both parts of the survey in this study.

Table 4.45 showed that one of the most important conclusions that could be drawn from the study was that both aspiring and sitting principals ranked “improving school culture” as the most important item of the list of 21 possible behaviors in the second part of the survey. Figure 5.2 below provides a comparison of their top and bottom 3 rankings.

Figure 5.2

Top 3 and Bottom 3 Comparisons of Mean Ranks for 21 Best Practice Behaviors

	<u>Sitting Principals</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrators</u>	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Strengthening school culture	1	3.20	1	3.76
Building a shared vision	2	4.57	2	4.39
Establishing high performance expectations	3	4.96	3	6.46
Developing school improvement plans	19	16.91	20	17.15
Improving high school graduation rates	20	18.39	19	16.66
Improving college enrollment rates	21	20.26	21	19.46

How many questions in an interview for a school administrator are focused on school culture specifically? Because the survey showed how important this component is to sitting principals, it would benefit aspiring administrators to attempt to incorporate

school culture into the answers of questions on various topics. Dr. Anthony Muhammad (2017) echoes the importance as he explains that the differences in the success between two similar schools can often be attributed to a toxic vs. healthy school culture.

When studying the responses to Part 1 of the survey (Table 4.39), support and feedback were two of the most important components of the leadership training for both aspiring administrators and sitting principals. A condensed version of Table 4.39 can be seen in Figure 5.3 below.

Figure 5.3

Condensed version of Table 4.39, Comparison of Mean Rankings

	<u>Sitting Principals</u>		<u>Aspiring Administrators</u>	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Question 11	1	1.24	1	1.07
Question 14	2	1.49	2	1.20
Question 7	3	1.53	4	1.27

Support and feedback had the highest mean responses on the Likert scale portion of the survey. There are two helpful conclusions that could be drawn from this information. First, it would benefit an aspiring administrator to find a mentor principal who was willing to give consistent feedback when the aspiring administrator was given leadership tasks. Additionally, this mentor could offer support and discuss scenarios when mistakes are made during the leadership training process. Secondly, because these two items were so important to sitting principals, it would be a valuable strategic move

during an interview to discuss how important it is to give feedback and support to teachers. Describing to a sitting principal a plan to support teachers when they make mistakes, as well as giving the teachers feedback through the walkthrough and evaluation process, would be a powerful discussion topic during an interview.

Sitting principals and aspiring administrators both answered that being “given opportunities to participate in real-life administrative situations during my leadership training” was one of the top four most valuable leadership experiences (from the questions provided in the Likert scale portion of the survey). For sitting principals this was the first leadership training experience where action could be taken. The three experiences that had higher means (being supported when mistakes were made, being given feedback on performance, and having strong administrative skills modelled) all involved a mentor component of learning. Looking for, asking for, and being given real-life administrative situations is the first experience for which an aspiring administrator could take action. This is very important for an aspiring administrator to know. Sitting principals find real world administrative scenarios to be very valuable, and so it would benefit an aspiring administrator to seek out as many of these experiences as possible prior to an interview. Also, completing these opportunities allows for feedback, support, and modeling which sitting principals found to be most valuable.

Sitting principals and aspiring administrators both ranked “building a shared vision” as the second most important school leader behavior (behind improving school culture). It would benefit aspiring administrators to familiarize themselves with the process of developing mission and vision statements. They should research the best ways to communicate a vision to faculty, as well as learn strategies to gain buy-in from faculty

and staff. Allowing faculty and staff a seat at the table in developing the vision could be one successful strategy. Dr. Anthony Muhammad (2017) suggests developing a leadership team, with a cross-section of educators from multiple departments, to help guide the school and build vision. A common question in interviews is “what steps would you take to implement a new initiative?” If an aspiring administrator can clearly communicate the importance of a shared vision and ways to gain buy-in from a staff of teachers, this would be very valuable to a sitting principal.

District Leadership

Backed by research, DuFour et al. (2016) describe a process that is crucial to seeing student success in schools. They simplify this process into three “big ideas” which can be summarized in the following way:

1. The main focus should be on student learning at the highest level.
2. Helping students learn requires a collaborative effort.
3. You must assess the effectiveness of the process by focusing on results in order to adjust as needed.

With collaboration being such an important part of this process, district leadership must be aware of one of the most glaring discrepancies in the survey data collected during this research. Sitting principals ranked “providing opportunities for teachers to collaborate” as the seventh most important behavior in the list of 21 items in part two of the survey. Aspiring administrators, however, ranked this as the eleventh most important item. In a survey that saw sitting principals and aspiring administrators rank several behaviors in the exact same place, this variation in results was surprising. The results show that administrators value collaboration more than the teacher leaders who are participating in

it. How can district leadership re-brand collaboration time? Is there a way to diagnose the health of collaboration in each building and work with sitting principals to improve the effectiveness of this time? Keating et al. (2020) warns that districts often “go through the motions” when it comes to the collaborative process. District leadership and sitting principals, according to Keating, must have a solid set of procedures and expectations to ensure that the collaborative process is valuable districtwide.

As mentioned in chapter 2, effective leaders utilize student learning data, demographic data, school process data, and perception data to make instructional decisions (Lange et al., 2012). With this information, a school administrator or leadership team can assess the current state of the school, determine ways to improve, and plan implementation of these strategies. This process should be, and in most cases is, a normal part of the yearly procedures of a school. Part 2 of the survey, however, provided district leadership with a fact, in which, they may or may not be aware. The term “school improvement plan” has lost its power in today’s schools. Both sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked “developing strategic school improvement plans” as one of the three least important behaviors in the list of 21 provided. When the research supports the use of data analysis to adjust and improve the long-term outcomes for students (Abbott & McKnight, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2008; Park & Datnow, 2009), it is discouraging to see principals and teacher leaders rank this component of the survey in the bottom three. A qualitative component would be needed to ask participants for an explanation of why they ranked this behavior where they did, but it is possible that creating a “school improvement plan” has become a formal requirement that schools complete with very little thought and emphasis. How can school districts make this

experience more valuable for schools? Is there a way that state requirements for these plans can be met while also allowing school leaders to benefit from their development and implementation?

A third implication for district leadership is the need to consider multiple post-graduate outcomes for students within their district. Sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked “improving college enrollment rates” as the least important behavior in the list of 21 behaviors provided in part 2 of the survey. One explanation is that college enrollment rates at the schools of surveyed participants may already be high, which would decrease the need for focus on improvement. Another possible explanation is that schools are beginning to meet student needs by incorporating vocational programs or other job preparation programs. This might cause them to worry less about college enrollment rates, but more about how they are preparing their own group of students for success after graduation. This study shows that it would be valuable for district leadership to analyze their college enrollment rates and maybe even survey their current families. Are the schools in the district meeting the needs of the students? Should the district look to add more AP courses or vocational courses based on the needs of their demographic?

A fourth implication for district leadership is the need to account for a strong mentor component in their aspiring administrator program. Both sitting principals and aspiring administrators listed receiving support when mistakes were made during their leadership training, receiving feedback when they completed administrative tasks, and having strong leadership modelled to them as the top three most important aspects of their overall leadership training. These three items can be accomplished by a strong

mentor. District leadership, regardless of the formality of their aspiring administrator program, can make sure that potential school leaders are paired with a strong sitting principal mentor within their district. This partnership could lead to faster and better development for the aspiring administrators. Additionally, building some of these bonds and connections might allow districts to keep their best aspiring administrators within their own district.

Education Departments of Colleges/Universities

Building upon the need for a mentoring/coaching component in leadership development at the district level, the survey also supports colleges and universities looking for ways to implement similar opportunities for aspiring administrators in their advanced degree programs. Silver et al. (2009) analyzed a job-embedded program which included a full-scale coaching program for new administrators. The results of the study showed that most all of the new administrators responded with a positive experience, citing the individual attention from the coaches as the most beneficial component. The survey in this study verified these results as both sitting principals and aspiring administrators ranked feedback, support, and modelling as being the three most important aspects of their leadership training. Both groups also chose “opportunities to participate in real-world administrative experiences” as being the fourth most important aspect of their training. What does this mean for colleges and universities who are offering degree programs for aspiring administrators? The most obvious need for these programs would be to find opportunities for aspiring administrators to get into school buildings to work with sitting principals. There is a great benefit for aspiring administrators to visit multiple schools and work with different types of leaders (Lively, 1999). Allowing

aspiring administrators the ability to find a mentor/coach (with the help of the College/University) could expedite the learning process. Additionally, they would be able to participate in real-world experiences in their training. If these could be incorporated into the college/university coursework, where the aspiring administrator reflected upon their performance, and then received feedback from both their participating sitting principal and their college/university professor, a very valuable experience would be achieved.

It might be difficult for colleges or universities to provide each of their graduate students with a mentor principal, or give them adequate hours inside of the school buildings. So how can colleges/universities still provide their aspiring administrators with real world scenarios to enhance their leadership training? One suggestion might be to form a committee of sitting principals to work together to document real experiences they have worked on in their buildings. Keeping the identities of those involved in the scenarios anonymous, college professors could provide these case-study situations to their aspiring administrators and allow them to work together to develop solutions/strategies. The most valuable part would be that after the team of aspiring administrators developed their strategy for solving the problem, the group could review the actual solution the school used. A great discussion of process, reasoning, and best-practice would follow. School law, special education law, managing personnel, and supporting teachers would all be topics that could be explored using these real-world scenarios.

A third implication for Colleges/Universities is the need to focus on school culture, shared vision, and high expectations when choosing curriculum topics. Sitting

principals and aspiring administrators ranked “improving school culture” as the most important behavior in the 21 behaviors provided in part two of the survey. If improving school culture is this important, it benefits the colleges/universities to provide research, theory, and practical knowledge on how a new administrator could begin improving school culture if given the opportunity to lead. Similarly, focusing part of the coursework for their graduate program on building a shared vision and creating high expectations for all would be very beneficial to the aspiring administrator.

A fourth implication for colleges/universities is the need to teach aspiring administrators how to make teacher collaboration effective. As mentioned in the implications for district leadership section of chapter five, the aspiring administrators ranked “creating opportunities for teacher collaboration” much lower than sitting principals. Providing aspiring administrators with the research and strategies needed to implement a collaborative culture at their school will be very valuable. Keating et al. (2020) stress the importance of collaboration at every level of a school system, from the school board to the individual teaching teams. With teacher collaboration having a positive impact on student learning (DuFour et al., 2016), colleges and universities should look for ways to help their graduate students understand the importance of the process.

Figure 5.4

Summary of Considerations for Aspiring Administrators, District Leadership, and Colleges/Universities

Considerations for Aspiring Administrators			
1. Incorporate school culture into responses of interview questions on various topics.	2. Ask for/find a mentor principal willing to provide valuable feedback and support.	3. Ask for/find real-life administrative opportunities to gain experiences that can be discussed in an interview.	4. Understand the process of creating shared vision and mission in a school. Understand gaining teacher buy-in.
Considerations for District Leadership			
1. Consider re-branding collaboration time to help emphasize the importance to the teachers in the district.	2. Attempt to make the process of developing a “school improvement plan” for valuable for schools.	3. Analyze current college enrollment rates and consider surveying the families. Is the district meeting student needs?	4. Connect each aspiring administrator with a quality sitting principal. Mentorship is crucial in their development.
Considerations for Colleges/Universities			
1. Organize multiple opportunities for aspiring administrators to spend time in multiple schools. Mentorship from different principals is valuable.	2. Consider developing a committee of sitting principals to develop real-world scenarios that can be studied in class.	3. Focusing coursework around creating positive school culture and creating and communicating high expectations.	4. Focus coursework on the importance of teacher collaboration and ways to implement a successful collaboration program.

Implications

As previously stated, the struggle that some aspiring administrators have experienced in interviews for school leadership led to the research questions to determine if there was a disconnect in the values and priorities of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. The results of this study, however, do not support this idea. As discussed at the beginning of Chapter 5, the study does point to some important implications and

considerations for practice (aspiring administrators, district leadership, and colleges/universities). It is also valuable to discuss the possible implications for policy and future research as well.

Implications for Policy

More and more school districts across the United States are demonstrating their focus on improving their aspiring administrator programs. As previously mentioned, the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) district is offering institutes to train both sitting principals and aspiring administrators. They are arranging their future leaders into cohort groups to take higher education courses together as well as allowing teacher leaders up to eight weeks of job-shadowing of quality administrators in the district (Borsuk, 2021). In Brevard County, FL district policy requires aspiring administrators to begin and progress through a seven-tiered program where they earn specific credentials as they move forward in their careers (Morgan, 2009). Many of these programs are designed to offer additional support, coaching, and mentoring as administrators and aspiring administrators advance through their careers. The research from this study would support the need for these programs. Sitting principals and aspiring administrators chose “being supported when mistakes were made”, “being given feedback on performance”, “having strong administrative skills modelled”, and “being given the opportunity to participate in real-world administrative experiences” as their top four most important leadership development experiences. All of these require a strong mentor or coaching relationship with an opportunity to practice real-world administrative scenarios. Moreover, as sitting principals ranked “improving school culture” as the top item in the list of 21 best-practice behaviors/activities of effective school leaders, this emphasized the need to understand

school culture, and learn strategies to cultivate a positive one. Therefore, it would benefit states to require administrative candidates to spend time with a mentor in an authentic school setting. The research, both from this study and studies in the literature review, suggest that having a valuable aspiring administrator program, utilizing a coach or mentor component, should be a requirement for future school leaders.

A second implication for policy is the lack of importance sitting principals and aspiring administrators placed on “developing a strategic school improvement plan”. The mean ranking from sitting principal responses was 16.91. The mean ranking from aspiring administrator responses was 17.15. As described in chapter 2, Bernhardt (2013) provided a framework for schools to follow if they want to have continuous improvement. The following five questions drive this framework.

- 1) Where are we now?
- 2) How did we get to where we are?
- 3) Where do we want to be?
- 4) How are we going to get to where we want to be?
- 5) Is what we are doing making a difference?

This framework forms the backbone of a school improvement plan, and should be completed by school leaders to help maximize student potential. Unfortunately, the words “school improvement plan” have been muddled and, based on the results found in the survey of this study, educators have devalued this process. Has the requirement for a school improvement plan to be submitted to the district or state made this a dreaded, mandatory task? Are educators giving the proper thought and focus into this process?

An implication for policy is the need to collect educator feedback and review each state's requirement of a school improvement plan, and consider modifications as needed.

Implications for Future Research

Several of the limitations in this study, provide opportunity for future research. Conducting a quantitative research study does not allow participants to explain or elaborate on their choices made in the survey. When sitting principals see the words “school improvement plan” for example, the researcher is unable to ask why they ranked this item as one of the least important. To attempt to gain a better idea of why aspiring administrators might be struggling to succeed during an interview with a sitting principal, it would be very helpful to conduct some interviews with each group of people after they complete a job interview process. During these reflection sessions with sitting principals and aspiring administrators, the researcher could also ask open-ended questions about the most important behaviors/attributes to leading a successful school. Rather than being provided a list of items to rank, the participants would be able to share their off-script ideas on what makes a school successful. Searching for overlap between these responses would add a level of thoroughness to the research conducted in this study, where all behaviors/responses were given to the participants.

An additional possibility for future research includes an in depth look at demographic data collected in this study. Does the amount of administrator experience influence the way that the sitting principals ranked their list of 21 items? Does the gender of the aspiring administrator have any impact on which training activities they found to be most valuable? If a goal of a state or district is to design a comprehensive and successful aspiring administrator program, the results from the demographic data could

help differentiate the learning and make sure that the program is appropriate for all candidates.

Limitations

This research was conducted with the acceptance of three important limitations. First, the survey used to determine a ranking of effective leadership practices, by both the aspiring administrators and the sitting principals, provided no opportunity for participants to choose the specific items that they truly value. In other words, the participants were not asked to provide the effective school behaviors they value, but instead were asked to rank from a provided list of 21 research-based behaviors/attributes. Were these 21 items the most important to the participants? The lack of autonomy in choosing the valuable behaviors was certainly a limitation to the study. To counter this limitation, the researcher clearly explained to the participants that these are not the only effective strategies seen in our schools. These 21 survey items are research-based and are of interest to the researcher. The participants ranked the items provided so that there is consistency between each participant.

A second limitation was the limited sample collected. Participants were pulled from six public school districts in Tennessee. With 55 sitting principals and 41 aspiring administrators answering the survey, there is limited power to make bold claims. It would be inappropriate to make broad generalizations about sitting principals and aspiring administrators across the country when participants are taken from a limited number of districts in Tennessee. To offset this limitation, the researcher attempted to pick six public school districts with various sizes and demographics to help the study be a

better representation of all schools across the country. The small participant pool will remain a limitation, however.

Included in limitations with regards to the participants of this study, the aspiring administrators were selected for participation by their sitting principals. On the survey sent to sitting principals, they were asked to list the email addresses of teacher leaders in their building who they view has high quality potential school leaders. While this was the most efficient way to identify potential aspiring administrators, a concern might be that sitting principals chose teacher leaders who agree with them or think in the same way that they do. When trying to determine if this was the best way to identify aspiring administrators, the researcher determined that allowing sitting principals to identify the most qualified to perform the duties was more valuable than the concern of choosing like-minded people. This limitation should still be noted, however, and considered by those who study this research.

When examining the hypothesis testing data in this study, it has previously been mentioned that a large number of individual t-tests were conducted on items from the survey. With each individual t-test using a 95% confidence interval, the number of tests conducted increases the opportunity for a Type 1 error to occur somewhere in the data. Understanding this limitation, the researcher discussed the descriptive data in length and provided the rankings of items from the survey. The researcher will refrain from making bold claims about the statistical significance found on several items from the survey.

Finally, an additional limitation to mention was the limited ability to determine the “why” of the results. When conducting qualitative data, it is easier to ask open-ended questions and to determine reasons for the results seen. In this study, with a standard

quantitative design, the researcher hoped to determine if there was a difference between the responses of the aspiring administrators and the sitting principals. If a difference was determined, there would be limited information to discuss meaningful reasons for this difference. As this is not uncommon in quantitative research, the researcher will pose some questions and discuss some possible reasons. These discussions could lead to productive future research projects.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, Marzano et al. (2005) determined that a school administrator must sometimes organize and execute up to 21 different responsibilities in a single school day. The job of being a school leader can be difficult, frustrating, overwhelming, and thankless. It can also, however, be rewarding, fulfilling, and purposeful. It is undeniable that students benefit tremendously from an effective school leader, and districts have a vested interest in placing the best candidates in these positions of leadership.

This study attempted to determine if aspiring administrators were prioritizing and valuing the same leadership training methods and behaviors/attributes as the sitting principals who might hire them. Would there be a disconnect between the values of these two important groups of educators? Ultimately, the findings of this study provided very little evidence that aspiring administrators and sitting principals disagree on the rankings of best-practice behaviors or the importance of various leadership training activities. In many cases these two groups seemed to answer in the exact same way. If these two groups were saying the same thing, then it became very important to look closely at what they were saying.

There was a high value placed on school culture, shared vision, and high expectations. There was tremendous value found in receiving support when mistakes were made, gathering feedback on performance, and having great leadership modeled. Both groups valued the collaborative and supportive school environment where their individual needs could be met with professional development. In their leadership development, both groups found real-life administrative experiences to be the best to expedite their learning.

Contrarily, both groups found improving high school graduation rates, improving college enrollment percentages, and completing a strategic school improvement plan as being the least important items in the survey. They found guided practice or simulated administrative situations to be less valuable than real-world experiences. They declared that “district-groomed” programs where they were prepared specifically for an administrative job were far less valuable than connecting with a good mentor and receiving feedback during the training process.

If the US Labor Department studies are correct that “baby boomers” nearing retirement age could account for 40% of school administrators retiring very soon (Ellison & Hayes, 2006), then it becomes crucial for districts and schools to support aspiring administrators. Programs designed to educate and prepare these future leaders are paramount. This study allowed for a snapshot of some of the perceptions and values of sitting principals and aspiring administrators. With this new information, districts can continue their pursuit of giving students the most effective leaders possible.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Survey Part 1 – Likert-Scale, surveying the importance of various leadership development and training practices.

Sitting Principal and Aspiring Administrator – Leadership Training Survey					
In developing me as a leader it was important...					
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.To be told by others I possessed leadership qualities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.That other people in the district influenced me to pursue an administrative position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.That I was recruited for an administrator position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.That I was part of a district-groomed (ie specifically trained) pool of potential administrators.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.That I participated in activities that were aligned to a set of standards.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.That I attained a set of competencies, or skills, before assuming an administrative position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.That leadership skills were modeled during my leadership training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.That I had participated in guided practice while	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

working on my leadership skills.					
9.That I participated in simulated administrative situations during my leadership training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.That I was given opportunities to participate in real-life administrative situations during my leadership training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11.That I was supported at times during my leadership training when I made mistakes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12.That assessments of my leadership skills were made during my leadership training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13.That activities assigned as part my leadership training were based on my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14.That feedback was given to me about my performance during my leadership training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15.That I was coached or mentored by the outgoing administrator whose position I filled.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix B:

Survey Part 2: Please Rank the Following Behaviors/Activities of Effective School Leaders in Order from Most Important (Number 1) to Least Important (Number 21).

Focus on Goals for Student Achievement	Building a shared vision
Establishing High Performance Expectations	Strengthening School Culture
Providing individualized teacher support and professional development	Matching Leadership Knowledge and Skills to the School Situation
Evaluating and developing teachers	Creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate
Providing instructional guidance (curriculum, pedagogy, and practice)	Establishing productive relationships with families and communities
Providing and implementing models of best practice	Empowering others to make significant decisions
Developing and implementing strategic school improvement plans	Providing organizational management skills (including personnel and budgetary matters)
Aligning resources to support the instructional program	Providing supportive working conditions in the school building
Managing data and knowledge to make good decisions	Exhibiting resiliency and adaptability
Recruiting and retaining quality teachers	Improving college enrollment rates
Improving high school graduation rates	

Appendix C

District Leadership from one of the participating districts in the study was asked to verify that questions from the Likert-Scale portion of the survey were appropriate for aspiring administrators. If the question received at least two “yes” responses, then it was used in the survey.

Is the Likert-Scale Survey Question appropriate for Aspiring Administrators?			
Question	District Leader 1	District Leader 2	District Leader 3
Question 1	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 2	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 3	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 4	Yes	Yes	No
Question 5	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 6	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 7	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 8	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 9	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 10	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 11	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 12	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 13	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 14	Yes	Yes	Yes
Question 15	No	Yes	Yes

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