A Multiple Case Study Examining Perceptions of Preparedness and Standards
Alignment of Principal Preparation Cohort Programs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine how well current students and graduates of principal preparation program cohorts in one large school district in the Mid-Atlantic perceived their program was preparing them, or has prepared them, to be school-based administrators. Current cohort students and graduates were studied to determine their perceptions regarding how well their principal preparation program prepared them to be school-based administrators as well as how well they believed their program was aligned with the current (2015) Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSELs). To ascertain if any significant differences appeared in the data, a two-tailed t test was used to compare participant groups (graduates with administrative positions and graduates without administrative positions) and an ANOVA was used to compare universities. Statistical analysis revealed that graduates with administrative positions perceived they were better prepared to be school-based administrators than graduates without administrative positions on most of the current PSELs. Additionally, graduates with school-based administrative positions believed their programs were better aligned the current PSELs than graduates without administrative positions. Furthermore, graduates and current students perceived that one of the universities under study did not prepare them as well and was not as well aligned as the other two universities under study based on some of the current PSELs. Focus group discussions revealed that significant differences in the data may be due to different administrative experiences/internships, curriculum, professors, and personal responsibility. A document review indicated that the standards taught were, in general, not well aligned with the current PSELs.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the perceptions of preparedness of current students and graduates of principal preparation program cohorts in one large school district in the Mid-Atlantic. Additionally, this study sought to determine how well current students and graduates believed their programs were aligned with current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSELs). A review of accreditation documents revealed that the standards taught in the principal preparation programs were not, in general, aligned with the current PSELs. A survey of current students and graduates of three principal preparation cohorts in the school district under study indicated that graduates with school-based administrative positions (principals, assistant principals, associate principals, deans) perceived they were better prepared than graduates without school-based administrative positions. Furthermore, graduates with school-based administrative positions indicated their programs were more aligned to the PSELs than did graduates without administrative positions. When comparing universities, current students and graduates perceived that one of the universities under study did not perform as well as the other two universities regarding perceptions of preparedness and PSEL alignment on some of the PSELs. A focus group determined that the possible reasons for the differences in the data were due to administrative experiences/internships, curriculum, professors, and personal responsibility. This study is significant because it informs the universities and school district of any perceived programmatic strengths and weakness. The school district and universities may want to gather more data to improve their program effectiveness.

Dedication

To my wonderful and dedicated wife, Lisa, who has supported me and my efforts since we first met on July 3, 1983. She believed in me before I did and has always been my pillar of strength. Lisa has made numerous sacrifices throughout my undergraduate studies up through my doctoral studies so that I could achieve my professional goals. Not only did she never complain about my absence while I was at class or while at home with my nose buried in a text book or this paper, she is the one who would not let me give up my pursuit even when I had my own doubts. While I was out trying to "better myself," she was working full time and taking care of our three incredible children, of whom I am very proud and also owe a debt of gratitude. Without Lisa, not only would this paper not be written, but I would probably still be trying to figure out what I want to do with my life.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Chapter 1: Background

Our nation's schools have come under fire since the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*. Since this startling report, reforms in education have largely addressed the need for improved teaching and quality teachers. Federal laws such as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) placed an emphasis on "highly qualified" teachers, and the more recent Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which removed "highly qualified" from the language, uses effectiveness, as defined by each state, as its measure. Regardless of the terminology used, the laws focus on ensuring our schools are filled with qualified teachers. Understandably, focus has been on teachers who have the most direct influence on student achievement. However, a growing body of research indicates the need for a greater emphasis on the effectiveness of school-based administrators.

Alvoid and Black (2014) described the changing role of the modern principal as:

[S]omething that would be almost unrecognizable to the principals of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The concept of the principal as a building manager has given way to a model where the principal is an aspirational leader, a team builder, a coach, and an agent of visionary change (para. 2).

Alvoid and Black (2014) further explained that:

[T]hese changing expectations, coupled with insufficient training and support, have led many principals to the conclusion that the job is no longer sustainable. Attrition due to resignations and early retirements, along with a shortage of qualified candidates for open principal positions, is leading toward a crisis of leadership in American education. *Principals do not feel sufficiently prepared by their preservice training to successfully meet the demands of school leadership* [emphasis added] (para. 4).

1

Since research indicates that teachers have the greatest influence on a student's academic success (Stronge & Tucker, 2000), it stands to reason that efforts in the United States toward improving teacher quality are necessary and vital. Often overlooked is the increasing role of the principal as an instructional leader. In order to improve our schools, we must also improve school leadership. As the quotes above from Alvoid and Black (2014) indicate, the role of the principal has changed dramatically over the years, but have our principal preparation programs changed with the times in order to better prepare our principals to lead in today's schools? Today's new principals are feeling overwhelmed and are leaving the principalship after only a short time, particularly in high needs schools, highlighting "the importance of districts having well-designed plans for recruitment, training, and ongoing support of their principals" (Alvoid & Black, 2014, para. 5).

Realizing the need to standardize what quality school leadership is, educational leaders, practitioners, and government officials created the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1996. Since its creation, the standards developed by ISLLC have been revised twice: in 2008 and 2015. In 2015, the collective name of these standards was changed to The Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (referred to in this dissertation as the PSEL Standards). In order to address the educational needs of today, universities must align their principal preparation programs with these standards to better ensure that students in principal preparation programs believe they are effectively prepared to meet these standards. Aligning principal preparation programs with these standards is part of the pipeline for success identified by the Council of Chief School State Officers (Council of Chief School State Officers, 2013). This dissertation addresses the issues of how well current students and graduates of principal preparation cohorts in one school district believe they were prepared to be school-based

administrators based on the current PSEL Standards and to determine how well current students and graduates believe their cohort programs were aligned to the current PSEL Standards. This study targeted current students and graduates of three principal preparation programs in one of the nation's largest school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) located in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Background of the Problem

"It is the administrator who creates a good school. And it is the teacher who creates a good classroom" (Wong, 1999, p. 1). While the classroom experience is important, recent research indicates that principals play a significant role in the success and failure of students. A good principal may raise achievement for students between two and seven months and conversely, a poor administrator can be responsible for lowering the achievement by the same amount (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). As a result of ESSA, and previously NCLB, schools are more accountable for student learning as measured by standardized tests. School-based administrators have also felt the pressure because failure to meet certain criteria could result in their dismissal.

Our schools need quality teachers as well as highly effective administrators. Standards-based principal preparation programs designed to produce effective principals should be a university and school district priority. This study aims to determine how well current students and graduates of principal preparation cohorts in one school district believe they were prepared for administrative positions, as well as how well their programs were aligned to leadership standards, based on the nationally accepted PSEL Standards.

Rationale for the Study

The Center on Great Teachers & Leaders stated that the concept behind the creation of standards for school leaders was to "strengthen organizations, support teachers, lead instruction, and advance student learning" (Center on Great Teachers & Leaders, n.d.). While the standards have evolved over the years, the primary concept behind the standards has remained consistent. School-based administrators are expected to lead their schools from Day One. To do so, they must be adequately prepared. Principal preparation programs are tasked with providing many of our school-based administrators with the proper training needed to be effective leaders. If leadership standards are designed to "strengthen organizations, support teachers, lead instruction, and advance student learning," it stands to reason that effective school-based administrators would be adequately prepared to accomplish these tasks. In the state where my research will be conducted, prior to receiving an endorsement in administration, potential graduates must pass the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) to prove they have mastered certain standards. However, it is also of interest to understand how well current cohort students and graduates perceive they were prepared by their program to effectively lead a school.

Theoretical Framework

A fairly simple theory underlies my research. The goal of improved school leadership will be accomplished through strengthening our principal preparation programs. Determining the quality of a principal preparation program would be an exercise in futility because too many variables can influence the quality of an educational program. However, we can determine how well aspiring school-based administrators believe they were prepared to be school-based leaders and ascertain how well they believe their program was aligned to current PSEL Standards. This knowledge informs us of the strengths and weaknesses of principal preparation programs.

Preparation plus alignment should yield prepared school-based leaders ready to effectively lead

our schools as determined by current PSEL Standards.
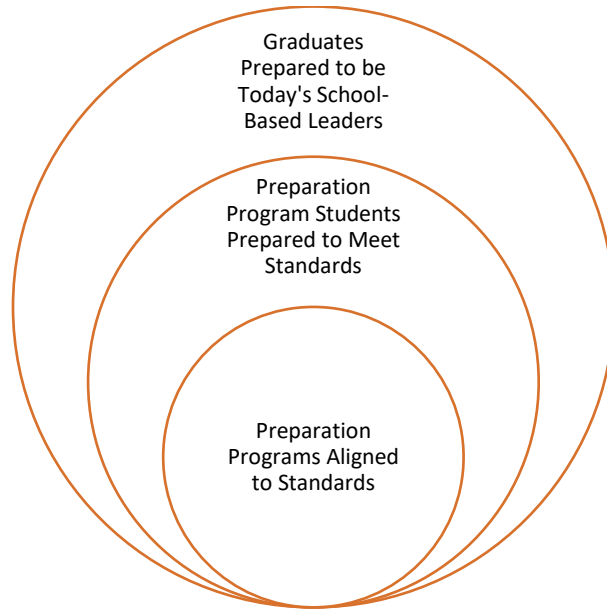
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of current cohort students and graduates regarding how well

   they were prepared by their principal preparation cohort program to meet each of the

   current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders?

   a. What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students, graduates

      who are not school-based administrators, and graduates who are school-based

      administrators (or who have been school-based administrators)?

   b. What are the differences in perceptions among cohort students and graduates from

      each of the universities under study?

2. What are the perceptions of current cohort students and graduates regarding how well their principal preparation program was aligned to each of the current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders?

    a. What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students, graduates who are not school-based administrators, and graduates who are school-based administrators (or who have been school-based administrators)?

    b. What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students and graduates from each of the universities under study?

Methodology

My research compared the different principal preparation cohort programs offered in one of the largest school districts in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. This district coordinates with three universities on a rotating basis to offer principals preparation cohorts for its teachers. I completed a case study in order to "tell a story" that involves a comparative analysis of the three programs offered in the district (Colton & Covert, 2007, p. 372). My aim was to determine how well current students and graduates believed they were prepared to be school-based leaders and to determine how well aligned the cohort programs were to today's PSEL Standards.

I used a mixed-method approach to gather data and report my findings. To determine alignment, I engaged in a document review using accreditation documents I obtained from the Department of Education (DOE) in the state in which I conducted my research and compared the endorsement competencies on the documents to the PSEL Standards. In order to determine participant perceptions, I created a survey to send to principal preparation cohort students and

graduates. The school district required approval before I could conduct any research and part of the approval process was to assign me a sponsor who was employed by the school district. Working with her, I gained the access I needed to conduct my research.

The survey asked participants to determine how well they believe the principal preparation cohort prepared them to meet each of the 10 PSEL Standards as well as how well aligned they believe their program was to the current PSEL Standards. Since all principal preparation courses must go through an application process to receive accreditation, the programs were vetted to ensure they met the standards that existed at that time. However, participants in the survey were asked to determine the extent to which they believe their courses were aligned to each *current* PSEL Standard. My participant pool came from cohort graduates from 2009 – to the current cohort students up to the graduating class of 2020. Even though the current PSEL Standards were not in existence during most of the cohorts, I sought to determine if current students and graduates felt prepared to meet *today's* standards. In essence, were the programs designed to meet the previous standards flexible enough to prepare students to meet today's standards. Finally, to triangulate my data and to provide greater insight, I conducted a focus group composed of a sample of survey respondents. Focus group participants were determined by a question on the survey asking each respondent if they would be interested in participating in a focus group. The number of focus groups and participants were determined by how many affirmative responses I received on the focus group question. My goal was to get a cross-section of current students, graduates who were school-based administrators, and graduates who were not school-based administrators representing each of the three universities under study.

<div align="center">**Limitations/Delimitations**</div>

Limitations

Limitations are defined as "influences that the researcher cannot control" (Baltimore County Public Schools, n.d., para. 1). With that definition in mind, I identified a few limitations with my research. Most significantly perhaps is the fact that while working on my research, I retired after 29 years with the school district under study. Toward the end of my career, I coordinated the principal preparation cohorts and worked with the faculty and students. While I still have close ties with people in the system, my retirement may have presented difficulties in accessing information and people.

The focus of my research was purposefully narrow and as such, could have presented an issue. While I had control of the intended audience size (my research could have been expanded to include more cohort years or other principal preparation programs), I had no control over how many of my intended audience would take my survey or participate in my focus group. However, I received plenty of survey responses from all the groups under study. Fortunately, my focus group, while small, contained at least one member from each group under study.

Delimitations

The most significant delimitation of my research is my decision to narrowly focus my research on just the three principal preparation cohorts that I coordinated during my tenure with the school district. Obviously, many other options exist for educators who want to pursue their administrative license, such as regional cohorts, non-cohort programs, and online courses. I chose the school district cohort model because I oversaw this program during my time as a coordinator for professional development. This research was designed to yield the most relevant

information considering my job status when I began this research. My tailored approach limited my audience, but hopefully improved the chances of positively impacting principal preparation cohort programs in the school district under study.

Definitions

A Nation at Risk Report (1983): In 1983, a report conducted by the National Commission for Excellence in Education commissioned by the Secretary of the Department of Education, Terrel Bell, was released that painted a grim picture of the current and future status of education in the United States. The report indicated that the United States had fallen behind other industrialized nations economically and educationally, called for major reforms to education, specifically at the secondary level, and stressed the need for the improvement of teacher education and recruitment. This report led to significant reforms in education nationally (Scherer, n.d.). The Nation at Risk report can be accessed at this link: https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html.

Endorsement Competencies: The endorsement competencies are the standards universities much teach in their principal preparation courses in order to receive accreditation.

Internship: Generically speaking, internships allow for individuals to gain valuable supervised work experience in the actual field of their interest. Internships may be paid or unpaid ("Legal Definitions Legal Terms Dictionary," n.d.). The National Association of Colleges and Employers provides the following definition of "internship":

> An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career

paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent (National

Association of Colleges and Employers, n.d.).

Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards/Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL): The ISLLC standards, have "helped guide leadership policy and practice in 43 states" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 2). They were first developed in 1996 and later revised in 2007. In 2015, the standards were again updated and renamed the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Research indicates that the significant difference between the previous ISLLC Standards and the new PSEL Standards is the greater emphasis on community, building staff capacity, positivity, and personal relationships (Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2017).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)/Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The No Child Left Behind Act was marked as the cornerstone of President George W. Bush's presidency. Put into law in 2001, NCLB called for greater accountability in elementary and secondary education, more choice for families with children in failing schools, flexibility for state and local systems in spending federal funds, and an emphasis in improving reading skills (*U.S. Department of Education, 2007*). In 2015, President Barak Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) supplanting NCLB. ESSA builds upon some of the concepts presented by NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Significance of the Study

By surveying current cohort students and graduates, my goal was to provide an understanding of how well current students and graduates perceived they were prepared to be school-based administrators and to determine how well aligned the programs were to the current PSEL Standards. From reviewing the literature, the school district under study used a very

typical cohort model that included two years of coursework and a predetermined number of internship hours (Barnett, 2004; Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr. M. T., & Cohen, C., 2007; and Varrati, Lavine, & Turner, 2009) based on state requirements for accreditation. I suspected there may be differences in perceptions among current cohort students, cohort graduates who are not administrators, and cohort graduates who are administrators or who have been administrators. I also sought to understand any significant differences among the universities regarding how well students and graduates perceived they were prepared by their university, as well as if there were any differences in how well aligned each university program was to the current PSEL Standards.

Overview

This study focused on one school district in the Mid-Atlantic and three universities that collaborated with the school district to offer principal preparation cohorts. In this dissertation, I discuss why principal preparation is a significant issue in education and what current literature says about principal preparation programs enumerating the strengths and weaknesses. I aimed to determine how effectively students and graduates perceived their particular cohort program prepared them for their role as a school-based leader and the extent to which they believed their program was aligned with the current PSEL Standards.

Schools offer a variety of options to educators who desire to become school-based administrators. One such option offered in many locales consists of the cohort model involving input from the university and school system. This model makes sense because universities have access to qualified faculty, field experts, evolving curriculum, research-based standards, and an understanding of assessment and cohort models. School systems provide the students, adjunct faculty with a practitioner's perspective, expectations for administrators, a process for screening

11

applicants, support from current and/or retired administrators, facilities in which to hold classes, and staff to coordinate the process.

 I used a mixed method process to evaluate the principal preparation cohorts under study. This research relied on a document review to determine how well the endorsement competencies aligned to the current PSEL Standards. In addition, I measured participant perceptions using a survey to determine how well current students and graduates believed their program prepared them to meet each PSEL Standard and to determine to what extent they believed their program was aligned to each PSEL Standard. A focus group of volunteers who responded to the survey was created to provide greater insight into their perceptions of effectiveness and alignment.

In the literature review that follows, I review various principal preparation cohort programs to determine what research indicated were effective tenets of principal preparation programs. I discussed the PSEL and ISLLC Standards and whether or not they were central to principal preparation programs. Following the literature review, I cover the methods used to collect and analyze the data gathered from the school district and universities under study. Next, I analyzed the data to determine how well principal preparation cohort students and graduates perceived they were prepared for school-based leadership and how well aligned they perceived their program was to the current PSEL Standards. This analysis also includes a focus group to determine reasons for any significant differences that are revealed by the survey data. I conclude by providing implications and suggestions for the school district and universities under study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Schools and school systems in the United States have come under great scrutiny since the 1983 Nation at Risk report followed recently by the NCLB legislation that added a greater level of accountability to public educational institutions. Under President Obama, the acronym changed to ESSA and states now have more flexibility to implement a framework for ensuring all students succeed (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Some modifications to annual testing and school accountability have also been applied (The Understood Team, n.d.).

The second most important factor in the success of a student is school leadership (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). To address this fact, there is an attempt in the United States to standardize the qualities of good school administration through the accreditation of principal preparation programs (Barnett & Muth, 2008, p. 1) and national standards. Each state is responsible for "licensing, certification and re-certification requirements for school leaders and, in most places, approves the college and university programs that prepare school leaders" (Hale & Moorman, 2003, pg. 1). Currently, all states and the District of Columbia have adopted leadership standards and 37 states require a master's degree and at least three years of teaching experience or other related experience in order to become a principal (Scott, 2018, para 3). Traditionally, in order to obtain a license to be a principal, teachers completed a principal preparation program at an accredited college or university (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 4).

This review begins with a historical examination of principal preparation programs followed by an examination of current principal preparation programs including recruitment and selection, coursework and internship, assessment and evaluation, and adherence to standards. Program weaknesses, including a lack of meaningful experiences, poor internships, and a lack of

collaboration are explored. Current literature regarding the common features of principal preparation programs including the alignment of programs to standards is investigated followed by a brief review of criticism of national standards. Following this brief review, I detail the relevance of studying principal preparation programs and dissect the common features of successful programs. Program weaknesses are also explored. This chapter concludes with a summary.

Historical Examination of Principal Preparation Programs

As we continue to wrestle with the issues facing education, school-based leadership has become a growing focus. How to best prepare our educational leaders, however, is not a new challenge. There has long been a division of philosophies when it comes to any profession where internships are a vital component of learning. Some believe it is within the purview of the universities to control the preparation of school leaders, but others believe the control should rest with the practitioners. This university versus practitioners' debate has prevailed for over a century (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). The predominant viewpoint of those who support the university model is the belief in the technical-rational knowledge of school leadership, while those who believe the best preparation is in practice-knowledge and artistry reside in the school system, or practitioners' camp (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009).

With the expansion of public education between 1890 and 1910, graduate degree programs in education grew (Levine, 2005), though "no formal leadership training, special degrees, or licenses were required" (University Council for Educational Administration, 2013, p. 44). By 1918, all children in America were required to attend schools (Watson, 2008), thus increasing the need for more teachers and administrators. Despite the growth in graduate degree programs in education in the 1920s, only two-thirds of the principals in the United States had any

degree (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). At the time, schools placed more emphasis on practicing

the craft than on researching the craft, while universities geared advanced degrees more toward

career researchers than school leaders (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). This focus on practical

experience with little acknowledgement of scholarly awareness continued until the early 1940s

(Cibulka, 2009).

By the 1940s and up through the 1970s, there was a substantial growth in principal

preparation programs across the United States. This growth may be attributed to the early

expansion of specialized graduate programs and the acceptance of certificate programs for

administrators (Miklos, 1983). The Social Sciences became more relevant as school leadership

began to evolve beyond merely an "execution of technical tasks" (Miklos, 1983, p. 159).

In the 1960s, the movement to create common standards for education began, but even

then the standards for licensure were low. Programs tended to be minimally adequate with the

prevailing mission of educators to "do no harm" (Cibulka, 2009, p. 456-457). Around the time of

the *Nation at Risk* report in 1983, a movement began in education to improve teacher and

leadership preparation programs. The movement was slow to take hold as indicated by a 1987

National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration report that concluded that 60

percent of our principal preparation programs should be shut down (Duncan, 2010). Beginning in

the late 1990s, principal preparation programs began to focus on standards and ethics (McCarthy

& Forsyth, 2009). This focus led to the requirement of leadership standards for administrator

licensure and preparation program approval in most states. By 2005, half the states required

administrative licensure candidates to pass examinations (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). The

debate over school leadership education sparked a sense of urgency around what former

secretary of education Arne Duncan (2010) referred to as a need for "transformational change" in

educational leadership. School systems, state departments, and universities began to look more creatively at principal preparation programs by providing tuition-free programs, scholarships, and tying their programs to student achievement (Duncan, 2010). Over the past several years, the desire to transform principal preparation programs has led to other strategic changes as well, including:

- Leadership standards-setting to identify expected knowledge and skills;

- Program standards-setting to underscore best practices in leadership preparation;

- Federal, state, and foundation grant funding for innovative program design and delivery;

- State and national accreditation requirements with assessment performance expectations;

- State required licensure exams or assessments;

- State requirements for program design, delivery, and content; and

- Enabling alternative pathways to licensure (University Council for Educational Administration, 2013, p. 4-5).

McCarthy and Forsyth (2009) suggested that we need to learn from the past to forge a new future of principal preparation. This future involves leaders "who understand teaching and learning, engage in critical analysis of current conditions, and are willing to question structures and deeply rooted cultural norms in the service of children and their families" (p. 120). As the role of the principal evolves, the path toward administrative credentials must also evolve.

Current Research Regarding Principal Preparation Programs

Principal preparation programs generally included some version of the following: student recruitment and selection; coursework and internship; evaluation and assessment; and adherence to a set of standards (Barnett, 2004; Gaudreau, Kufel, & Parks 2006; Darling-Hammond,

LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; NewSchools Venture Fund, 2008; and Zaretsky, Moreau, & Faircloth, 2008). Each of these components contained different elements that led to research-based best practices. The Wallace Foundation developed a bulleted list of important features demonstrated by what they determined to be quality principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007):

- Research-based content, aligned with professional standards and focused on instruction, organizational development, and change management;

- Curricular coherence that links goals, learning activities, and assessments around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge about effective organizational practice;

- Field-based internships that enable the application of leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner;

- Problem-based learning strategies such as case methods, action research, and projects that link theory and practice and support reflection;

- Cohort structures that enable collaboration, teamwork, and mutual support;

- Mentoring or coaching that supports modeling, questioning, observations of practice, and feedback; and

- Collaboration between universities and school districts to create coherence between training and practice as well as pipelines for recruitment, preparation, hiring, and induction. (p. 4)

Principal preparation programs must stay current with changes in school cultures. Today's principals are required to meet the needs of all stakeholders, which includes parents, community leaders, local businesses, superintendents, school board members, teachers, and students. The skills associated with effectively running a school has shifted from management to

leadership with an emphasis on aptitude for instructional leadership (Barnett, 2004). Barnett (2004) suggested that university programs should ensure their graduates are prepared for the new school culture. They can accomplish this "in part through curriculum alignment work, requiring expected course outcomes to align with applicable national standards, working with practitioners in identified effective schools, and putting into place on-going program assessments with strategies to improve those areas not meeting the needs of today's educational leaders" (p. 122).

The Stanford Educational Leadership Institute concluded that several additional factors led to program effectiveness: vigorous recruitment, financial support, and district and/or state infrastructure (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Vigorous recruitment meant actively seeking quality teachers with proven leadership experience rather than passively waiting for anyone to apply. By actively recruiting candidates, programs were better able to identify the candidates with the characteristics they preferred, including the recruitment of minorities and women. Statistics supported the belief that vigorous recruitment best served principal preparation programs. According to the research reported by Darling-Hammond, et al. (2007) "a higher percentage of exemplary program graduates were referred or recommended to their program by districts (63% v. 32%), and two-thirds had at least some costs paid, as compared to one-third of the national sample. In programs like Delta State University's (DSU) and San Diego's Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA), candidates must have substantial teaching experience and be nominated by their districts to be considered for admission" (p. 145). In some programs, the university and district collaborated to select the candidates.

As mentioned above, some exemplary programs also provided financial support for their participants. Support consisted of paid internships and partial tuition reimbursements.

Exemplary programs received support from district and/or state policies that support principal development. Again, according to research reported by Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007):

> Most of the participants in the programs we studied received financial support, at rates twice those of the national sample. More than 70% of the national comparison group paid for all their costs themselves, in contrast to 38% of graduates of exemplary pre-service programs. Many of these financial supports were possible because of outside funding, including foundation grants, state funds, and district resources targeted to support administrative interns, sometimes in assistant principalship positions (p. 96-97).

The financial support provided for these participants ranged from state supported to grant funded. The state of Mississippi had a Sabbatical Program that underwrote the salaries of participants in the Delta State University principal preparation program. The University of San Diego provided funding through district funds and the Broad Foundation for tuition and salary support. Another program in Hartford reimbursed principals using funding from a Wallace grant (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

In early 2018, the Education Development Center, supported by the Wallace Foundation, published the Principal Preparation Program Self-Study Toolkit. This publication combined recent principal preparation program research for the purpose of developing a tool that school districts can use to assess and improve their principal preparation programs. The toolkit was specifically designed "to prepare principals to lead chronically low performing schools, with an end goal of improving student achievement" (King, 2018, p. 4). The toolkit identifies relevant program domains and indicators that support successful principal preparation programs. These domains are: Candidate Admissions; Course Content; Pedagogy-Andragogy; Clinical Practice; Performance Assessment; and Graduate Outcomes. These domains are presented in a rubric

allowing principal preparation programs to assess their level of effectiveness on a scale of Meets Few/No criteria to Meets All criteria. Each domain includes 5 or 6 indicators of effectiveness.

Pulling this all together, there are several general components that research indicates are necessary in order to have an effective principal preparation program. This includes a process for recruitment and selection, quality coursework and internship, systematic assessment and evaluation, and an adherence to national standards. Universities are flexible in how they implement each of these, but none should be overlooked. In the section below, I detail each of these components.

Recruitment and Selection

The selection process begins with a clear understanding of the skills and talents necessary to be a school principal. New Leaders for New Schools categorized these skills and talents by how easy or how difficult they were to teach. Candidates who lacked skills and talents that were teachable would curry favor over candidates who lacked skills and talents that were more difficult to teach. Some of these skills included discipline, visibility, relationships, flexibility, and situational awareness (NewSchools, 2008).

The Delta State University (DSU) program in Mississippi distinguished itself from others because of its rigorous and selective admissions process. Among characteristics on which they placed a priority were the ability to develop the core values and skills administrators need to lead instruction; the desire to create a self-reflective and ethical culture; and the alignment of problem-based learning with relevant theory. Additionally, they looked for the development of leaders who were oriented to organizational change and renewal and the cultivation of strong partnerships with school districts in the Delta region (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). In order

to participate in the DSU principal preparation program, candidates were nominated by someone in their school district and must have been eligible for the state-funded sabbatical program. Once nominated, the candidates then took part in an interview process with a panel of program faculty, graduates, and local administrators. DSU also used Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) scores, transcripts, resumes, and essays about education and leadership to determine the acceptable program candidates. The acceptance rate for the DSU program was about 50%, up from 25% a few years ago due to a better screening process (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007, p. 21).

New York City Region 1 and Bank Street College Principals Institute worked together to recruit and select candidates for their principal preparation program. Candidate qualifications included being strong instructionally and a demonstrated leadership ability (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Candidates supplied transcripts, reference letters, and an autobiography (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Members from Region 1 and Bank Street assessed each application with the final decision resting with Region 1. The second stage of the application process included a group interview and candidates solved a problem collaboratively while being filmed. The superintendent and deputy superintendent, who collectively made the final decision on who entered the program, reviewed the film (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

A unique feature of The University of Connecticut's Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP) was its pre-screening process. UCAPP faculty and school administrators individually recruited teacher leaders for the program but they also provided information about the program to the public. After applying, applicants were screened. Some were referred to less rigorous programs or encouraged to continue to develop their leadership potential before applying again (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Following the initial screening, applicants moving forward in

the process submitted a written application. From this pool, 90% were interviewed and 80% of those interviewed entered the program (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007, p. 71).

Coursework and Internship

Gaudreau, Kufel, and Parks (2006) concluded, based on their review of research, that the lack of a full-time internship offered during principal preparation programs was the most significant barrier to quality mentoring. Additionally, Zaretsky, et al. (2008) suggested that principal preparation programs include more problem-based learning and student-centered discovery learning into their curriculum as well as examples and case studies to address special education issues.

Delta State also has a strong mentoring program. One distinguishing aspect of the DSU internship program was the pairing of students with current principals. This allowed students to receive immediate feedback and to experience authentic school-related issues. Students completed three 12-week periods of internship in elementary, middle, and high schools and a two-week central office internship. Coursework took place during the summer months. Graduates completed 48 semester credits and received a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership with an initial certification as an administrator in Mississippi (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). A unique feature of the DSU internship program was the requirement that participants complete their internship in schools other than where they worked. Full-time, certified administrators, not retired administrators, mentored the participants. Interns participated in all levels of administration. In addition to a site mentor, each DSU candidate had a faculty supervisor as well (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

Research indicated that adults learn best when given the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in authentic settings (NewSchools, Venture Fund, 2008). In the New Leaders for New Schools model, candidates spent a year in residency learning from a mentor principal. While in residence, coaching/mentoring, collaborative learning through a cohort, and targeted training were provided. At the end of the year, the candidate must demonstrate proficiency in "School Leadership," "Personal Leadership," and "Technical Leadership" (NewSchools, Venture Fund, 2008, p. 12-13).

The San Diego State University (SDSU) Aspiring Leaders was a "one-year, cohort-based preparation program" that combined "university coursework with a full-time administrative internship" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007, p. 29). This model allowed candidates to work closely with the district's most effective practicing principals. A second year program offered support to newly placed principals and assistant principals.

The following were the cornerstone beliefs of the SDSU program (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007):

- Theory must connect to practice. Students learn best through developing field-based knowledge and skills grounded in research.
- Consistent inquiry, reflection, and critical feedback are essential for adult learning.
- Effective administrators must develop a set of specific educational leadership skills, such as the ability to analyze teaching and design professional learning opportunities for teachers, and the ability to articulate and reflect a set of beliefs in all aspects of their work as site leaders (p. 29).

Successful SDSU candidates completed 24 units of graduate credit coursework co-taught by university professors and district practitioners. At the completion of their coursework, participants were assessed on a problem-based learning project, portfolio, and professional platform statement. University faculty and district practitioners conducted the evaluation using a rubric aligned with standards. SDSU used supervisor meetings, monthly site visits, and formal evaluations to monitor candidate progress. During the internship, cohort members met to discuss their experiences gaining support from each other (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

In its Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA), SDSU placed interns in schools to serve as assistant principals embedding them in the community to learn side-by-side with principals. This differed from traditional programs that placed students in schools on a temporary basis (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Interns were paid a full salary for the year with financial support of the Broad Foundation and were allowed to forgo their teaching responsibilities while accumulating over 1,200 hours of active administrative experience. ELDA graduates were significantly more likely to receive close supervision and 96% agreed that their internship was critical for their experience in becoming a principal (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

Students in the New York Bank Street program progressed through the program in a cohort and took courses every semester for two years beginning in the fall. They had classes twice a week and met with an advisor once a week. The internship component began in the first semester where students spent time observing and reflecting. They worked with their advisor to develop an internship based on the "School Planning, Implementing, Observation, and Reflection protocol (SPIOR)" (Darling-Hammond, et al., p. 60-61, 2007).

24

During the second semester, Bank Street students developed an Intern Program Plan based on their previous plan and the Education Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards. Students made the transition from observer to leader, engaging in activities to promote and develop leadership competency. Each month during this semester, students met for a seminar on a special topic (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

The third semester, summer, offered students the opportunity to intern as assistant principals in summer school programs. Students worked and met with a mentor during their internship. This mentor, or advisor, was typically a retired principal. Three times per semester, the mentor met with a group of six to nine students for an opportunity to share their experiences and offer support and advice (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

In the University of Connecticut's Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP) participants completed 32 hours of graduate level coursework, 11 of which were completed through an internship. Students created program goals and completed a community analysis project reflecting the community in which their internship took place. Coursework took place during each semester and faculty professors and district administrators who served as adjunct professors taught classes (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

Assessment and Evaluation

Setting performance criteria was the first step in developing a principal evaluation system (NewSchools Venture Fund, 2008). According to NewSchools (2008), when developing a principal evaluation method or tool, the following should be considered: develop clear and explicit criteria, align criteria with your organization's mission, and ensure buy-in from each principal.

In the DSU program, written assignments, portfolios, presentations, and individual and group work were assessed. Participants also designed and implemented school-wide change projects at each site. The authentic work done during the internship resulted in candidates spending more time as instructional leaders than graduates from other programs (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007).

The Bank Street College student assessment consisted of a portfolio that they shared with their cohort classmates and advisors. The portfolio contained artifacts related to their experiences. One additional unique factor required of the participants was journaling during their internship. Participants were required to maintain a journal

> in which they documented critical incidents, challenges, and discoveries and reflected on how these experiences have shaped their leadership development. Submitted on a weekly basis, the journal was a confidential document, shared only between the candidates and their advisors and returned to candidates with comments or guiding questions to deepen their thinking. (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007, p. 70).

Adherence to National Standards

Johnson and Uline (2005) suggested that principal preparation programs base their curriculum on what effective schools are already doing, particularly by focusing on the fidelity with which the ISLLC standards are applied in principal preparation programs. National standards for school-based administrators as identified by the National Policy Board for School Administration and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, formally NCATE) guide today's administrators and therefore logically should provide the foundation for principal preparation programs. Recent research by Morehead University, however, indicated that this may not be the case. In an interview of Morehead graduates and non-Morehead

26

graduates who were current school-based or central office administrators, researchers determined that participants were not particularly prepared in ISLLC Standards 5; "An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner," or 6; "An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context," and found that preparation programs were not providing enough opportunities for participants to engage with stakeholders (Barnett, 2004, p. 125). Other research indicated that principal preparation program graduates perceived they were adequately prepared to lead having completed a program that used ISLLC Standards in their curriculum (McFadden, Mobley, Burnham, Joyner, & Peel, 2003 as cited in Hemmen, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009). Examples of how some universities and departments of education have incorporated ISLLC Standards follows.

Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, provided students in their Educational Administration program with a handbook that explicitly states how the university's philosophy and courses are aligned with ISLLC Standards. Page three of the handbook states "The department of education has adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards to guide its process of developing graduate students in educational leadership and future administrative roles" (Bradley University: Leadership in Education, Human Services, & Counseling Department, n.d.). See Appendix A for a sample from the handbook.

Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi provided a matrix on its website (http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/degrees/education/ed_admin.html) demonstrating how each course in its Educational Administration program addressed each ISLLC Standard, in addition to each state of Texas standard. After an introduction to the standards, the matrix listed each course

in the program and identified the specific standards addressed in each course. According to the

matrix, each ISLLC Standard is addressed at least once during the program. This matrix provides

students with a clear understanding of the course objectives and how each course will contribute

to their development as administrators.

The PSEL Standards have supplanted ISLLC as the current standards upon which school-

based administrators should be evaluated and therefore prepared for by principal preparation

programs. While relatively new, the PSEL Standards have been praised for emphasizing

educational "virtues," the "social nature of work," "relationships and interactions," and the need

to attend not just to students, but their families and communities (Murphy, Louis, & Smylie,

2017, p. 1). Furthermore, Murphy, et al., (2017) praised the PSEL Standards because they

> present[s] an optimistic view of leadership, one that focuses on human potential, growth,
>
> and support in conjunction with a focus on educational rigor and accountability. Instead
>
> of relying on a deficit-based perspective, it emphasizes the strengths that individuals and
>
> communities bring to K-12 education" (p. 1).

However, they caution that not only do these new standards need to be formally introduced into

our principal preparation programs, but they must lead to a new way of thinking about school

leadership (Murphy, et al., 2017).

Principal Preparation Program Weaknesses

Perhaps equally important to the features of successful programs is research surrounding

current weaknesses in principal preparation programs. Armed with knowledge regarding what

works and what does not, collaborators are better equipped to make more informed decisions in

order to design effective programs. The following section explores what research indicated were

current programmatic weaknesses in principal preparation programs.

Lack of Authentic and Meaningful Experiences

In their study of principal preparation programs, Williamson and Hudson (2001) identified several specific issues. They found in some cases that principal interns were not given real projects to do that would translate into the real world, decrying one such instance where an intern was tasked with answering the phone because the principal did not have the time to devote to her (Williamson & Hudson, 2001). In other cases, tasks were assigned based on school needs and not intern needs or the activities assigned lacked significance. Some interns did not receive feedback nor were given time to process their experiences (Williamson & Hudson, 2001). Other roadblocks to success for principal interns resulted from last minute changes in job assignments or principals who turned out to be poor mentors. In one case, the principal chosen as a mentor proved to be incompetent (Williamson & Hudson, 2001). To avoid these pitfalls, Williamson and Hudson suggested that universities reach out to school districts to discuss their programs and their internships and form a partnership devoted to improvement (2001).

Low Quality Internships

In April 2005, Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), with support from The Wallace Foundation, published a comprehensive study on principal internship programs. They summarized their findings through the following seven points:

- Preparing school reform leaders was not a high priority;
- Principal interns were more likely to follow than lead;
- Leadership departments and school districts were not working together to provide well-structured, well-supervised internships for aspiring principals;

- Many aspiring principals were under-supported during their internship experience;

- Performance evaluations of principal candidates often lacked a high degree of rigor;

- University department heads were overconfident about the effectiveness of their principal preparation programs and the quality of the internships they offered aspiring principals; and

- Principal preparation was out of sync with accountability demands (p. 5-6).

A critical missing piece of the internship experience, according to the SREB, was providing interns with opportunities to lead activities for school and student improvement and not just participate or observe them. Ideally, interns would begin by observing, then move toward participating in, and finally culminate with leading such activities.

Poor Collaboration

A survey conducted by Fry, et al. (2005) indicated that there appears to be a working relationship chasm between school systems and universities. More than two-thirds of the university-based leadership departments indicated they did not have a strong relationship with the local school districts. Interactions between universities and school systems do not occur regularly in about half of those surveyed (Fry, et al., 2005). While collaboration appears to be a growing service industry trend, research was vague regarding the influence of collaboration on the effectiveness of principal preparation programs.

Criticism of ISLLC Standards

The criticism of ISLLC Standards ranged from being inadequate to being impossible to achieve. The Standards were criticized for not promoting reform during a time when reform was paramount (Hemmen, et al., 2009). They were also criticized for not addressing many aspects of leadership, including cultural responsiveness, social justice, ethics, special education, school finance, building management, diversity, and school technology (Hemmen, et al., 2009; Superville, 2015; and Young, Mawhinney, & Reed, 2016). On the other end of the spectrum, the ISLLC Standards were referred to as "unattainable" and "unrealistic" (Hemmen, et al., 2009, p. 5). Therefore, when the Standards are not met, professors could come under undue scrutiny and school leaders could suffer from a sense of failure (Hemmen, et al., 2009).

Relevance of Researching Principal Preparation Programs

The influence of a principal on school culture, teacher quality and retention, staff professional development, student behavior, and parent satisfaction cannot be minimized (NewSchools Venture Fund, 2008). It is imperative that we, as a nation and as educators, strive to prepare our future school leaders with the same rigor and relevant experiences we do with other professionals. Instructional practices remain a focus of our improvement efforts and our principals are the instructional leaders in our schools. M. Christine DeVita, the president of the Wallace Foundation, in an introduction to a report on School Leadership Studies: Developing Successful Principals, summarized what critics have to say about the current state of principal preparation programs in the following manner (Davis, S.; Darling-Hammond, L.; LaPointe, M.; & Meyerson, D., 2005):

A range of critics, including principals themselves, raise a litany of concerns about the quality and effectiveness of the leadership preparation typically provided at university-

based programs and elsewhere. That it is disconnected from real-world complexities. That the knowledge base is weak and outdated. That curricula often fail to provide grounding in effective teaching and learning. That mentorships and internships often lack depth or opportunities to test leadership skills in real situations. That admissions standards lack rigor and, as a result, too many graduates will eventually be certified, but not truly qualified to effectively lead schoolwide change (para. 3).

Principals often feel ill-prepared to lead their schools resulting in a high rate of principals leaving the profession. This results in a shortage of qualified principals to lead our schools (Davis, et al., 2005). A recent Gallop poll indicated that administrators are not the only profession dependent upon a quality college education. The quality of college education one receives, regardless of the profession, can translate into long-term success in work. Specifically, college students who are able to apply their learning in real-life situations report being successful long into their professional career (Gallup, Inc., 2014). This has implications for principal preparation programs. If administrators are expected to meet national standards, they must be adequately prepared in college to do so, preferably by applying the standards during an internship or other curriculum related activity. If principal preparation programs are not aligned, it would appear as if success as an administrator may be more difficult to achieve. To emphasize this point, Young et al. (2016) boldly proclaimed "one could go as far as saying that a set of standards is only as good as the processes through which the standards are applied and the fidelity with which the standards are implemented by each preparation program (p. 21)."

Summary

Research indicated that the principal is second only to the teacher regarding student success. Principals are no longer simply managers tasked with the logistic and budgetary aspects

of operating a school, but must be instructional leaders tasked with improving student achievement. Over the course of time, school-based administrators have evolved from building managers to instructional leaders, perhaps due to the mounting pressure on our schools to develop successful students. As a result, national standards have been developed to provide school-based administrators with guidelines for success. Many states have adopted these standards and have incorporated them, either specifically or through their influence, into principal preparation programs.

While quantifying an effective principal preparation program is difficult, the indicators of quality principal preparation programs, according to the research, depended upon the quality and/or approach of recruitment and selection, coursework and internship, assessment and evaluation, and adherence to standards. Targeted recruitment and selection for candidate applicants was preferred over an open-application process. Courses should be taught by university and school system employees to provide students with a researcher (university) and practitioner (school system) viewpoint and coursework and internships should provide authentic learning experiences. In other words, quality principal preparation programs depend upon how well school districts and universities design principal preparation programs to best prepare our aspiring school leaders and how well the programs are aligned to current standards.

While research indicated there were a multitude of factors that led to effective principal preparation programs, this paper will focus on the alignment to standards and how well participants believe their program prepared them to meet these standards. As of 2016, almost all states have either incorporated or modified the PSEL Standards (or ISLLC Standards) into their preparation programs and all states have been influenced to some degree by the ISLLC Standards (Young, et al., 2016). In the next chapter, I explain the methodology I used to determine how

well participants perceived they were prepared by their principal preparation program and the

extent to which their programs were aligned with today's PSEL Standards.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As indicated in previous chapters, principals increasingly act as instructional leaders with a direct influence on the instructional programs they oversee. This influence impacts school culture, teacher development, and student success. Principals today must be change agents prepared for the challenges of an increasingly demanding culture, a growing focus on accountability, and a moral responsibility to close the achievement gap. It is incumbent upon principal preparation programs to provide the education and experience necessary for our future principals to meet these demands. To assist in developing effective school leaders, national standards for school leadership have been in effect since 1996, updated in 2007 and 2015, and it is important to understand how well students and graduates of principal preparation programs feel they have been prepared by their university to meet the demands of these standards. It is equally important to understand how well their principal preparation program was aligned with current standards which they are expected to meet as school-based administrators. Without program alignment, it is not reasonable to expect our future school leaders will be prepared to meet national standards designed to improve our schools.

In this chapter, I discuss the purpose of my study, restate my research questions, and describe how I conducted my research. I provide details regarding my data collection procedures and how I analyzed data. I also discuss my role as the researcher, including how I handled any perceived conflicts of interest or concerns of bias and my qualifications. How I address the issues of validity and reliability are also discussed. This chapter concludes with a summary.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how well current students and graduates of principal preparation programs in one school district and from three universities perceived they

were prepared by their principal preparation program to be school-based administrators based on the current PSEL Standards and to determine how well aligned their programs were to the current PSEL Standards. The underpinning motivation for this study is based on recent findings that principals are second only to teachers regarding student success (Leithwood, et al., 2004) and principals are expected to be instructional leaders now more than ever (Barnett, 2004). Therefore, it is imperative that our principal preparation programs aim to prepare our future administrators to be as effective as possible. My research questions focused on how well principal preparation cohort students and graduates perceived they were prepared to meet the PSEL Standards and how well aligned their program was to the PSEL Standards. To review, my research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of current cohort students and graduates regarding how well they were prepared by their principal preparation cohort program to meet each of the current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders?

   a. What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students, graduates who are not school-based administrators, and graduates who are school-based administrators (or who have been school-based administrators)?

   b. What are the differences in perceptions among cohort students and graduates from each of the universities under study?

2. What are the perceptions of current cohort students and graduates regarding how well their principal preparation program was aligned to each of the current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders?

a.   What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students, graduates

who are not school-based administrators and graduates who are school-based

administrators (or who have been school-based administrators)?

b.   What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students and

graduates from each of the universities under study?

Case Study Methodology

I employed a mixed methodology in order to thoroughly answer my research questions. A

case study approach was appropriate in this situation because I desired to gain a considered

understanding of an education program from the perspective of those involved (Merriam, 1998).

According to Merriam, "[c]ase studies of students, programs, schools, innovations, teachers, and

policies…[have] illuminated educational practice for over 30 years" (p. 26). I intended to

"illuminate" the principal preparation cohort programs in the school district under study in order

to gain a better understanding of how well students and graduates perceived they were prepared

to be school-based leaders and how well they believed their programs were aligned with current

PSEL Standards. Additionally, I sought to understand the reasoning behind their perceptions,

particularly when significant differences were identified by the survey results. My data were

triangulated through a document review, survey, and focus group. My methodology is

summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Methodology Matrix

Method	*Objects/Subjects*	*Confidentiality*	*Analysis Instrument*
Document Review	DOE Program Status Matrix PSEL Standards	Public documents	Coding and group analysis to determine alignment
Preparedness and Alignment Survey	Current cohort students and graduates	Participants not asked to provide their name or any demographic information unless interested in participating in the focus group	Qualtrics and JMP (Survey creation and Analysis Tools)
Focus Group	Volunteer cohort students and graduates	Survey participants had the option to participate or not	Notes were taken and coded for themes

A document review was used to determine how aligned the state required endorsement competencies were to the current PSEL Standards. The endorsement competencies were the standards that the state required each university to teach in their principal preparation programs. Determining the extent to which the endorsement competencies were aligned to the current PSEL Standards provided me with a basis of understanding of what standards were taught during the cohorts and how closely they were aligned to current standards. This information may be valuable when determining implications for the school district and universities. A document review was an appropriate strategy for me to use as the documents under review "contain[s] information or insight relevant to the research question[s] and…can be acquired in a reasonably practical yet systematic manner" (Merriam, 1998, p. 124). The documents reviewed provided "descriptive information" (Merriam, 1998, p. 126) that informs the standards taught in each principal preparation program allowing for a comparative analysis to today's PSEL Standards.

The survey was intended to directly answer each of my research questions. Respondents were asked to rate how well they believe they were prepared by their principal preparation cohort to meet the PSEL Standards and how well they believe their principal preparation program was aligned to the PSEL Standards. For my research, a survey was an appropriate tool to use in order to gain insight into participant perceptions (Colton & Covert, 2007). According to Colton and Covert, 2007, "[s]urveys are adept at garnering [this] information because a number of item formats, including multi-item scales, can be used for both data collection and verification" (p. 10 – 11). My survey was a multi-scale survey designed to assess participant perceptions of preparedness and alignment. Because surveys can be limited in the responses they solicit (Colton & Covert, 2007), focus groups were convened to provide greater detail and insight into participant's perceptions.

The purpose of the focus group was to review the survey data and determine why significant differences existed in the survey data. The focus group was employed so I could gain insight that would not be revealed by the survey. Focus groups were an appropriate tool to use in combination with a survey because focus groups allow for "probing" and "multiple perspectives" (Colton & Covert, 2007, p. 133). My goal of the focus group was to capture, to the best of my ability, the perspectives of the participants in explaining why any significant differences occurred in the survey data. In the words of Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 101) "[T]he participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective)."

Focus group participants were asked to volunteer by answering a question on my survey indicating they would be interested in participating in a focus group. This is the only time I requested personal information on the survey. Since my focus group questions were designed to

determine why any significant differences existed on the survey responses, only people who actually completed the survey could participate in the focus group. A focus group was an appropriate research strategy for this study as I aimed to interpret the survey data (Edmunds & American Marketing Association, 2000, p. 4).

Data Collection Procedures

I requested via email from the state DOE accreditation documents submitted by each university. In less than one week, I received a reply from the Assistant Superintendent for Teacher Education and Licensure with the necessary documents attached. Each document was a matrix that outlined which endorsement competencies corresponded with each course the university offered in its principal preparation program. The DOE was very compliant with my request and answered any questions I had. They provided me with the DOE Program Status Matrix for Administration and Supervision PREK-12 (Status Matrix) for each university under study. Each Status Matrix listed the required endorsement competencies with the course designed to teach that competency. Since the endorsement competencies were the same for each university, the only difference among the matrices was the course in which each competency was taught. With this in hand, I simply printed out the current PSEL Standards, widely available on the internet in multiple places, and engaged in my preliminary analysis to determine how well aligned the endorsement competencies were to the PSEL Standards.

I created a survey using Qualtrics to answer my research questions. Therefore, the survey served two primary purposes: To determine how well participants believe they were prepared to be school-based leaders and to determine how well they believe their cohort program was aligned with current PSEL Standards. I decided to base my survey on the current PSEL

Standards because administrators need to be prepared to lead in today's schools according to today's standards.

Before beginning my survey, I had to receive approval from the school district under study. As an outside agent, I could not have access to the email addresses nor could I send out the survey myself. I had to rely on my school-district sponsor to send out the survey. I called my school district sponsor to discuss the parameters of the approval letter and the steps we needed to take to obtain the necessary email addresses. The school district deemed it impossible to deconstruct from their database exactly who earned their licensure through one of the cohorts under study from everyone else who earned their license from any institution. Therefore, the survey was sent to all school-district employees who had administrative licenses in the school district, but the survey introduction requested only those who graduated from or were current students in one of the cohorts under study take the survey. Once the addresses were made available, my sponsor sent the survey out in intervals because there were too many email addresses to send at once. Over the course of several days, various school district employees received my survey. The survey was also sent to current students participating in the principal preparation cohorts under study. This database was easily obtained by my sponsor. Eventually, everyone in my intended audience should have received the survey.

I used Qualtrics as my survey tool which was recommended to me by my committee chair and was available through my university. Participants answered a question on the survey to determine which cohort they attended and were given questions based on the current PSEL Standards. One question at the end of the survey asked participants if they would be interested in participating in a focus group. To analyze the data, I used JMP, which is also a software provided by my university and with which I am familiar from my coursework.

My intended audience was composed of current cohort students and cohort graduates from the years 2009 to the current cohorts. Using Qualtrics, I was able to determine which respondents were current students, graduates who were not school-based administrators, and graduates were or had been school-based administrators. I was also able to determine which university each respondent attended. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly because their numbers were simply smaller, I did not receive enough responses from current students to be able to include them as a subgroup along with graduates with administrative positions and graduates without administrative positions. As a result, I ended up with two groups to analyze instead of three. I also chose to include all three universities to determine if the participants' perceptions differed by university, which could provide useful information to those universities. I received ample responses representing each of the universities under study. The cohort years are identified in Table 2 using pseudonyms for the universities.

Table 2

Principal Preparation Cohorts Under Study

Cohort	*Cohort Years*
University A	2009 - 2011
University C	2010 - 2012
University B	2011 - 2013
University A	2012 - 2014
University C	2013 - 2015
University B	2014 - 2016
University A	2015 - 2017
University C	2016 - 2018
University B	2017 - 2019
University A	2018 - 2020

The final piece of my methodology was to convene a focus group in order to gain greater insight into the survey results, particularly any responses that resulted in significant differences. Responses with significant differences indicated something was happening to influence the responses other than mere chance. What that something was would provide me with valuable information for the school district and universities under study.

Of the 59 survey respondents, 16 indicated an interest in participating in the focus group. Upon reviewing the data, I realized two of the respondents who indicated an interest in participating in the focus group were not part of my intended audience; they happened to be former colleagues of mine who were eager to help. I contacted them and thanked them for their interest but let them know they were outside my intended audience. Still, this left me with 14 potential focus group participants from which to draw the recommended number of 5 – 10 (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 67 and Krueger, 2002, p. 1). I contacted all of the potential focus group participants via email, thanked them for their interest in participating, and let them know I was working on a date for the focus group.

I sought to reserve a room at one of the administrative offices of the school district under study. My sponsor was extremely helpful in securing me a room in the time frame I suggested, which was about two weeks after the conclusion of the survey. With the room, date, and time in place, I contacted the potential focus group participants. Unfortunately, one by one, I received replies indicating conflicts with the date. As a result, only two could attend the focus group on the date scheduled. Since I needed more focus group participants, I requested another date.

My sponsor was again very gracious in working with me to secure another date for my focus group. This time, the date was about three weeks away from the previous date. I hoped this would provide the potential participants plenty of time to plan. Fortunately, I received attendance

confirmation from seven of the original 14 who indicated an interest. This put me in the middle

of the desired number of participants with a little room for cancelations. On the day of the focus

group, I was contacted by two of the potential participants who indicated they would not be able

to attend. This left me with five participants with no more room for cancelations. Fortunately, the

five participants were able to attend and luckily represented each of the groups under study and

each university.

Data Analysis Procedures

I triangulated my data by using a document review, survey, and focus group. A document

review provided me with information regarding the program's alignment with PSEL Standards

and through analysis, I determined how closely programs were aligned with current PSEL

Standards. The survey provided me with ample data, cursory though it may be, regarding how

current students and graduates perceived they were prepared for the role of school-based

administrator and how well their programs were aligned to the current PSEL Standards. The

focus group provided me with greater insight into the survey responses and helped identify why

significant differences existed on the survey results.

Document Review

To determine if the principal preparation programs were aligned with the current PSEL

Standards, I cross-referenced the aforementioned Status Matrix to the PSEL Standards. At first,

my thought was to simply state alignment as a binary choice: Each endorsement competency was

either aligned or not aligned to a PSEL Standard. Shortly after I began my analysis, I realized

two categories would not sufficiently detail the alignment. I considered the idea of having five

designations of alignment that would include Fully Aligned, Mostly Aligned, Partially Aligned,

Barely Aligned, and No Alignment Discovered. However, I felt it would be an exercise in futility

44

to parse evidence to decide between designations such as Mostly Aligned and Partially Aligned and Partially Aligned and Barely Aligned. So, I decided on three designations: Fully Aligned; Partially Aligned; and No Alignment Discovered. My wording on the last category, No Alignment Discovered, was purposeful. I accepted that this was a subjective exercise and understood that someone else could "discover" alignment where I did not.

Since the Status Matrices provided by the DOE were dated 2007, it stood to reason the language would be different from today's PSEL Standards. Trying to determine what language is similar to the PSEL Standards of today was challenging and will undoubtedly lead to some disagreement with my assessment. However, my attempt was to be fair to the universities and to engage in a process that was consistent. Furthermore, I attempted to only consider alignment that was explicit in nature and not implicit. I did not pretend to be able to get into the minds of those who created the standards or endorsement competencies. However, I did consider close synonyms and phraseology that I considered to be similar in nature. (For example, I considered "differentiated and effective instruction" to be similar to "pedagogy"). Having said this, there were times during consultation with colleagues where we could intuit meaning from having either taken courses, taught courses, or applied these standards in practice. As an example, while a standard might not specifically indicate collaboration, it is widely assumed that school leadership today, and for the past several years, requires collaboration.

I also used commonly understood rules of grammar. For instance, if the PSEL Standard included "and," then I felt it was imperative that the endorsement competency included all the words or concepts after "and." As an example, PSEL Standard 2. b) states "Act according to and promote the professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement." To receive a designation of Fully

Aligned, the endorsement competency had to include acting *and* promoting (or some form thereof) integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, *and* continuous improvement. Without all of these qualifiers, it would not be accurate to say there is full alignment. Of course, there were times when a judgement had to be made.

Furthermore, when determining alignment, I focused my attention on actionable terms and nouns. As an example, PSEL Standard 2 C) states: "Effective leaders: Place children at the center of education and accept responsibility for each student's academic success and well-being." Actionable terms I focused on to determine alignment were "Place" and "accept responsibility." *Placing* children at the center of education is different than *believing* they should be at the center. Also, *accepting responsibility* implies a greater level of commitment than providing a challenging curriculum and ensuring a safe environment, for instance. Simply because the terms "academic success" and "well-being" may be on the matrix, the key for alignment purposes were the actionable words associated with these terms. These may be subtle differences, but their meanings were significant. However, I was careful to identify synonyms that would qualify as the same or similar. My goal was to determine how well the endorsement competencies on the Status Matrix aligned with the current PSEL Standards. I expected this to be a rather arduous process, so for the purpose of clarity, I recorded on a chart the extent to which the endorsement competencies were aligned, in my judgment, to the PSEL Standards. Once I made my alignment determination, I sought expert analysis from two knowledgeable educational professionals to confirm or refute my judgment. Either way, my aim was to engage in thoughtful conversations to determine alignment. Alignment determination was made through consensus. I did not "overrule" my colleagues simply because this is my research. I entered the discussion with an open mind desirous of drawing the strongest conclusions possible regarding alignment. If

two people thought one way and the third another way, I based alignment on the majority opinion.

The individuals I chose to provide expert analysis to confirm or refute my analysis determination were two educational professionals for whom I have great respect and whose opinions I value. I met with both these individuals separately, so their input was theirs alone. Because of their current professional status, each of these individuals would have knowledge and understanding of the professional standards used today, in the past, and in university cohorts. At some point in my career, I worked with both of these individuals and maintain a friendship with them today.

The first of these individuals I met with is a current superintendent in a Mid-Atlantic school district. He spent time as a school-based administrator and Assistant Superintendent in the school district under study and also taught courses for one of the university cohorts under study. Furthermore, he received a doctorate from a university cohort. His experiences make him imminently qualified to assess and compare PSEL Standards and the endorsement competencies.

The second individual with whom I met is a current principal in the school district under study. This individual also received a doctorate in a university cohort and has spent time as a central office administrator. As someone responsible for evaluating current educators and being evaluated based on leadership standards herself, this individual would have a firm grasp on the meaning of each standard and how it should be applied.

During my meeting with the first individual, I provided him with copies of the matrix and my alignment determination. We went through the same process I did when I made my own determinations. For each standard, I explained my rationale. In some instances, he agreed with me without hesitation and we moved on. For others, we discussed the meaning of the standard

and my assessment. Sometimes, he convinced me that my original determination was not accurate, and sometimes I convinced him it was. In other cases, we didn't come to an agreement, but I vowed to reconsider it after meeting with the second individual.

Due to schedule conflicts, I met with the second individual over the phone. I sent her the paperwork via email and gave her time to review it. We spent over two hours on the phone and except for the fact we were not face to face, the process went very similar to the process with the first individual described above. When we didn't agree, we discussed it and either convinced each other, or I agreed to reconsider using both her input and the first individual's input. See Appendix B for a sample of our document review analysis.

Survey

Survey respondents were asked to determine how well they were prepared to meet each PSEL Standard and how well their program was aligned to each PSEL Standard using the following scale:

- Extremely well (5)

- Very well (4)

- Moderately well (3)

- Slightly well (2)

- Not well at all (1)

There are ten PSEL Standards each with a list of stems that help define the main standard. Each main standard has between 6 and 12 stems. Since asking survey respondents to answer more than 60 questions would be burdensome to the respondent and would likely result in very few survey completions, my survey questions centered on the main standard. However, each question listed the stems so the respondent could make a thoroughly informed decision (See

Appendix C for the survey). Using the software program JMP, I was be able to determine a mean

score based on respondent status (current student, graduates who were not school-based

administrators, and graduate who were school-based administrators) and university for each

PSEL Standard, which enabled me to compare groups. As shown in the scale above in

parenthesis, I assigned a 5 for a response of Extremely well, a 4 for a response of Very well, and

so forth down to a 1 for a response of Not well at all. Therefore, if the mean value for a question

from any particular group resulted in a score of 3.78, for example, that would indicate a response

average between Moderately well and Very well, leaning more towards Very well.

Having worked with these cohorts, I understood that the typical cohort would include

about 20 people. Therefore, I anticipated my intended audience to be approximately 200 people.

However, when I considered natural attrition due to retirement, job opportunities in other school

districts, or any other variety of reasons, I felt my actual intended audience was closer to 170

people (I based my math on the attrition rate of the cohort I attended). Since the school district

could not identify which licensed administrators attended the cohort programs under study, the

survey was sent to about 1,700 school-district employees with an administrative license. If they

were not in the intended audience, they were politely asked to exit the survey. If there were part

of the intended audience, they were asked to identify which cohort and then asked to continue

with the survey. Survey participants were given about one month to complete the survey.

At the survey deadline, I received 59 responses. Two responses had to be dismissed

because they were outside of my targeted audience. This gave me a total of 57 responses.

Therefore, my usable survey response rate was about 34% (out of an estimated 170 potential

respondents). According to the online survey websites Question Pro and Survey Anyplace, this

response rate is at the higher end of a typical response rate for an online survey sent via email (Bhat, 2019 and Lindemann, 2018).

Focus Groups

I arrived at my designated room early and began to set up. My five focus group participants arrived either early or on time. Immediately, everyone began chatting and most of them seemed to know each other already. This made for a very relaxing atmosphere and the comfortable setting I hoped to attain. Once settled in, I began the session by introducing myself, going over procedures and the consent form, and finally collecting the consent form (See Appendix D for my focus group protocol). Additionally, I reviewed the concept of a statistically significant difference since this was at the crux of my data analysis. I explained, without going too deep into the concept, that a statistically significant difference among data indicated that there was a high degree of confidence that the difference was not due to chance and that the difference was likely due to something actually happening to cause the data to be significantly different. I reminded them that my goal was to try to determine what that something was. I also explained the format of the session, specifically that we would first look at the data from the perspective of someone who is a school-based administrator and someone who is not a school-based administrator. Once the first session was completed and after a short break, we would then reconvene and look at the data from the perspective as a graduate from the university each attended.

I began by reviewing the data indicating that administrators perceived they were better prepared than non-administrators on Standard 1 and asked them to what could they attribute this difference. I took notes during the discussion and probed when necessary to clarify my own thinking. If I noticed someone not participating, I drew them into the conversation (though this

was rare since everyone seemed very comfortable and willing to share). Once this conversation ended, we proceeded to the next question regarding alignment, again with Standard 1. I explained that administrators indicated they believed their program was better aligned than non-administrators and again asked them to what could they attribute this significant difference. Again, I took notes as they discussed and asked clarifying questions. This was the process used throughout the first session. My aim here was to determine why administrators believed they were better prepared and their courses better aligned than non-administrators.

About half-way through the first session, one of the participants in the focus group mentioned in passing that she participated in a cohort that was outside of my intended audience. At first, I was confused wondering if I heard her correctly, but as she continued to speak, it was apparent that I did hear her correctly. I did not want to interrupt the discussion and I certainly did not want to make her feel uncomfortable or unwanted, especially since she took the time to complete the survey and attend the focus group. I knew this was a dilemma, but I decided to proceed with the focus group uninterrupted and would decide how to handle the situation later.

The cohort she attended was very similar to the cohorts under study. It was run by the same school district in partnership with University B. The only material differences of which I am aware is this cohort was condensed into one year whereas the cohorts under study were two-year programs and since participants must already have a Master's degree, the condensed program is a licensure program only pending the successful passing of the state exam. The cohorts under study were degree programs that led to licensure upon successful completion of the program and passing of the state required exam. The recruitment and selection process was similar and they were both based on the same model.

It was apparent during the discussions that this individual was providing useful insight into the programs and her comments were often met with agreement. Her perspective was very similar to the perspective of others who attended the cohorts under study. At no point did she share any information that seemed out of the ordinary for this group. After consulting with my doctoral board chair, we decided to include her perspective. Any quotes directly attributed to her will be identified using the pseudonym "Alice."

I conducted the second session in the same manner as the first. I reviewed each of the standards that indicated a significant difference among the universities or between two universities. As expected, themes between administrators and non-administrators converged with themes among the universities. In fact, some statements in the previous session applied to the university session. However, the group did express greater difficulty in comprehending why University A performed significantly worse than the other universities, though some clarity was provided by our lone University A representative.

I created documents that would allow me to take organized notes during the focus group in order to ascertain why significant differences existed on the survey data (See Appendixes E and F for examples of focus group note taking templates). As the focus group discussed the survey results, themes began to emerge. Once the focus group was over and I returned home, I reviewed my notes and developed three main themes and one underlying theme that are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Validity and Reliability

Any study must contain a certain level of validity and reliability. Triangulation is used in order to ascertain a clear picture of the phenomenon under study and to get results that are as free from bias as possible. Having peers review information throughout the research process aids in

providing validity to the process (Stake, 2006, p. 77). Merriam explained that "the reliability of documents and personal accounts can be assessed through various techniques of analysis and triangulation" (1998, p. 206). Below I explain how I attempted to address the issues of validity and reliability in my study.

Validity

Colton & Covert (2007) described research validity as "the extent to which we measure what we purport to measure" (p. 65). To enhance validity, Merriam (1998) suggested several strategies based on research and her personal experience. I will use four of the six strategies suggested by Merriam. Each are described below.

Triangulation. Merriam (1998) stated that triangulation is "using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings" (p. 204). To meet this standard, I collected four sets of data via a survey, conducted a focus group, and cross-referenced accreditation documents with the current PSEL Standards to determine how aligned programs were with the current standards. Furthermore, I collected data from three different, but similar, sources. Specifically, data was collected from different cohorts of participants from three different universities. I sought survey and focus group data from current principal preparation program students, graduates who are not administrators, and graduates who are or have been administrators. The survey data was shared with the focus group to seek clarification and insight into the results.

Member checks. Inherent in the focus group activity is a "member check." I sought input from the focus group regarding the survey data. My document review was analyzed by other professionals. Furthermore, I took notes during the focus group and shared summary information of my notes with the focus group for clarification and confirmation as needed.

Peer examination of findings. The cross-referenced Status Matrix documents were examined by two knowledgeable professionals and together we made a final determination regarding how well the endorsement competencies on the Status Matrix aligned with the PSEL Standards. During our meetings, I shared support for my opinions and solicited their opinions in order to come to a consensus regarding how aligned the endorsement competencies were to the PSEL Standards.

Researcher bias. I graduated from one of the universities under study and worked in the school district under study for 29 years. At one point in my career, I was the coordinator for these principal preparation programs. In this role, I worked closely with each university and the participants. Having gone through the program myself to become a school-based administrator and central office administrator, I of course have an opinion related to my topic of study. However, having overseen the programs, I was more interested in how others perceive program effectiveness. In my role as a student in one of these programs and as the coordinator, I saw no reason to be concerned regarding how well these programs prepared aspiring school-based administrators. I also formed no opinion regarding which university had a superior or inferior program. While they each did things a little differently, they were all excellent programs in my opinion.

Reliability

According to Colton & Covert (2007), "reliability is the extent to which an instrument produces the same information at a given time or over a period of time" (p.74). However, as Merriam notes (1998), "reliability is problematic in the social sciences simply because human behavior is never static" (p. 205). Furthermore, Merriam suggests that, with regards to the social sciences, instead of "demanding that outsiders get the same results," a more appropriate standard

is to determine if the "results are consistent with the data collected" (p. 206). Merriam offers the following techniques to determine dependability of the data: the investigator's position; triangulation; and an audit trail. Below I provide my position and a review of how I triangulated my research.

The investigator's position. I graduated from one of the universities under study and was employed by the school district under study for 29 years. After graduating from the principal preparation program, I began a career as an assistant principal and then became a central office coordinator overseeing the principal preparation programs. I coordinated three principal preparation programs, including the university from which I graduated (I did not coordinate the program during my cohort years). For each program, I worked directly with university personnel to promote each program, recruit and interview potential program candidates, select professors, review curriculum, and support participants. I was the liaison between the school district and universities.

Triangulation. I triangulated my research by examining relevant documents, creating a survey, and conducting a focus group. Triangulation "strengthens reliability" (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). The document review determined, subjectively, if endorsement competencies found on the Status Matrix were aligned to the current PSEL Standards. The survey asked respondents to determine, based on their perceptions, how well their program prepared them to be administrators and how well their program was aligned to current PSEL Standards. The focus group provided greater insight into any significant differences that may be found on the survey results regarding preparation and standards alignment.

Researcher Qualifications

I am a graduate of one of the principal preparation cohorts and when I began my doctoral pursuit, I was an assistant principal. During my coursework, I was promoted to a manager position and then to a coordinator position with oversight of the principal preparation cohort programs in my school district. Therefore, I had a vested interest in how well our programs performed and a desire to improve our programs as necessary. Fortunately, my position with the school district allowed me wide-ranging access to current and historical documents related to the programs under study. I also worked with current stakeholders, including university and school district personnel and program students and graduates. While working on this dissertation, my role changed again. I had the opportunity to become an assistant principal in the school where my career began. Regardless of my shifting role and recent retirement, I continue to have a strong interest in how participants perceive the effectiveness of the principal preparation cohort programs. My 29 years in education all with the school district under study combined with the fact that I was not only a student in one of the cohorts under study, but I also coordinated the cohort programs, provides me with unique qualifications to conduct this research. I had no preconceived notions, however, regarding the results of my research.

School District Employee

I began my career in 1988 as school teacher teaching 6th grade. I spent ten years in the classroom teaching 5th and 6th grades (in some years both at the same time) until I became inspired by the technology revolution of the mid-1990s. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the school district created instructional technology positions for which I was recruited. Reluctantly, because I enjoyed being a teacher, I accepted a school-based instructional technology position. I spent the next thirteen years in this position at four different schools and eventually I was

persuaded by my administrators to pursue a degree in administration in order to become a

school-based administrator. Following their advice, I applied for and was accepted into a

principal preparation cohort program. Shortly after graduating from this program, I accepted a

position as an assistant principal within the school district.

I served as an assistant principal for about two years until budget cuts threatened to

reduce the number of assistant principals. Not wanting to risk a salary reduction, I decided to

pursue other opportunities that would offer me stability and an increase in salary. As a result, I

applied for a central office manager position which eventually grew into a coordinator position

overseeing the professional development opportunities for our support employees, teachers, and

administrators. I also managed the principal preparation cohort programs. During this time, I was

a central figure in publicizing the cohort programs, recruiting, interviewing, and collaborating

with university personnel.

Ethics

My research focused on how well current students and graduates perceived they were

prepared to be administrators by their university cohorts, and how well their program aligned

with current PSEL Standards. It is important to note that I received a Master's degree in

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from one of the three universities under study. I also

worked for the school system under study for 29 years until my recent retirement. While working

with each of the universities, my only goal was to help the universities and school districts

develop the best principal candidates they possibly could, regardless of which university the

aspiring administrators attended. I developed very positive relationships with each university and

supported them to the best of my ability. Whether or not to include the university from which I

graduated in my study was a point of debate for my doctoral committee and me. The decision

was made to include the university in order to increase the likelihood of receiving enough data to analyze and the value the data could provide. This decision also informs me that my committee believes in my ability to remain objective and ethical.

Participants in this study remained anonymous to each other, unless they decided to join the focus group. Each participant was given the opportunity to join the focus group and was informed prior to joining that their survey responses would remain anonymous, but their focus group comments will be known to me and other focus group participants. However, no names are provided in my dissertation (pseudonyms are used as necessary). Focus group participants were free to exchange personal information with each other if they chose to do so. And they all chose to do so.

Pseudonyms or generic terms, such as school district, are used for the school system and universities under study. On the survey, the actual university names appeared for the participants, but pseudonyms were used when providing data in this dissertation. Universities and the school district were known to the focus group, but are not revealed in this dissertation. All identifying subject and university information on documents contained in this paper were concealed or replaced by pseudonyms.

While I used human subjects in my study, I did not foresee any issues that could be potentially harmful in any manner to the participants. Research subjects were asked to take an anonymous survey which took less than 20 minutes to complete. At their discretion, survey respondents were asked to volunteer for a focus group. Since I worked with and supported many of the participants, I was hopeful my relationship eased any of their potential concerns. An IRB from my university was completed and approval from the school district was provided before I conducted my data collection.

Summary

The aim of this study was to determine how well current students and graduates from principal preparation cohorts in one specific school district perceived they were prepared to meet the demands of school-based administration as determined by the PSEL Standards and to determine how well principal preparation cohort students and graduates perceived their program was aligned to current PSEL Standards. I studied three universities in one school district, the school district in which I was employed and from which I recently retired.

My research included a document review, a survey, and a focus group. The data gained from these sources enabled me to analyze perceptions based on type of participant (graduates who are not school-based administrators and graduates who are school-based administrators or who had been) and university. I used strategies to increase validity and reliability and to maintain an unbiased perspective. Chapter 4 includes my data analysis.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine how well current students and graduates from specific principal preparation cohorts believed they were prepared by their cohort to be school-based administrators. Additionally, I sought to determine how well aligned the principal preparation cohorts were to the current PSEL Standards. To make this determination, I engaged in a collaborative document review, collected survey data, and conducted a focus group. Through analysis of the survey, I was able to group survey respondents based on their status as a current student, graduate with a school-based administrative position, or graduate without a school-based administrative position. I also grouped respondents according to their university. This grouping allowed me to determine if any significant differences existed on the survey data between the different groups. In this chapter, I provide a description of survey respondents and focus group participants and a description of the data analysis instruments I used. I review and answer my research questions through an analysis of each of my data collection methods. This chapter concludes with a summary.

Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they were a current student, a graduate with a school-based administrative position (or had a school-based administrative position) or a graduate without a school-based administrative position. They were also asked to identify which cohort they attended, which also identified their university. No other demographic information was requested on the survey. Table 3 shows the breakdown of survey respondents.

Table 3

Number of Survey Respondents by Group and University

	Group			
University	*Current Students*	*Graduates with School-Based Admin Positions*	*Graduates w/o School-Based Admin Positions*	*Total Respondents*
University A	3	8	16	27
University B	2	10	6	18
University C	0	6	6	12
Total	5	24	38	57

Five survey respondents participated in my focus group. The five participants represented each of the universities and groups under study. One was a current school-based administrator, one was a current central office administrator (therefore qualifies as a graduate without a school-based administrative position for this research), one was a former administrator who went back to teaching (therefore qualifies as a school-based administrator for this research), and two had never been administrators. For the purposes of this research, I had two school-based administrators and three non-school-based administrators. Each university was also represented: One from University A, two from University B, and two from University C.

Analysis of Data

In the sections that follow, I present the analysis of the data in the order in which I collected it. I begin with my document review providing a brief overview of the analysis process. Next, I review the survey data and provide a narrative analysis supported by tables. Finally, I

provide a brief review of the focus group procedures and then analyze the results of the focus group.

For the document review, I created a scale to determine how aligned the endorsement competencies provided by the state DOE were to the current PSEL Standards. The scale I used was Fully Aligned, Partially Aligned, and No Alignment Discovered. I then collaborated with others to verify or refute my analysis. I used the data collection tool Qualtrics to gather survey data. Once the data were collected, I broke them down into subgroups for comparison. I then entered the data into the software program JMP and used a two-tailed t test and ANOVA to analyze the survey data. I used a protocol I adapted from the Office for Victims of Crimes, U.S. Department of Justice, to organize my focus group process. I created my own note taking template and took notes during the focus group. When analyzing the data, I used a checklist from the Social Science Tools for Coastal Programs.

Document Review Analysis

I worked with two colleagues to determine how aligned each PSEL Standard was to the endorsement competencies provided to me by the state department of education. Appendix B contains the list of PSEL Standards in the first column, the university cohort endorsement competencies in the second column with the alignment determination (Fully Aligned, Partially Aligned, No Alignment Discovered), an explanation in the third column, and the ratio of agreement (3/3 meaning we all agreed and 2/3 meaning two of us agreed) in the last column. I intended going into this process to rely on consensus, not unanimity, and not solely on my own opinion, which would negate any need for expert consultation. In some cases, we decided on Fully Aligned while acknowledging the lack of an exact or precise alignment. I notated these instances in the Ratio of Agreement column.

We analyzed each stem of each PSEL Standard in comparing the standards to the endorsement competencies. Expectedly, some endorsement competencies showed more alignment than others. In an effort to demonstrate numerically how closely each PSEL Standard was aligned to the endorsement competencies, I assigned a numeric value to each category of alignment. If we determined the specific PSEL stem was Fully Aligned with the endorsement competencies, I assigned it a numeric value of 5. Partially Aligned PSEL stems were assigned a numeric value of 3 and if no alignment was discovered, I assigned it a numeric value of 1. I chose this scale because it replicates the survey scale (5, 4, 3, 2, 1). I then calculated the mean value for each standard by adding the numeric values of each stem and dividing by the number of stems. This allowed me to determine an overall level of alignment for each PSEL Standard to the endorsement competencies. Table 4 shows the results of the process in which I engaged to determine the mean value for PSEL Standard 1, Mission, Vision, and Core Values. I used this same process to determine a numeric value for each PSEL Standard alignment to the endorsement competencies.

Table 4

Numeric Value Assignment to PSEL Standard 1

PSEL Standard 1 Stems	*Level of Alignment to Endorsement Competencies*	*Numeric Value*
a) Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student.	Partially Aligned	3
b) In collaboration with members of the school and the community and using relevant data, develop and promote a vision for the school on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational practices that promote such success.	Fully Aligned	5
c) Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define the schools culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, care, and trust; and continuous improvement.	Fully Aligned	5
d) Strategically develop, implement, and evaluate actions to achieve the vision for the school.	Fully Aligned	5
e) Review school's mission and vision and adjust them to changing expectations and opportunities for the school, and changing needs and situations of students.	No Alignment Discovered	1
f) Develop shared understanding of and commitment to mission, vision, and core values within the school community.	Fully Aligned	5
g) Model and pursue the school's mission, vision, and core values in all aspects of leadership.	Fully Aligned	5
		Mean = 4.14

As Table 4 shows, the overall alignment of PSEL Standard 1 to the endorsement competencies is 4.14. This indicates that we believed there was more than partial alignment between PSEL Standard 1 and the endorsement competencies, but not quite full alignment. To get an overall picture of alignment, I calculated an overall mean by adding the mean values of each standard and dividing by the number of standards. The mean value of 2.62 would indicate

an overall alignment just below Partially Aligned. Table 5 shows the numeric value representing

alignment for each PSEL Standard for all three universities studied.

Table 5

Mean Values of the Document Review Alignment Analysis

PSEL Standard	*Document Review Mean*
1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values	4.14
2. Ethics and Professional Norms	2.00
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	2.50
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	3.86
5. Community of Care and Support for Students	1.33
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	2.56
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	2.25
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	3.00
9. Operations and Management	3.00
10. School Improvement	1.60
Overall Alignment	2.62

It is important to note, this analysis is a "paper" analysis and what takes place in the

actual classroom may be very different. Therefore, to get a more complete picture of alignment,

the survey data must also be included. The table comparing our document review alignment to

the survey alignment can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Mean Values of Survey Data Compared to Document Review

PSEL Standard	University	*Survey Mean*	*Document Review Mean*
1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values:	University A	3.81	
	University B	4.28	4.14
	University C	4.27	
2. Ethics and Professional Norms	University A	4.00	
	University B	4.35	2.0
	University C	4.33	
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	University A	3.46	
	University B	3.71	2.5
	University C	3.92	
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	University A	3.41	
	University B	4.24	3.86
	University C	4.42	
5. Community of Care and Support for Students	University A	3.74	
	University B	3.76	1.33
	University C	3.82	

Table 6 (Continued).

6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	University A	3.48	
	University B	4.24	2.56
	University C	4.00	
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	University A	3.52	
	University B	4.47	2.25
	University C	4.25	
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	University A	3.48	
	University B	3.81	3.00
	University C	4.08	
9. Operations and Management	University A	3.48	
	University B	3.76	3.00
	University C	4.08	
10. School Improvement	University A	3.52	
	University B	4.35	1.60
	University C	4.33	

For the most part, our document review analysis showed less alignment than indicated by the survey respondents (see next section for a detailed survey analysis). The only exceptions are found with University A and Standards 1 and 4. This could indicate that the programs were flexible enough to allow for inevitable changes to standards. It could also indicate that we were was not as forgiving with our alignment assessment as I thought. According to the survey respondents, the alignment falls between partially aligned and fully aligned, but according to the document review, alignment falls between no alignment discovered and partially aligned, but much closer to partially aligned than no alignment discovered.

Survey Data Analysis

To begin my survey analysis, I will begin with my research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of current cohort students and graduates regarding how well they were prepared by their principal preparation cohort program to meet each of the current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders?

    a. What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students, graduates who are not school-based administrators, and graduates who are school-based administrators (or who have been school-based administrators)?

    b. What are the differences in perceptions among cohort students and graduates from each of the universities under study?

2. What are the perceptions of current cohort students and graduates regarding how well their principal preparation program was aligned to each of the current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders?

    a. What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students, graduates who are not school-based administrators, and graduates who are school-based administrators (or who have been school-based administrators)?

    b. What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students and graduates from each of the universities under study?

To answer Research Questions 1.a. and 2.a., I had to make an adjustment. While my overall response rate was typical for an online survey sent via email (Bhat, 2019 and Lindemann, 2018), I did not receive enough responses from current students (five responses) to include them

in my data analysis. For the purposes of Research Questions 1.a. and 2.a., I only compared graduates who are (or were) school-based administrators to those who have graduated but are not school-based administrators. Therefore, when comparing graduates with school-based administrative positions with graduates without school-based administrative positions, I used a two-tailed t test using the software program JMP. Since I am only comparing two variables, a t test is an appropriate test to use. I received enough responses from graduates of each university to include all three universities. Therefore, to compare perceptions among the universities to investigate Research Questions 1.b. and 2.b., I used an ANOVA since I compared three variables.

Research Question 1 simply asks what are the perceptions of current students and graduates with regard to how well they were prepared by their program to be school-based leaders. To answer this question, as well as Research Question 2, I ran a Distribution test to determine the mean and other relevant descriptive statistics. My analysis begins with Research Question 1 to ascertain the general perception of how well the programs prepared current students and graduates to be school-based leaders.

Research question 1. This section provides analysis for Research Question 1 and the sub questions and investigates the perceptions regarding how well current students and graduates believed they were prepared by their program to meet the current PSEL Standards based on the survey results. The survey sought to determine how well current students and graduates perceived they were prepared to meet today's PSEL Standards and to identify any significant differences among the groups studied. What follows is an analysis of their perceptions and significant differences among the groups studied.

Perceptions regarding preparation in general. This question investigates the perceptions of the current students and graduates who attend or graduated from one of the principal preparation cohorts under study, regardless of their job status or university attended. Table 7 shows the relevant statistics for Research Question 1 with regard to the perceptions of current students and graduates and how well they believe they were prepared by their program.

Table 7

Distribution Results Regarding Perceptions of Preparedness Among All Survey Respondents

Standard	Number	Mean	Std Dev	Upper 95%	Lower 95%	Skewness	Median	Mode
Standard 1	57	4.02	0.83	4.24	3.8	-0.42	4	4
Standard 2	56	4.18	0.81	4.4	3.96	-0.77	4	4
Standard 3	55	3.67	0.94	3.93	3.42	-0.38	4	4
Standard 4	56	3.84	0.93	4.09	3.59	-0.51	4	4
Standard 5	56	3.84	0.95	4.09	3.59	-0.46	4	4
Standard 6	56	3.79	0.91	4.03	3.54	-0.16	4	4
Standard 7	56	3.95	0.94	4.2	3.96	-0.43	4	4
Standard 8	56	3.75	0.98	4.01	3.49	-0.2	4	4
Standard 9	56	3.66	1.01	3.93	3.39	-0.67	4	4
Standard 10	56	3.88	0.94	4.13	3.62	-0.71	4	4
Overall	54	3.91	0.87	4.15	3.67	-0.52	4	4

With regard to Standard 1, Mission, Vision, and Core Values, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were slightly more than Very Well prepared to meet this PSEL

Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 4.02 with a standard deviation of 0.83. The 95% confidence limits were 3.8 and 4.24.

With regard to Standard 2, Ethics and Professional Norms, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were slightly more than Very Well prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.81. The 95% confidence limits were 3.96 and 4.4.

With regard to Standard 3, Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were more than Moderately Well prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.94. The 95% confidence limits were 3.42 and 3.93.

With regard to Standard 4, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were significantly more than Moderately Well, but less than Very Well, prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.84 with a standard deviation of 0.93. The 95% confidence limits were 3.59 and 4.09.

With regard to Standard 5, Community of Care and Support for Students, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were significantly more than Moderately Well, but less than Very Well, prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based

administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.84 with a standard deviation of 0.95. The 95% confidence limits were 3.59 and 4.09.

With regard to Standard 6, Professional Capacity of School Personnel, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were significantly more than Moderately Well, but less than Very Well, prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.79 with a standard deviation of 0.91. The 95% confidence limits were 3.54 and 4.03.

With regard to Standard 7, Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were significantly more than Moderately Well, but slightly less than Very Well, prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.95 with a standard deviation of 0.94. The 95% confidence limits were 3.96 and 4.2.

With regard to Standard 8, Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were significantly more than Moderately Well, but less than Very Well, prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.98. The 95% confidence limits were 3.49 and 4.01.

With regard to Standard 9, Operations and Management, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were more than Moderately Well prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.66 with a standard deviation of 1.01. The 95% confidence limits were 3.39 and 3.93.

With regard to Standard 10, School Improvement, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were significantly more than Moderately Well, but less than Very Well, prepared to meet this PSEL Standard as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.88 with a standard deviation of 0.94. The 95% confidence limits were 3.62 and 4.13.

With regard to their Overall preparation, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed they were significantly more than Moderately Well, but less than Very Well, prepared to meet the PSEL Standards as a school-based administrator, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for the Overall rating was 3.91 with a standard deviation of 0.87. The 95% confidence limits were 3.67 and 4.15.

The results range from a low mean of 3.66 (Standard 9, Operations and Management) to a high mean of 4.18 (Standard 2, Ethics and Professional Norms). This data demonstrated that current students and graduates combined felt that they were better than Moderately Well prepared to just over Very Well prepared on each of the PSEL Standards, including the overall rating, to be school-based administrators by their principal preparation program.

Regarding the results from the survey, the range of perceptions fell from Moderately Well to Very Well, or better. The difference is subtle and could be a result of a few responses

going one way or the other. However, actions to remedy these differences are included among

overall suggestions for the school district and universities addressed in Chapter 5.

  Perceptions regarding preparation by position. Table 8 shows the PSEL Standards

where a significant difference existed on the survey between graduates who are school-based

administrators and graduates who are not school-based administrators, regardless of the

university cohort they attended.

Table 8

Two-Tailed T Test Results Comparing Perceptions of Preparedness

PSEL Standard	Group	*Number*	*Mean*	*Difference*	*Lower CL Diff*	*Upper CL Diff*	*P-Value*
1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values	Not Admins	28	3.68	-0.70	-1.13	-0.27	0.0021
	Admins	24	4.38				
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Not Admins	28	3.50	-0.84	-1.34	-0.34	0.0014
	Admins	23	4.30				
5. Community of Care and Support for Students	Not Admins	28	3.54	-0.68	-1.21	-0.15	0.0126
	Admins	23	4.22				

Table 8 (Continued).

6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	Not Admin	28	3.50				
				-0.67	-1.17	-0.17	0.0093
	Admins	23	4.17				
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	Not Admins	28	3.54				
				-0.81	-1.30	-0.33	0.0015
	Admins	23	4.35				
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	Not Admin	28	3.43				
				-0.66	-1.19	-0.13	0.0156
	Admins	23	4.09				
10. School Improvement	Not Admin	28	3.54				
				-0.73	-1.23	-0.22	0.0060
	Admins	23	4.26				
Overall	Not Admins	26	3.54				
				-0.77	-1.24	-0.300	0.0020
	Admins	23	4.30				

Note: The p-value is significant at P<0.05. Mean Differences may not appear exact due to rounding.

This sub-question investigates the differences by job position in perceptions of how well current students and graduates believed they were prepared to be school-based administrators based on the PSEL. I compared responses from graduates who were not school-based administrators to those of graduates who were school-based administrators. As discussed below, graduates who were school-based administrators perceived the level of preparation to be higher than their counterparts with regard to 7 of the 10 standards. I summarize the significant differences below.

With regard to Standard 1, Mission, Vision, and Core Values, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.68 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.38, for a mean difference of -0.70. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0021. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated the preparation with regard to Standard 1 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 4, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.46 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.30, for a mean difference of -0.84. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0014. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated the preparation with regard to Standard 4 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 5, Community of Care and Support for Students, the results showed that graduates who were school-based administrators scored 3.55 and graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 4.22, for a mean difference of -0.68. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0126. Graduates who

were school-based administrators rated the preparation with regard to Standard 5 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 6, Professional Capacity of School Personnel, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.50 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.17, for a mean difference of -0.67. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0093. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated the preparation with regard to Standard 6 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 7, Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.54 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.35, for a mean difference of -0.81. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0015. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated the preparation with regard to Standard 7 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 8, Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.43 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.09, for a mean difference of -0.66. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0156. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated the preparation with regard to Standard 8 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 10, School Improvement, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.54 and graduates who were school-based

administrators scored 4.26, for a mean difference of -0.73. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0060. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated the preparation with regard to Standard 10 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to the Overall rating, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.54 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.30, for a mean difference of -0.77. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0020. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their overall preparation significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

The results of questions regarding Standards 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and Overall indicated that graduates who were school-based administrators scored significantly higher than graduates who were not school-based administrators on the question of how well they believed they were prepared to meet the PSEL Standards as school-based administrators. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant with a high degree of confidence on seven of the PSEL Standards and the Overall rating. Therefore, to answer Research Question 1.a., there is a high degree of confidence that statistically significant differences exists between how well graduates who were school-based administrators and graduates who were not school-based administrators perceived they were prepared to be school-based administrators. Based on the focus group data, which is expanded upon later in this chapter, the main reasons identified by focus group participants related to these differences are how much the groups gained from their internships, how well they perceived the curriculum to be related to their experiences, and the effectiveness

of some professors. Also present in the focus group discussions was an underlying believe that personal responsibility could account for how much one gets from their own education.

Perceptions regarding preparation by university. To answer Research Question 1.b., "What are the differences in perceptions among cohort students and graduates from each of the universities under study?" I used an ANOVA due to there being three universities in the study. Tables 9 through 11 show the standards for which significant differences existed in the data. In reference to Table 9, Summary of Fit from an ANOVA test indicates that significant differences exist in the data, but does not identify what those significant differences are. In my data analysis, the p-value was set at 0.05 so anything less than 0.05 (Prob > F) would indicate a significant difference. The R Squared value indicates to what extent the differences may be due to chance. An R squared value of 1 would indicate there is no possibility of chance playing a role in the difference and an R-Value of 0 would indicate a high probability that chance played a role in the difference. The F-Ratio identifies the variation among the means with a higher number indicating a greater variance in the means. The degrees of freedom (DF) is derived by the formula n-1.

Table 9

Summary of Fit and Analysis of Variance for Perceptions of Preparedness

PSEL Standard	Source	R^2	DF	F Ratio	Prob >F
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Summary of Fit	0.21			
	University		2	6.97	0.0021
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	Summary of Fit	0.17			
	University		2	5.54	0.0066
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	Summary of Fit	0.16			
	University		2	5.52	0.0085

Table 9 (Continued).

| 10. School Improvement | Summary of Fit | 0.11 | | |
| | University | | 2 | 3.38 | 0.0415 |

Note: The p-value is significant at P<0.05.

Table 10

Means for One Way ANOVA with Standard Deviation for Perceptions of Preparedness

PSEL Standard	Level	Number	Mean	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Standard Deviation
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	University A	27	3.41	3.08	3.73	0.89
	University B	17	4.18	3.77	4.59	0.88
	University C	12	4.33	3.85	4.82	0.65
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	University A	27	3.41	3.08	3.73	0.89
	University B	17	4.24	3.83	4.64	0.83
	University C	12	4.00	3.51	4.49	0.74
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	University A	27	3.56	3.22	3.89	1.01
	University B	17	4.35	3.93	4.78	0.79
	University C	12	4.25	3.74	4.76	0.62
10. School Improvement	University A	27	3.56	3.21	3.90	1.05
	University B	17	4.12	3.68	4.55	0.78
	University C	12	4.25	3.73	4.77	0.62

Table 11

Ordered Differences Report for Perceptions of Preparedness

PSEL Standard	Level	-Level	*Difference*	*Lower CL*	*Upper CL*	*p-Value*
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	University B	University A	0.77	0.14	1.40	0.0130*
	University C	University A	0.93	0.22	1.63	0.0071*
	University C	University B	0.16	-0.61	0.92	0.8747
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	University B	University A	0.83	0.20	1.46	0.0069*
	University C	University A	0.59	-0.11	1.30	0.1153
	University B	University C	0.24	-0.53	1.00	0.7402
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	University B	University A	0.80	0.14	1.45	0.0134*
	University C	University A	0.69	-0.04	1.43	0.0672
	University B	University C	0.10	-0.69	0.90	0.9481
10. School Improvement	University B	University A	0.69	-0.06	1.45	0.0753
	University C	University A	0.56	-0.11	1.23	0.1166
	University C	University B	0.13	-0.68	0.95	0.9192

Note: The p-value is significant at P<0.05. An asterisk indicates a significant difference.

This question investigates the impact of each university's principal preparation cohort on

how well graduates and current students of the university cohorts perceived they were prepared

to be school-based administrators as it relates to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders Standards 1 through 10, plus an Overall rating. Results indicating how well graduates and current students believed their university prepared them to be school-based administrators were analyzed.

With regard to Standard 4, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 4 ($F(2, 53) = 6.97$ p = 0.0021). Using η2 as a correlation-based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 21% of the overall variability in university effectiveness. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and Universities B and C. The results showed that University A scored 3.40 and University B scored 4.18 which was statistically significant (p = 0.0130), with an effect size d = 0.87, indicating that University B scored 0.87 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.14 \leq \mu \leq 1.40$. The results also showed that University A scored 3.40 and University C scored 4.33 which was statistically significant (p = 0.0071), with an effect size d = 1.21, indicating that University C scored 1.21 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.22 \leq \mu \leq 1.63$. The results demonstrated that University B and University C scored significantly higher than University A regarding how well graduates and current students believed their university prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 4.

With regard to Standard 6, Professional Capacity of School Personnel, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 6 ($F(2, 53) = 5.44$ p = 0.0066). Using η2 as a correlation-

based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 17% of the overall variability in university effectiveness. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University B. The results showed that University A scored 3.41 and University B scored 4.24 which was statistically significant (p = 0.0069), with an effect size d = 1.02, indicating that University B scored 1.02 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.20 \leq \mu \leq 1.46$. The results demonstrated that University B scored significantly higher than University A regarding how well graduates and current students believed their university prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 6.

With regard to Standard 7, Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 7 ($F(2, 53) = 5.52$ p = 0.0085). Using η2 as a correlation-based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 16% of the overall variability in university effectiveness. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University B. The results showed that University A scored 3.56 and University B scored 4.35 which was statistically significant (p = 0.0134), with an effect size d = 0.89, indicating that University B scored 0.89 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.14 \leq \mu \leq 1.45$. The results demonstrated that University B scored significantly higher than University A regarding how well graduates and current students believed their university prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 7.

With regard to Standard 10, School Improvement, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet

PSEL Standard 10 ($F(2, 53) = 5.52$ p = 0.0415). Using $\eta 2$ as a correlation-based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 11 percent of the overall variability in university effectiveness. However, individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed no significant differences among the Universities. Therefore, I cannot state with confidence that the differences were statistically significant.

In conclusion, there are some significant differences in how well students perceived they were prepared by their university to be school-based administrators. The difference among the three universities is significant with a high degree of confidence on Standards 4, 6, and 7. Specifically, University A scored significantly lower than University B and University C on Standard 4. University A also scored significantly lower on Standards 6 and 7 than University B. No significance differences existed between Universities B and C. Therefore, to answer Research Question 1.b., there is a high degree of confidence that significant differences exists in the perceptions of current students and graduates regarding how well their university prepared them to be school-based administrators on Standards 4, 6 and 7.

Research question 2. This section provides analysis for Research Question 2 and the sub questions and investigates the perceptions and differences of perceptions regarding how well current students and graduates believed their program was aligned to the current PSEL Standards based on the survey results. The survey sought to determine how well current students and graduates perceived their program was aligned to today's PSEL Standards and to identify any significant differences among the groups studied. What follows is an analysis of their perceptions and significant differences among the groups studied.

Perceptions regarding alignment in general. To answer Research Question 2, "What are the perceptions of current cohort students and graduates regarding how well they perceive their

principal preparation program was aligned to each of the current Professional Standards for

Educational Leaders?" I ran a Distribution test as I did for Research Question 1. Table 12 shows

the results.

Table 12

Distribution Results Regarding Perceptions of Alignment Among All Survey Respondents

Standard	*Number*	*Mean*	*Std Dev*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95%*	*Skewness*	*Median*	*Mode*
Standard 1	56	4.05	0.84	4.28	3.83	-0.48	4	4
Standard 2	56	4.18	0.86	4.41	3.95	-0.90	4	4
Standard 3	55	3.64	1.02	3.91	3.36	-0.49	4	4
Standard 4	56	3.88	1.01	4.15	3.60	-0.38	4	4
Standard 5	55	3.76	1.02	4.04	3.49	-0.38	4	4
Standard 6	56	3.82	0.99	4.09	3.56	-0.52	4	4
Standard 7	56	3.96	0.91	4.21	3.72	-0.52	4	4
Standard 8	55	3.71	1.03	3.99	3.43	-0.33	4	3
Standard 9	56	3.70	0.97	3.96	3.44	-0.58	4	4
Standard 10	56	3.95	0.94	4.2	3.70	-0.84	4	4
Overall	54	3.98	0.84	4.21	3.76	-0.37	4	4

With regard to Standard 1, Mission, Vision, and Core Values, the data demonstrated that

survey respondents believed their program was slightly more than Very Well aligned to this

PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this

Standard was 4.05 with a standard deviation of 0.84. The 95% confidence limits were 3.83 and 4.28.

With regard to Standard 2, Ethics and Professional Norms, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was slightly more than Very Well aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.86. The 95% confidence limits were 3.95 and 4.41.

With regard to Standard 3, Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was more than Moderately Well aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.64 with a standard deviation of 1.02. The 95% confidence limits were 3.36 and 3.91.

With regard to Standard 4, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was significantly more than Moderately Well, but not Very Well, aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.88 with a standard deviation of 1.01. The 95% confidence limits were 3.60 and 4.15.

With regard to Standard 5, Community of Care and Support for Students, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was significantly more than Moderately Well, but not Very Well, aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.76 with a standard deviation of 1.02. The 95% confidence limits were 3.49 and 4.04.

With regard to Standard 6, Professional Capacity of School Personnel, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was significantly more than Moderately Well, but not Very Well, aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.82 with a standard deviation of 0.99. The 95% confidence limits were 3.56 and 4.09.

With regard to Standard 7, Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was significantly more than Moderately Well, but not Very Well, aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.96 with a standard deviation of 0.91. The 95% confidence limits were 3.72 and 4.21.

With regard to Standard 8, Meaningful Engagement of Families and Communities, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was more than Moderately Well aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.71 with a standard deviation of 1.03. The 95% confidence limits were 3.43 and 3.99.

With regard to Standard 9, Operations and Management, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was more than Moderately Well aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for this Standard was 3.70 with a standard deviation of 0.97. The 95% confidence limits were 3.44 and 3.96.

With regard to Standard 10, School Improvement, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was significantly more than Moderately Well, but not Very Well, aligned to this PSEL Standard, regardless of their current job status or university attended.

The mean for this Standard was 3.95 with a standard deviation of 0.94. The 95% confidence limits were 3.7 and 4.2.

With regard to the Overall Rating, the data demonstrated that survey respondents believed their program was significantly more than Moderately Well, but not Very Well, aligned to the PSEL Standards, regardless of their current job status or university attended. The mean for the Overall Rating was 3.98 with a standard deviation of 0.84. The 95% confidence limits were 3.76 and 4.21.

The results range from a low mean of 3.64 (Standard 3, Equity and Cultural Responsiveness) to a high mean of 4.18 (Standard 2, Ethics and Professional Norms). This data demonstrated that current students and graduates combined felt their programs were better than Moderately Well aligned to just over Very Well aligned on each of the PSEL Standards, including the overall rating. Regarding the results from the survey, the range of perceptions fell from Moderately Well to Very Well, or better. The difference is subtle and could be a result of a few responses going one way or the other. However, actions to remedy these differences are included among overall suggestions for the school district and universities addressed in Chapter 5.

Perceptions regarding alignment by position. This section answers Research Question 2.a, "What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students, graduates who are not school-based administrators, and graduates who are school-based administrators (or who have been school-based administrators)?" To answer this question, I ran a two-tailed t test comparing survey responses between graduates from the cohort programs who were not school-based administrators and graduates from the cohort programs who are or were school-based administrators (as indicated above, I did not receive enough responses from current students to

include them in the results) regarding how well aligned they believed their program was to

today's PSEL Standards. Table 13 shows the results of the t test.

Table 13

Two-Tailed T Test Results Comparing Perceptions of Standards Alignment

PSEL Standard	Group	Number	Mean	Mean Difference	Lower CL	Upper CL	P-Value
1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values	Not Admins	28	3.75	-0.60	-1.04	-0.15	0.0096
	Admins	23	4.35				
2. Ethics and Professional Norms	Not Admin	28	3.93	-0.51	-0.97	-0.04	0.0345
	Admins	23	4.43				
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Not Admin	28	3.57	-0.69	-1.26	-0.12	0.0182
	Admins	23	4.26				
5. Community of Care and Support for Students	Not Admins	27	3.44	-0.69	-1.26	-0.11	0.0210
	Admins	23	4.13				

Table 13 (Continued).

6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	Not Admin	28	3.50				
				-0.72	-1.26	-0.18	0.0105
	Admins	23	4.22				
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	Not Admins	28	3.64				
				-0.62	-1.11	-0.13	0.0146
	Admins	23	4.26				
10. School Improvement	Not Admin	28	3.61				
				-0.74	-1.25	-0.23	0.0053
	Admins	23	4.35				
Overall	Not Admins	26	3.69				
				-0.57	-1.03	-0.11	0.0165
	Admins	23	4.26				

Note: The p-value is significant at P<0.05. Mean Difference may not appear exact due to rounding.

This question investigates the impact of each university's principal preparation cohort program on how well current students and graduates perceived their cohort program was aligned with the current PSEL Standards 1 through 10. Current students, graduates from the cohort programs under study who were not school-based administrators, and graduates from the cohort

programs under study who were school-based administrators were surveyed going back ten years. Since not enough current students responded on the survey, their results are omitted for this analysis.

With regard to Standard 1, Mission, Vision, and Core Values, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.75 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.35 for a mean difference of -0.60. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0096. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their program alignment to current PSEL Standard 1 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 2, Ethics and Professional Norms, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.93 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.43, for a mean difference of -0.51. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0345. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their program alignment to current PSEL Standard 2 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 4, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.57 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.26, for a mean difference of -0.69. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0182. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their program alignment to current PSEL Standard 4 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 5, Community of Care and Support for Students, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.44 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.13, for a mean difference of -0.69. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0210. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their program alignment to current PSEL Standard 5 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 6, Professional Capacity of School Personnel, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.50 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.22, for a mean difference of -0.72. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0105. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their program alignment to current PSEL Standard 6 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 7, Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.64 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.26, for a mean difference of -0.62. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0146. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their program alignment to current PSEL Standard 7 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to Standard 10, School Improvement, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.61 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.35, for a mean difference of -0.74. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0053. Graduates who were school-based

92

administrators rated their program alignment to current PSEL Standard 10 significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

With regard to the Overall rating, the results showed that graduates who were not school-based administrators scored 3.69 and graduates who were school-based administrators scored 4.26, for a mean difference of -0.57. A t test comparing the two was statistically significant resulting in a p-value of 0.0165. Graduates who were school-based administrators rated their Overall program alignment significantly higher than graduates who had not been school-based administrators.

The results of questions regarding Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and Overall indicated that graduates who were school-based administrators scored statistically significantly higher than graduates who were not school-based administrators on the question of how well they perceive their university programs were aligned with current PSEL Standards. Furthermore, since the Lower CL of graduates who were school-based administrators was higher than the Upper CL of graduates who were not school-based administrators on Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and the Overall rating, there is a high level of confidence that a statistically significant difference exists between the two groups with regards to those standards.

In conclusion, graduates from the principal preparation cohort programs under study who were school-based administrators rated their program's alignment to current PSEL Standards higher on *each* standard than graduates who are not administrators. The difference between the two groups is significant with a high degree of confidence on questions regarding Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and the Overall rating. Therefore, to answer Research Question 2.a., there is a high degree of confidence that a significant difference exists between how well graduates who were

school-based administrators and graduates who are not school-based administrators perceived their program was aligned to current PSEL Standards.

Perceptions of alignment by university. To answer Research Question 2.b., "What are the differences in perceptions among current cohort students and graduates from each of the universities under study?" I used an ANOVA test. Tables 14 through 16 show the standards where significant differences existed in the data. In reference to Table 14, Summary of Fit from an ANOVA test indicates that significant differences exist in the data, but does not identify what those significant differences are. In my data analysis, the p-value was set at 0.05 so anything less than 0.05 (Prob > F) would indicate a significant difference. The R Squared value indicates to what extent the differences may be due to chance. An R squared value of 1 would indicate there is no possibility of chance playing a role in the difference and an R-Value of 0 would indicate a high probability that chance played a role in the difference. The F-Ratio identifies the variation among the means with a higher number indicating a greater variance in the means. The degrees of freedom (DF) is derived by the formula n-1.

Table 14

Summary of Fit and Analysis of Variance for University Alignment to PSEL Standards

PSEL Standard	Source	R^2	DF	F Ratio	Prob >F
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Summary of Fit	0.21			
	University		2	6.93	0.0021
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	Summary of Fit	0.12			
	University		2	3.56	0.0355
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	Summary of Fit	0.23			
	University		2	8.05	0.0009

Table 14 (Continued).

10. School Improvement	Summary of Fit	0.20			
	University		2	6.44	0.0031

Note: The p-value is significant at P<0.05.

Table 15

Means for One Way ANOVA with Standard Deviation for University Program Alignment to PSEL Standards

PSEL Standard	Level	Number	Mean	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Standard Deviation
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	University A	27	3.41	3.05	3.76	1.05
	University B	17	4.24	3.79	4.68	0.83
	University C	12	4.42	3.89	4.95	0.67
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	University A	27	3.48	3.11	3.85	1.09
	University B	17	4.24	3.77	4.70	0.83
	University C	12	4.00	3.45	4.55	0.74
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	University A	27	3.52	3.20	3.83	0.98
	University B	17	4.47	4.07	4.87	0.62
	University C	12	4.25	3.78	4.72	0.62
10. School Improvement	University A	27	3.52	3.19	3.85	1.05
	University B	17	4.35	3.93	4.77	0.61
	University C	12	4.33	3.83	4.83	0.65

Table 16

Ordered Differences Report for University Program Alignment to PSEL Standards

PSEL Standard	Level	-Level	*Difference*	*Lower CL*	*Upper CL*	*p-Value*
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	University C	University A	1.01	0.24	1.78	0.0069*
	University B	University A	0.83	0.14	1.51	0.0140*
	University C	University B	0.18	-0.65	1.01	0.8595
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel	University B	University A	0.75	0.04	1.46	0.0348*
	University C	University A	0.52	-0.28	1.31	0.2658
	University B	University C	0.24	-0.63	1.10	0.7892
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	University B	University A	0.95	0.34	1.56	0.0012*
	University C	University A	0.73	0.05	1.41	0.0329*
	University B	University C	0.22	-0.52	0.96	0.7542
10. School Improvement	University B	University A	0.83	0.19	1.48	0.0079*
	University C	University A	0.81	0.09	1.54	0.0231*
	University B	University C	0.02	-0.76	0.80	0.998

Note: The p-value is significant at P<0.05. An asterisk indicates a statistically significant difference.

This question investigates the impact of principal preparation cohort programs on

perceptions of program alignment to the current PSEL Standards 1 – 10, plus an Overall rating,

by university, according to cohort program graduates and current students. Graduates and current students from each of the cohort programs under study were surveyed going back ten years. Results indicating how well graduates and students believed their university program was aligned to current PSEL Standards were analyzed.

With regard to Standard 4, Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 4 ($F(2, 53) = 6.93$ p $= 0.0021$). Using η2 as a correlation-based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 21 percent of the overall variability in university effectiveness. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and Universities B and C. The results showed that University A scored 3.41 and University C scored 4.42 which was statistically significant (p $= 0.0069$), with an effect size d $= 1.17$, indicating that University C scored 1.17 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.24 \leq \mu \leq 1.78$. The results also showed that University A scored significantly below University B on the question of how aligned students felt their university program was to current PSEL Standard 4. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University B. The results showed that University A scored 3.40 and University B scored 4.24 which was statistically significant (p $= 0.0140$), with an effect size d $= 0.88$, indicating that University B scored 0.88 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.14 \leq \mu \leq 1.51$. The results demonstrated that University B and University C scored significantly higher than University A regarding how well graduates and current students believed their university prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 4.

With regard to Standard 6, Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 6 ($F(2, 53) = 3.56$ p = 0.0355). Using $\eta 2$ as a correlation-based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 12 percent of the overall variability in university effectiveness. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University B. The results showed that University A scored 3.48 and University B scored 4.24 which was statistically significant (p = 0.0348), with an effect size d =0.78, indicating that University B scored 0.78 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.04 \leq \mu \leq 1.46$. The results demonstrated that University B scored significantly higher than University A, with a high degree of confidence, regarding how well aligned the universities were to PSEL Standard 6, according to graduates and current students of the cohort programs.

With regard to Standard 7, Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 7 ($F(2, 53) = 8.05$ p = 0.0009). Using $\eta 2$ as a correlation-based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 23 percent of the overall variability in university effectiveness. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University B. The results showed that University A scored 3.52 and University B scored 4.47 which was statistically significant (p = 0.0012), with an effect size d = 1.19, indicating that University B scored 1.19 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.34 \leq \mu \leq 1.56$. The results also showed that University A scored significantly

below University C on the question of how well aligned students felt their university program was to current PSEL Standard 7. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University C. The results showed that University A scored 3.52 and University C scored 4.25 which was statistically significant ($p = 0.0329$), with an effect size $d = 0.91$, indicating that University C scored 0.91 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.05 \leq \mu \leq 1.41$. The results demonstrated that Universities B and C scored significantly higher than University A, with a high degree of confidence, regarding how well aligned the universities were to current PSEL Standard 7, according to graduates and current students of the cohort programs.

With regard to Standard 10, School Improvement, the ANOVA showed that the groups exhibited significant differences in how well they believed their program prepared them to meet PSEL Standard 10 ($F(2, 53) = 6.44$ $p = 0.0031$). Using $\eta 2$ as a correlation-based measure of effect showed that differences among the groups accounted for 20 percent of the overall variability in university effectiveness. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University B. The results showed that University A scored 3.52 and University B scored 4.35 which was statistically significant ($p = 0.0079$), with an effect size $d = 1.00$, indicating that University B scored 1.00 standard deviation higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.19 \leq \mu \leq 1.48$. The results also show that University A scored significantly below University C on the question of how well aligned students felt their university program was to current PSEL Standard 10. Individual group comparisons using the Tukey-Kramer test showed significant differences between University A and University C. The results showed that University A scored 3.52 and University C scored 4.33 which was statistically significant ($p =$

0.0231), with an effect size d = 0.95, indicating that University C scored 0.95 standard deviations higher than University A. In addition, the 95% confidence interval for the difference was $0.09 \leq \mu \leq 1.54$. The results demonstrated that Universities B and C scored significantly higher than University A, with a high degree of confidence, regarding how well aligned the universities were to PSEL Standard 10, according to graduates and current students of the cohort programs.

In conclusion, there are some significant differences in how well students perceive their university programs were aligned to the current PSEL Standards. The difference among the three universities is significant with a high degree of confidence on Standards 4, 6, 7 and 10. Specifically, University A scored significantly lower than University B and University C on Standards 4, 7, and 10. University A also scored significantly lower on Standard 6 than University B. No significance differences existed between Universities B and C. Therefore, to answer Research Question 2.b., there is a high degree of confidence that significant differences existed among the universities regarding how well aligned their programs were to the current PSEL Standards 4, 6, 7, and 10, according to graduates and current students of the cohort programs.

This data expresses the "what" and answers my research questions. However, knowing the "what" might identify where problems may exist, but the why might identify the solutions. Therefore, in order to further enhance my research and confirm or refute the results, I conducted a focus group of survey respondents to determine the "why."

Focus Group Analysis

While there is no one commonly established method for analyzing qualitative data, and indeed flexibility is encouraged (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007; Ahmed, Quraishi, &

Abdillahi, 2017; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018), it was important for me to establish a process to analyze the focus group data based on research. After reviewing several procedures online, I decided to adapt a checklist for analyzing focus group data provided by the Social Science Tools for Coastal Programs (Introduction to conducting focus groups, 2009, p. 12). I chose this checklist for its ease of use and how it matched my concept of how the process should work. The checklist contained five items. I detail my data analysis below using each of the five headings on the checklist. See Appendix H for the complete checklist.

1. Get to know the data

I created a document that would allow me to record the focus group responses in real time for each standard (See Appendixes I and J). I also audio recorded the session but with so few people in the room, there was no need to transcribe the recordings because I could plainly hear and see everyone as they were talking. As I took notes, I wrote down my impressions and requested clarification when needed. Sometimes, someone would say something that was more pertinent to the next session regarding the universities and I would notate it accordingly. I had separate sections on my notes for when administrators spoke and when non-administrators spoke so I could be sure to keep them separate. I used the same process when assessing the university data. Because my target audience was very specific, numbering only about 170 people, and my responses were limited to only 57 (though percentage-wise a good response rate), it was inevitable that my focus group would be close to the minimum desired. While this puts obvious limitations on my focus group data in terms of extrapolating to the population in general, I did have at least one representative from each group under study.

2. Focus on the analysis

I established a procedure for the focus group that would allow me to gain the insight I needed to make an informed analysis. My goal was to ascertain why the survey respondents answered the way they did on the survey that produced significant differences in the data. While I jotted down many notes, I paid careful attention to anything that might shed light on the significant differences.

I conducted two sessions during the focus group. The first session focused on significant differences between administrators and non-administrators regarding the questions of how well they were prepared and how well their program was aligned to current standards. I proceeded to ask for information standard by standard. After a while, the group was able to isolate on a few possible reasons for the significant differences. At one point, one of the participants simply said "ditto" to the next question. I used this same strategy when determining the significant differences among the universities. Again, I focused on the significant differences that existed on the survey among the universities. Since the group was now acclimated to the process, they were able to respond holistically regarding the significant differences that existed among the universities instead of standard by standard.

3. Categorize information

As the focus group was speaking, categories of information began to emerge. To ensure I was interpreting their comments accurately, I occasionally provided the group a brief summary of what I wrote and asked if I had captured their thoughts accurately. When the discussion started to dwindle, I asked the group if they had any other thoughts. If not, we moved on. When I reviewed my notes, I took their comments and organized them into categories or themes that

could explain why significant differences existed on the survey. Most of their comments applied to all the standards, so instead of having a different set of themes for each standard, I created one set of themes that might explain all the significant differences, both between administrators and non-administrators and among the universities.

4. Identify Connections

Once I had themes, I noticed a similarity between two of them so I decided to combine those two themes (Administrative Experiences and Internship). I paid careful attention to distinguish between programmatic issues and class-specific concerns. If the issue presented seemed very specific to a certain course (a professor who was not able to attend class for instance) and was not confirmed by others, it was not included as a category or theme. It is not unusual for students to complain about certain aspects of their courses, but it is doubtful that one specific instance or occurrence could result in such significant differences in data over the span of 10 years and different cohorts.

5. Interpret the data

Consistent with the checklist, I aimed to describe my analysis in-depth and to focus only on the relevant data to answer my research questions. If comments were made that I felt were not materially useful to the reader, I did not include them. At first, I categorized my analysis by Administrator/Non-Administrator and by each university. However, after more review and analysis, I concluded that the analysis would be better served holistically because the information gleaned from the focus group crossed over from administrator to non-administrator and from university to university. During the conversations, it was apparent that some themes were

developing. These themes existed throughout the standards and were not necessarily standard specific, although some were more university specific.

Consistent with research regarding analyzing qualitative data (Kreuger, 2002; Rabiee, 2004; and Stewart, et al., 2007), I sorted my data into themes. I looked for commonalities among the comments provided and for agreements and disagreements. After reviewing my notes, I determined the following themes emerged that could explain the occurrence of significant differences in the survey data.

Administrative Experience/Internship. The most common theme running throughout the focus group discussion centered around administrative experience and internship. There was debate regarding exactly when administrators felt prepared: Was it a result of their preparation program or was it a result of their experience now that they are administrators? Graduates who were not school-based administrators seemed to accept the theory that administrative experience likely accounted for the significant differences. However, administrators were not so eager to agree that their perception of preparedness and alignment was solely due to their current experience, and as the conversation evolved, it became apparent that internships were a critical means to gain the necessary administrative experience. One non-administrator noted that her internship experience was "less than robust" while also admitting that she did not put forth the greatest effort either. Another non-administrator observed that he "know[s] what I learned, but don't know if it works in real life." Administrators, on the other hand, commented that gaining administrative experience during their internship was a big focus of their program and that the internship hours were what really gave them the confidence to do the job from the very beginning.

Non-administrators felt as if they were not always able to gain the necessary administrative experience during their preparation program due to their mentor or their status as a classroom teacher. They mentioned that administrative experiences such as being on school improvement teams, providing colleague feedback, and participating in interviews would have provided a greater experience for them. They felt if they were not included on these teams or given the opportunity to participate in these administrative experiences, they had little opportunity to get this experience. This provoked Alice, who is a non-school-based administrator from the cohort not specifically under study, to offer that her mentor was great and was able to provide a variety of tasks during her entire experience and wondered if there was something inherent in some teachers that prevented them from taking the initiative to seek these opportunities. While this comment was not universally agreed to, it was not dismissed either. A school-based administrator also chimed in regarding how great his mentor was as well. Non-administrators also believed that while they didn't appreciate how on point their internship activities may have been, the internship did not necessarily connect classwork to practice, in their opinion. To them, classwork seemed distinct from the internship. To sum up the administrator perspective, one administrator stated, in reference specifically to Standard 10 but applicable to the discussion with regards to all standards, "internships really played a role" in being prepared for school-based leadership.

Curriculum. The next most commonly discussed factor centered around curriculum. While each university is compelled by state law to teach certain standards, the courses in which those standards are taught can vary greatly. For example, according to the Status Matrix referred to in the Document Review section of this chapter, only University C included a course specifically designed to address the needs of special education. The University A participant

105

could not recall learning anything about special education in his program, other than what was taught during his school law course. Reviewing the matrix would support his memory as there were no courses in the University A curriculum specific to special education. Also, a review of the matrix reveals that University B relied less on internship hours to meet standards than did Universities A and C. On the matrix that shows which courses are designed to teach each standard, internship is indicated 18 times for University A and 19 times for University C. The internship is only indicated five times for University B. This could be interpreted to mean that University B directly taught concepts through coursework more so than did Universities A and C. This would seem to confirm the perception from the University A participant who, when reviewing Standard 4 (Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment) stated "I don't even know what course would have gone over this information." This individual went on to say that University A "did not prepare us at all around curriculum and instruction." Non-Administrators were more inclined to note that they did not believe their curriculum was necessarily aligned to the jobs they were seeking, which of course could explain why significant differences existed regarding preparedness and alignment.

A school-based administrator from University B mentioned that he had two courses in his program dedicated to Professional Learning Communities. In his opinion, this prepared him to create a professional community amongst his staff (Standard 7). The other administrator also indicated he felt prepared to develop a community within his school. Non-administrators, however, felt less prepared, indicating they either did not remember learning much about building communities in school or did not have any opportunities as a non-administrator to prepare for building communities.

Professors. The third theme that arose during our focus group involved the professors. Participants from both Universities B and C indicated that one quarter to one half of their professors were adjunct professors from the school district. The participant from University A, which performed significantly lower on several standards, reported that half to three quarters of his instructors were adjunct professors from the school district. The sense from the focus group was that adjunct professors from the school district concentrated more on teaching students how the school district operates than how to apply the national standards. While this may have resulted in the appearance of less alignment to national standards, the group believed this did help better prepare them for leadership in the school district. Alice indicated that she had adjunct, university, and "outside" professors. Her feeling was that she received phenomenal instruction from both the adjunct and university professors, but did not feel the same way about the outside professors. In fact, her exact words were adjunct and university professors "were far superior than outside professors." While I did not ask, it was apparent that "outside" professors were professors from neither the university nor school district. From my experience, "outside" professors are brought in to teach a specific topic or a few classes for their expertise. Some focus group participants commented that they thought the curriculum was given to the professors, but Alice thought the professors made up the curriculum. This could be a result of a difference between her cohort and those under study, but these comments regarding professors led the group to wonder about the oversight process for professors and the curriculum.

Personal Responsibility. A common thread and underlying theme present throughout much of the focus group discussion was the difference in opportunities that non-administrators believed they had compared to administrators. This did not seem to be university specific. As noted above, one non-administrator shared that while her internship was not robust, she did not

take advantage of it. Common amongst the non-administrators was a feeling that they just did not

have opportunities to get the administrative experience they needed. They mentioned not able to

participate in critical school committees or functions. Administrators, on the other hand, seemed

to take greater advantage of the opportunities provided by their programs. Non-administrators

were also more inclined to believe that administrators felt better prepared because they are

currently doing the job. Administrators were less inclined to believe their preparation was on the

job only. My sense was that administrators really did not believe their preparation was on the

job, but did not want to offend non-administrators by completely dismissing the notion. There

was a distinct level of confidence difference between the two groups, but I got the sense that this

confidence existed before they became administrators. Unstated, but undeniably present, was the

sense that personal responsibility for your own learning and experience outcomes could play a

factor in whether or not you feel prepared to be a school-based administrator.

Summary

The data showed clear discrepancies in perceptions of preparedness and standards

alignment. The universities under study were obligated to teach standards that were several years

old for many of the cohort students and graduates. While the national standards were revised

twice, the Department of Education in the state in which the programs under study reside, did not

update their own standards requirements for over ten years. This resulted in endorsement

competencies not being fully aligned to the current PSEL Standards, as evidenced by a document

review. The researcher and two people familiar with leadership standards reviewed accreditation

documents provided by the Department of Education to as objectively as possible determine how

aligned the standards provided on the Program Status Matrix was for each university to the

current PSEL Standards. For most standards, the document review indicated less alignment than did survey respondents.

The survey results indicated numerous significant differences existed between graduates who were school-based administrators and graduates who were not school-based administrators regarding how well they perceived they were prepared to be administrators and how well aligned their program was to the current PSEL Standards. In all, significant differences in perceptions of preparation between graduates who were not administrators and graduates who were administrators existed in seven of the ten standards plus an overall rating. With regards to alignment, there were also significant differences between graduates who were not administrators and graduates who were administrators in seven standards and again, the overall rating.

Significant differences also appeared among the universities. University A performed significantly lower with regards to perceptions of preparation and perceptions of alignment on four standards. On some standards, University A only performed below one of the other universities and in other standards it performed below both the other universities. There were no significant differences between University B and University C.

In an attempt to determine why significant differences existed on the survey data, a focus group was convened. Survey respondents had the opportunity to indicate on the survey if they would be interested in participating in the focus group. While 16 survey respondents initially expressed an interest, only five were eventually able to attend. As a result of the focused discussions, several themes emerged. Conversations isolated on the importance of administrative experience and internship, curriculum, and professors. Unstated, but ever-present, was a belief that personal responsibility may have played a role in perceptions of preparedness.

In Chapter 5, I provide a brief synopsis of this dissertation followed by a review of my findings. I offer suggestions to the school district and universities regarding the implications this research has for their programs, including analysis-based suggestions they might consider. I also provide personal reflections regarding my experience as a cohort student and as a former coordinator of these programs.

Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

In Chapter 1, I discussed the importance of principal preparation, noting that research indicates principals are second only to teachers when it comes to the success of a student (Leithwood, et al., 2004). Alvoid and Black (2014) concluded that today's principals "do not feel sufficiently prepared by their preservice training to successfully meet the demands of school leadership" (para. 4). This is the backdrop that gives this research credence. Our principal preparation programs must effectively prepare our future school-based leaders and their programs must be based on expertly derived standards for school-based leadership.

In Chapter 2, I provided considerable information regarding the history of principal preparation and current research into principal preparation programs. Many principal preparation programs have been studied and some common variables, such as rigorous recruitment and selection, coursework and internship, assessment and evaluation, are typical of principal preparation programs. Research indicates some improvements needed in principal preparation programs are more meaningful experiences, improved internships, better collaboration, and greater alignment to national standards. Improving internships could mean providing interns with skilled mentors and requiring journaling and or frequent collaborative sessions. Improving experience could mean exposing the intern to more administrative experiences such as observing and evaluating teachers, participating on interview panels, and engaging in school improvement sessions.

In Chapter 3, I provided an outline of my methodology for data collection. First, I requested accreditation documents from the state DOE which detailed the standards, or endorsement competencies, principal preparation programs are to teach and the courses in which those standards are taught. Then I created a survey that would answer my research questions.

Working with my school district sponsor, I was able to send my survey to everyone in the school district with an administrative license, though my target audience was much smaller. Finally, I conducted a focus group comprised of interested individuals who took the survey to gain insight into the survey results.

In Chapter 4, I detailed how I collected the data and provided my analysis. With a couple knowledgeable colleagues, we dissected the documents provided by the state DOE to determine how aligned the standards taught in our principal preparation programs were to the current PSEL Standards. We used a scale of Fully Aligned, Partially Aligned, and No Alignment Discovered. Next, I conducted a survey that was sent to all employees in the school district under study who had administrative licenses. From that group, my intended audience was reserved to only those who attended one of the cohorts under study. I estimated this would number around 170 people and from that group, I received 59 responses. After reviewing the survey submissions, I determined that two responses were technically outside my targeted audience and deleted them.

My survey analysis revealed that there were significant differences between how graduates who were school-based administrators and graduates who were not school-based administrators perceived they were prepared and significant differences also existed between these groups regarding how well they perceived their principal preparation program was aligned to the current PSEL Standards. Furthermore, the survey revealed significant differences among the universities regarding how well graduates and current students perceived they were prepared and how well their programs were aligned to current PSEL Standards.

From the 57 responses that I could use, I was able to secure commitments from five, ultimately, who expressed an interest in participating in my focus group. The focus group was comprised of graduates who were school-based administrators (or who had been) and graduates

who were not school-based administrators and at least one representative from each of the

universities under study. The objective of this group was to determine why significant

differences existed in the survey results. I shared the survey data, significant differences only,

with the focus group participants standard by standard. First, we discussed the significant

differences as non-administrators and administrators, then we discussed the significant

differences in terms of university programs. From the conversations, I was able to glean three

themes and an additional underlying theme all of which could explain the significant differences

in the data.

In this chapter, I discuss my analysis and the implications for the school district and

universities under study. My analysis includes the collaborative document review, the survey

results that showed significant differences, and the emerging focus group themes. Combined,

these may provide the school district and universities with valuable knowledge to better align

their programs with national standards and to better prepare aspiring school-based administrators

for the challenges of school leadership from Day One.

Findings and Implications

My research questions sought to determine how well principal preparation cohort

students and graduates believed they were prepared to be school-based administrators and how

well their programs were aligned to current PSEL Standards. More specifically, I was interested

to learn if there were any significant differences in how well current students, graduates who

were school-based administrators, and graduates who were not school-based administrators

perceived they were prepared by their principal preparation cohort to be school-based

administrators as well as how well their program was aligned to PSEL Standards. Additionally, I

wanted to understand if there were any significant differences in perceptions among students and

graduates regarding the universities under study. To answer my research questions, I engaged in a collaborative document review, created a survey and analyzed the results, and finally I conducted a focus group.

Document Review Findings and Implications

The accreditation documents I received from the state DOE listed the state required endorsement competencies and the courses in which each competency would be taught. When I received the documents via email from the DOE, I immediately noticed they were dated 2007. I received these documents in May of 2018. Thinking I must have received outdated documents, I contacted the DOE via email to request more recent accreditation documents and was told that I had the most recent documents. The endorsement competencies had not been updated since at least 2007 meaning principal preparation students were being taught standards that were from at least four to eleven years old by time they graduated from their program. The ISSLC Standards, now PSEL Standards, have been updated twice (2008 and 2015) since 2007. This fact alone would seem to indicate that the standards taught would not be aligned to current PSEL Standards. When I first inquired in May 2018, there was no indication that the endorsement competencies would soon be updated. However, according to a recent email reply from the DOE in March 2019, the "new licensure regulations and approved program regulations were approved in August 2018." Regardless of this update, the universities under study would have used the endorsement competencies dated 2007 for the vast majority of the cohorts under study. A brief comparison between the 2007 competencies and the updated competencies reveals that much of the language is the same. In fact, there are only a few subtle differences in the main competency headings.

To determine how well aligned the endorsement competencies were to the current PSEL Standards, I solicited the assistance of two knowledgeable educators. When quantifying our results using a scale of 5 for Fully Aligned, 3 for Partially Aligned, and 1 for No Alignment Discovered, I found a range of alignment from 1.33 (PSEL Standard 5) to 4.14 (PSEL Standard 1) indicating that some standards were closer to No Alignment Discovered and others closer to Fully Aligned. Given that the endorsement competencies were from 2007, a wide disparity in the alignment was not a surprise.

While neither the school district nor the universities control when the DOE updates endorsement competencies, it would be prudent for each organization to ensure the state mandated endorsement competencies are the *minimum required* and that they update their own required competencies in order to always maintain a program that is up to date with current standards. While this may happen in each class by each professor in an unofficial manner, a more prescriptive process, such as including current standards on their own matrix that includes which course is designed to teach the standard, may be more appropriate to ensure aspiring school-based leaders are prepared to lead using current standards. In fact, it may be of great interest for the school district and universities to collaborate to determine what current standards should be emphasized the most, which could lead to a curriculum update.

Survey Findings and Implications

I honestly had no concrete idea what the survey results would reveal. I felt like I could make an authentic argument that non-administrators would feel most prepared and that current administrators would feel least prepared. I could also argue the opposite. I had similar thoughts regarding standards alignment. Regarding the universities, I was surprised to see significant differences among them.

It should be noted, however, that the results reflect positively upon the school district and universities. Survey respondents believed they were better than moderately well prepared to very well prepared to be school-based administrators. As well, they believed their programs were more than moderately well aligned to more than very well aligned to current PSEL Standards.

Additionally, when comparing non-administrators with administrators there is reason for optimism. For each current PSEL Standard, administrators felt better prepared than non-administrators, and for the most part, the results indicated administrators felt close to very well prepared. Had the results been the opposite, meaning administrators actually felt less prepared than non-administrators, that would possibly indicate a significant issue with their preparation. It could also have signaled a warning that their administrators are feeling more overwhelmed than imagined. While the results should be seen as good news, the school district may have reason to be concerned for their administrator pipeline. Fortunately, this particular school district has programs for educators who express an interest in school-based leadership and has a robust aspiring principal program that provides leadership and mentorship for assistant principals who express an interest in becoming principals. They also have a variety of other programs to help aspiring leaders and to mentor first year principals in addition to their university principal preparation cohort programs. Their principal selection process is also very rigorous. Additional research to determine the effectiveness of these programs may be beneficial to the school district. It would be interesting to know what percentage of their principals attend one of their in-house programs and whether or not differences in perceptions arose between administrators who attended in-house programs and those who did not.

Since graduates without administrative positions scored their preparation and alignment below graduates with administrative positions, I thought it might be informative to extract data

from the survey to determine if more graduates without administrative positions from University A, which performed below the other universities, took the survey than graduates without administrative positions from the other universities. The survey data indicates that twice as many graduates without administrative positions took the survey than graduates with administrative positions from University A. There were only very slight differences in these numbers for the other universities. This could account for the significant differences between University A and the other universities.

Focus Group Findings and Implications

The focus group appears to have provided revealing information regarding the perceptions of administrators and non-administrators and perceptions of preparation and alignment among the universities. The themes generated by the focus group were: Administrative Experience/ Internship; Curriculum; and Professors. An underlying theme of personal responsibility was also present throughout the discussion.

Based on the focus group discussion, universities may want to take a closer look at their internship requirements to ensure principal preparation cohort students gain valuable administrative experiences, not just go through the motions. This could be accomplished with something as simple as a journal, similar to the Bank Street College program referenced in Chapter 2 (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007), to be kept by each student and reviewed weekly by a mentor, or by having collaborative sessions with a university internship sponsor, school-based mentor (preferably a principal), and the student. These meetings would allow for the planning of meaningful experiences for the student and serve as a learning opportunity for the student after engaging in internship experiences.

The school district could contribute to the situation by working with principals who serve as principal preparation cohort student mentors. Once a student identifies a mentor, the mentor could attend a brief workshop, perhaps hosted in tandem by the school district and university, regarding the expectations of a mentor and the administrative experiences in which the student is expected to engage. The internship experience should not be just up to the student but rather should be a collaborative effort that includes the school district and university as well. Some successful principal preparation cohort programs have very robust internships allowing students to spend a year in an intern environment with a skilled mentor. Gaudreau et al. (2006) went a step further in declaring that the lack of a full-time internship offered during principal preparation programs was the most significant barrier to quality mentoring. The universities and school district should ensure that principal preparation cohort students are being mentored at the highest level and are offered quality administrative experiences during their internship period. Zaretsky et al. (2008) suggested that principal preparation programs include more problem-based learning and student-centered discovery learning into their curriculum as well as examples and case studies to address special education issues. Furthermore, The Wallace Foundation's University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI) produced a report published by the Rand Corporation in 2018 that provided a list of possible changes based on best practices that principal preparation programs may consider to improve their programs (Wang et al., 2018).

- aligning clinical experiences with standards and curricula

- providing candidates with realistic principal experiences

- extending the length of the clinical experience

- enhancing the mentoring, supervision, and evaluation of the candidates throughout

the clinical experience (p. xiv).

This list provides a summary of enhancements the principal preparation cohorts may want to consider to improve the internship experience for their students.

Regarding curriculum, universities should ensure their courses are continually updated to meet evolving trends and standards relevant to successful school leadership. Two of the universities under study relied heavily on internship hours to meet their endorsement competencies. A review of how this approach is working could be merited. It seems as if some standards are subsumed in particular courses, but perhaps courses specific to the standards, or perhaps more explicitly related to the standards, is warranted. An administrator from University A, which performed significantly lower than the other universities, could not even recall what course would have taught him curriculum, instruction, and assessment (though a review of the Status Matrix indicates that University A taught a course titled "Curriculum Development and Evaluation"). Perhaps a re-assessment of the courses and course outlines would be beneficial.

Based on the above, I would recommend the universities collaborate to strengthen their programs and to share their ideas. I understand they are competing for students, but the way the district rotated which university provided the principal preparation programs each year in reality, they were not competing for the same students at the same time. Regardless, I would hope the university model would value strengthening their program to better meet the needs of aspiring school-based administrators over competing for their dollars. As a graduate and coordinator of these programs, I see no reason to believe the universities are focused otherwise.

The school district and universities may want to review how they select their professors. While having some school district adjunct professors appears beneficial, too many may be

detrimental to achieving the goal of preparing principal preparation students to meet the PSEL

Standards either through preparation or alignment. Maintaining a practitioner (adjunct professor)

to university professor ratio of roughly 1 to 2 or 1 to 4 would seem to be ideal in order to provide

principal preparation cohort program students with an appropriate balance between the practice-

knowledge and artistry of school leadership and the technical-rational knowledge of school

leadership (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009).

Regarding personal responsibility, the very nature of this issue would seem to absolve the

school district and universities from any accountability here. However, if the school district and

universities collaborate as indicated above when discussing internships, students may take their

internship responsibilities more seriously. Unfortunately, regardless of how talented or well-

meaning someone is, humans can be inclined to "take the easy way out" or view their internship

as merely checking off hours instead of gaining valuable experience. A journal subject to

periodic review and occasional meetings among the student, school-based mentor, and university

mentor, as indicated by research presented in Chapter 2 (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007), may

provide some incentive to take greater personal responsibility for making the internship more

robust. But I would be remiss if I did not also conclude that each individual is responsible for

taking their education and internship seriously and they should take a proactive stance regarding

their learning experiences. If they are not on the school improvement team, they should attend

meetings. If they are not asked to be on interview panels, they should make the request to at least

attend in a non-judgmental capacity.

Comparative Review of the Programs Under Study to Research

In Chapter 2, I detailed the researched-based components that comprise effective principal preparation programs. These components include a process for recruitment and selection, quality coursework and internship, systematic assessment and evaluation, and an adherence to national standards. All of these components were evident in my research. My research also indicated that the professor may also have an impact of perceptions of effectiveness. In the section below, I detail how the programs under study compare to my research in Chapter 2.

Recruitment and Selection

All three universities under study engaged in a similar recruitment and selection process. The recruitment process included promoting each program in employee newsletters and providing an informational session at an event for aspiring leaders. This information was widely available to all school district employees and district leaders were encouraged to provide this information to those under their charge who they believed would be good future school-based leaders. Anyone who was interested in participating in the principal preparation cohort program could apply.

Upon the application deadline, a panel of current principals reviewed each application, including letters of recommendation and applicant resume, to determine who they believed had the qualities to enter the principal preparation program. The only requirement for selection into the principal preparation cohort was that the applicant must have at least three years of teaching experience. Other qualities were loosely defined by each panel, but generally speaking, the panel looked for candidates who had some leadership experience outside of their building. Letters of recommendation were influential as well, especially for candidates who were considered

borderline based on their application and resume. Once the panel selected the successful

applicants, each candidate was interviewed by members of the panel, a university representative,

and me. Once the interviews were complete, the interview panel determined which candidates to

accept into the principal preparation cohort program.

While this is a typical recruitment practice and similar to the successful New York City

Region 1 and Bank Street College Principal Institute program and UCAPP (Darling-Hammond,

et al., 2007), it lacks the rigor described in Chapter 2 for the DSU program and San Diego's

ELDA program, which required an applicant receive a nomination from someone in their school

district in order to apply (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Even though school-based leaders

were encouraged to share application information with potential leaders in the school-district

under study, application into the program was open to anyone who wanted to apply.

The selection process was also typical of the process described in Chapter 2, for the most

part. The school district and universities worked together to determine successful applicants.

Unlike some successful programs, however, the programs under study did not require a group

interview or problem-solving tasks. Much like the successful UCAPP (Darling-Hammond, et al.,

2007), the school-district provided many other opportunities for employees to gain valuable

leadership experience if an applicant was unsuccessful, allowing the applicant to gain leadership

skills so they could apply again in the future.

Coursework and Internship

Coursework and internships were critical factors in determining how well graduates

believed they were prepared to be school-based leaders. The programs under study required

students to accrue over 300 hours of internship experience, which is more than most states

require (Davis, 2016). Research by Gaudreau, et al. (2006) concluded that the lack of a full-time internship was a significant barrier to quality mentoring of prospective school-based administrators. Some successful principal preparation programs such as those at SDSU and DSU, involve more rigorous internships than the programs under study (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). These programs required full-time internships, close supervision, and/or provided some financial support for interns. Like some successful programs, the cohorts under study paired students with current principals (not retired principals) and each student had to demonstrate their learning through a project, journal, or portfolio at the end of the year.

With regards to coursework, one comment from the focus group stands out. An individual from University A stated that he had no idea in which course he would have been taught PSEL Standard 4. According to the beliefs of the SDSU program, "Theory must connect to practice" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007, p. 29). Another focus group participant who was not a school-based administrator expressed a similar feeling that coursework seemed disconnected from his internship when he stated that "I know what I learned, but don't know if it works in real life." However, one of the focus group participants who is a school-based administrator commented that his coursework in creating Professional Learning Communities was essential for him to establish his school as a professional learning community. While some successful research-based programs may be more rigorous, the effectiveness of the coursework and internship appears to be a matter of perspective.

Assessment and Evaluation

From my experience as a student and the coordinator of the programs under study, the assessment and evaluation provided by the universities under study mirrored those of the Bank Street College program. In the Bank Street College program, much like the programs under

study, students were required to maintain a portfolio of their administrative experiences,

although each program under study allowed students to demonstrate their knowledge in different

ways. Students in both the Bank Street College program and programs under study required were

required to keep track of their internship experiences, though not necessarily through a journal in

the programs under study. However, the Bank Street College program required students to

submit their journal on a weekly basis and their university advisor provided "comments and

guiding questions to deepen their thinking" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007, p. 70).

Adherence to National Standards

Johnson and Uline (2005) believed that focusing on the fidelity with which programs

applied the ISLLC Standards to their curriculum would lead to effective principal preparation

programs. From a review of the documentation provided by the DOE, the cohort programs under

study were standards based. While the review of the documentation indicated there were some

areas where the standards were not well aligned to the current PSEL Standards, the survey of

current students and graduates indicated a stronger alignment to current PSEL Standards. Strong

alignment can lead to the perception of better preparedness (McFadden, et al., 2003 as cited in

Hemmen, et al., 2009). This supports the survey results that indicated all students and graduates

believed their program was better than Moderately Well aligned to just over Very Well aligned

and they felt between better than Moderately Well prepared to just over Very Well prepared.

Professors

The cohort programs under study used clinical faculty, adjunct professors from the school

district, and "outside" professors. At least two of the universities also used tenured/tenure track

professors. Typically, adjunct professors were current or former administrators from the school

district under study. Focus group participants indicated that adjunct professors taught courses one-fourth to three-fourths of the time. Establishing a balance between faculty professors and adjunct professors is key to having an effective principal preparation program (Davis, 2016). According to McCarthy and Forsyth (2009), the ideal ratio of practitioner to university professor would be from 1 to 2 to 1 to 4. However, according to The School Superintendents Association (AASA) survey, respondents indicated that "having most/all courses taught by current or former effective principals" was the number one way to improve principal preparation programs (Davis, 2016, p. 9).

Suggestions for Further Research

The school district may want to expand on this research to included other principal preparation programs internal to the school district or external. I received several requests from school district employees with an administrative license to participate in my survey, even though they understood they were outside of my intended audience. There may be a desire for administrators and potential administrators to share their knowledge with the school district which could only serve to strengthen administrators and the pool of school-based administrator candidates. The results of this research and any other could inform the school district which standards should be the focus of workshops, seminars, and other continuing educational opportunities for school-based administrators and potential school-based administrators.

In my conclusion above, I referenced the fact that twice as many graduates without administrative positions than graduates with administrative positions from University A took the survey. In light of this, University A may be interested in their own survey to determine if there is a difference between graduates from University A who are administrators and graduates from

University A who are not administrators. The results could shed more light regarding why significant differences existed in this research.

Researcher Reflections

Throughout my research, I did my best to maintain a high level of transparency and impartiality. My only goal was to follow the data and information where they led me, regardless of whether the data were consistent with my viewpoint or completely disparate from my viewpoint. Having graduated from one of the principal preparation programs under study and eventually becoming the school district coordinator managing all three principal preparation programs under study, I have a high opinion of the preparation I received and of the universities in the cohort system. I am very grateful for the principal preparation program I attended and know that it prepared me to be a school-based administrator from the very first moment I stepped into a school building as an assistant principal. I also know I did my best to take advantage of the opportunities provided to me by the university and school district. I certainly am not shocked by the results of my research, but I definitely am surprised by the number of standards that demonstrated a significant difference between non-administrators and administrators. Similarly, I was surprised to see University A preform significantly lower on several standards. The school district may consider additional research in this area.

As I researched this topic, I found many instances where my experience with these cohorts informed me that the model employed by the school district and universities was very similar to what research indicates constitutes excellent programs. The programs used a recruitment process followed by a rigorous selection process. The selection process included a principal panel that reviewed resumes submitted by cohort applicants. If the resume did not indicate the candidate was ready for one of the cohorts, the applicant was not accepted. The

panel usually determined readiness by how much leadership the candidate demonstrated in their schools and in district capacities. The panel scored candidates on a rubric. Candidates who met certain criteria moved on to the interview process. Once a candidate made it through the resume vetting process, a panel of sitting principals and a university representative interviewed them. The university representative typically took the stance that they wanted to accept everyone because they held the responsibility to train candidates to be administrators. However, the universities also benefited monetarily by having more students in their programs. The principals dismissed the monetary aspect and selected only those candidates whom they thought were ready to enter a principal preparation program.

As the coordinator of these programs, I conducted the recruitment and selection process, but I remained silent on selection, unless asked to provide input. I served more as a facilitator and less a decision maker. Once the panel made its decisions, I contacted all candidates to inform them of their acceptance or rejection. Rejections always came with suggestions for what they needed to do to be accepted into one of the programs in the future. The acceptance criteria were similar for each university, though different people participated in the resume review and interview process. Once admitted into a program, I maintained contact with the students and professors to answer questions and provide assistance when needed. I maintained a very positive relationship with the students from each university.

Prior to the start of each cohort, I met with the university representative to review the course list and discuss potential professors. Many of the professors I knew and regarded highly. In fact, I discussed with two of the program representatives the possibility of teaching once I completed my doctorate. I remain interested in teaching a cohort.

Overall Conclusions

My research questions focused on the perceptions of current students and graduates and how well they believed they were prepared to be school-based leaders and how well they believed their programs were aligned with today's PSEL Standards. Additionally, my research questions asked about the differences in perceptions among current students, graduates who are school-based administrators, and graduates who are not school-based administrators regarding how well they were prepared to be school-based leaders and how well their program was aligned to current PSEL Standards. I also sought to determine what the differences were among the three universities under study regarding perceptions of preparedness and alignment among current students and graduates of the three universities. The results of my research indicate there are significant differences between principal preparation cohort graduates who are school-based administrators and graduates who are not school-based administrators. In fact, these differences exist to a significant level on many standards with regards to how well they were prepared and how well aligned their program was to the PSEL Standards. In each instance of a significant difference, graduates who are school-based administrators felt better prepared and believed their program was better aligned than graduates who are not school-based administrators. In my analysis above, I detailed my conclusions and implications for the school district and universities.

Significant differences existed among the universities, with University A scoring significantly below the other universities on a few of the standards. Although University A performed behind the other universities, their scores were typically in the Moderately Well to Very Well range. Perspective is warranted. University A still performed well.

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Appendix A

Bradley University Student Handbook example of curriculum alignment to ISLLC Standards

SREB CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 1 –
The School leader is able to create a focused mission to improve Candidate achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum, and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.

Aligns with 2008 ISLLC Standard 1 Functions A-E	COURSE ALIGNMENT Introduce preliminary knowledge	Internship Project Alignment	ARTIFACT/Product serving as evidence of competency *Supervisor Evaluates	ASSESSED LEVEL OF ACCOMPLISHMENT *Mentor Evaluates	PARTICIPATION or LEADERSHIP Level (min. 80% Leadership)	Grade Level Experience: EC, Elem, Middle, HS.
1.A Working with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in Candidate achievement as defined by the mission of the school	EHC 611 EHC 676 EHC 686*	**Focus Area: 3.3 –** State the mission of the school. Determine and analyze the different systems that exist within the school to fulfill the school's mission		Excellent Proficient Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory	Participation Leadership	
1.B Working with the administration to develop, define, and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision	EHC 611 EHC 676 EHC 686*	**Focus Area: 1.1 –** Explain the purpose of the SIP and its relationship to the school's vision in a presentation to a group of stakeholders (e.g., at a faculty meeting, department meeting, parent group, community group, etc.)		Excellent Proficient Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory		
1.C Working with the faculty to develop, define, and/r adapt best practices based on current research that support the school's vision	EHC 611 EHC 676 EHC 686*	**Focus Area: 1.1 –** Explain the purpose of the SIP and its relationship to the school's vision in a presentation to a group of stakeholders (e.g., at a faculty meeting, department meeting, parent group, community group, etc.)		Excellent Proficient Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory		

Appendix B

Example Document Review Analysis

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)/University Cohort Alignment

PSEL Standard 1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values: Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

Aligned Endorsement Competencies:

Endorsement Competency a: Knowledge, understanding, and application of planning, assessment, and instructional leadership that builds collective professional capacity, including:

Endorsement Competency b: Knowledge, understanding, and application of systems and organizations, including:

Endorsement Competency e: Knowledge, understanding, and application of the purpose education and the role of professionalism in advancing education goals, including:

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (2015)	University Cohort Endorsement Competencies (UCEC) (2007)	Explanation of Alignment Determination	Ratio of Agreement
1. a) Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student.	**Partially Aligned** a. (8) Communication of a clear vision of excellence, linked to mission and core beliefs that promotes continuous improvement consistent with the goals of the school division.	UCEC does not include language specific to the "*well-being* of each student."	3/3
1. b) In collaboration with members of the school and the community and using relevant data, develop and promote a vision for the school on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational	**Fully Aligned** a. (1) Principals of student motivation, growth, and development as a foundation for age- and grade- appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment. b. (4) Using data as part of ongoing program	The basic idea for this standard is to work collaboratively to use data that is relevant to child development and program evaluation.	3/3

practices that promote such success.	evaluation to inform and lead change. e. (5) Intentional and purposeful effort to model continuous professional learning and to work collegially and collaboratively with all members of the school community to support the school's goals and enhance its collective capacity.		
1. c) Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define the schools culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, care, and trust; and continuous improvement.	**Fully Aligned** a. (5) Incorporation of differentiated and effective instruction that responds to individual learner needs including appropriate response to cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity.	Standards speak to the desire to be child centered and to address their needs.	3/3
1. d) Strategically develop, implement, and evaluate actions to achieve the vision for the school.	**Fully Aligned** a. (2) Collaborative leadership in gathering and analyzing data to identify needs to develop and implement a school improvement plan that results in increased student learning.	Standards address strategies to move the school forward.	3/3 While the UCEC specifically addresses collaboration, experience intuits collaboration would be part of the PSEL Standard.
1. e) Review school's mission and vision and adjust them to changing expectations and opportunities for the school, and changing needs and situations of students.	**No Alignment Discovered**	The UCEC does not address adjusting mission and vision based on changing expectations or situations.	3/3

1. f) Develop shared understanding of and commitment to mission, vision, and core values within the school community.	**Fully Aligned** e. (5) Intentional and purposeful effort to model continuous professional learning and to work collegially and collaboratively with all members of the school community to support the school's goals and enhance its collective capacity.	Both address the need for collaborative work with the school community to support vision and goals.	2/3 One collaborator was more comfortable with a Partially Aligned determination.
1. g) Model and pursue the school's mission, vision, and core values in all aspects of leadership.	**Fully Aligned** e. (4) Intentional and purposeful effort to model professional, moral, and ethical standards as well as personal integrity in all interactions. e. (5) Intentional and purposeful effort to model continuous professional learning and to work collegially and collaboratively with all members of the school community to support the school's goals and enhance its collective capacity.	Each address modeling leadership.	3/3 While the PSEL does not specifically address the moral aspect, it does address "all aspects of leadership" which should naturally include moral and ethical standards. e. (5) was added during collaboration process.

Appendix C

Principal Preparation Cohort Survey

I provide my consent to use my responses on this survey for the intended use of the researcher.

o   Yes

o   No

In which principal preparation program cohort are you participating or did you participate?

o   2009 - 2011 (University A)

o   2010 - 2012 (University C)

o   2011 - 2013 (University B)

o   2012 - 2014 (University A)

o   2013 - 2015 (University C)

o   2014 - 2016 (University B)

o   2015 - 2017 (University A)

o   2016 - 2018 (University C)

o   2017 - 2019 (University B)

o   2018 - 2020 (University A)

Please choose a description below that most accurately describes your status as it relates to the principal preparation program.

o   I am currently a student in a principal preparation program.

o   I graduated from a principal preparation program but have not been a school-based administrator.

o   I graduated from a principal preparation program and am currently or have been a school-based administrator.

There are 2 questions for each Professional Standard for Educational Leaders (PSEL) in this survey. Questions are contained in the form of a matrix. The first question in the matrix is designed to ascertain how well you believe you were prepared, or are being prepared, to be a school-based administrator to meet the current PSEL Standard identified in the question. The second question is designed to ascertain how well you believe your program was/is aligned with the current PSEL Standard identified in the question.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

PRINCIPAL PREPARATION COHORT PERCEPTIONS

Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values states that Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

Effective leaders:

a) Develop an educational mission for the school to promote the academic success and well-being of each student.
b) In collaboration with members of the school and the community and using relevant data, develop and promote a vision for the school on the successful learning and development of each child and on instructional and organizational practices that promote such success.
c) Articulate, advocate, and cultivate core values that define the school's culture and stress the imperative of child-centered education; high expectations and student support; equity, inclusiveness, and social justice; openness, caring, and trust; and continuous improvement.
d) Strategically develop, implement, and evaluate actions to achieve the vision for the school.
e) Review the school's mission and vision and adjust them to changing expectations and opportunities for the school, and changing needs and situations of students.
f) Develop shared understanding of and commitment to mission, vision, and core values within the school and the community.
g) Model and pursue the school's mission, vision, and core values in all aspects of leadership.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 1?	○	○	○	○	○
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 1?	○	○	○	○	○

Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms states that Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Act ethically and professionally in personal conduct, relationships with others, decision-making, stewardship of the school's resources, and all aspects of school leadership.
b) Act according to and promote the professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement.
c) Place children at the center of education and accept responsibility for each student's academic success and well-being.
d) Safeguard and promote the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.

e) Lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students' and staff members' backgrounds and cultures.
f) Provide moral direction for the school and promote ethical and professional behavior among faculty and staff.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 1?	○	○	○	○	○
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 1?	○	○	○	○	○

Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness states Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Ensure that each student is treated fairly, respectfully, and with an understanding of each student's culture and context.
b) Recognize, respect, and employ each student's strengths, diversity, and culture as assets for teaching and learning.
c) Ensure that each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.
d) Develop student policies and address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner.
e) Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.
f) Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.
g) Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in their interactions, decision making, and practice.
h) Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to	○	○	○	○	○

meet PSEL
Standard 1?

How well do you
believe the
principal
preparation
program was/is
aligned to PSEL
Standard 1?

⬡ ⬡ ⬡ ⬡ ⬡

Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment states Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and core values of the school, embody high expectations for student learning, align with academic standards, and are culturally responsive.
b) Align and focus systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within and across grade levels to promote student academic success, love of learning, the identities and habits of learners, and healthy sense of self.
c) Promote instructional practice that is consistent with knowledge of child learning and development, effective pedagogy, and the needs of each student.
d) Ensure instructional practice that is intellectually challenging, authentic to student experiences, recognizes student strengths, and is differentiated and personalized.
e) Promote the effective use of technology in the service of teaching and learning.
f) Employ valid assessments that are consistent with knowledge of child learning and development and technical standards of measurement.
g) Use assessment data appropriately and within technical limitations to monitor student progress and improve instruction.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 1?	⬡	⬡	⬡	⬡	⬡
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 1?	⬡	⬡	⬡	⬡	⬡

Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students states Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

Effective leaders:

a) Build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy school environment that meets that the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student.
b) Create and sustain a school environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community.
c) Provide coherent systems of academic and social supports, services, extracurricular activities, and accommodations to meet the range of learning needs of each student.
d) Promote adult-student, student-peer, and school-community relationships that value and support academic learning and positive social and emotional development.
e) Cultivate and reinforce student engagement in school and positive student conduct.
f) Infuse the school's learning environment with the cultures and languages of the school's community.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 5?	○	○	○	○	○
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 5?	○	○	○	○	○

Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel states Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Recruit, hire, support, develop, and retain effective and caring teachers and other professional staff and form them into an educationally effective faculty.
b) Plan for and manage staff turnover and succession, providing opportunities for effective induction and mentoring of new personnel.
c) Develop teachers' and staff members' professional knowledge, skills, and practice through differentiated opportunities for learning and growth, guided by understanding of professional and adult learning and development.
d) Foster continuous improvement of individual and collective instructional capacity to achieve outcomes envisioned for each student.
e) Deliver actionable feedback about instruction and other professional practice through valid, research-anchored systems of supervision and evaluation to support the development of teachers' and staff members' knowledge, skills, and practice.

f) Empower and motivate teachers and staff to the highest levels of professional practice and to continuous learning and improvement.
g) Develop the capacity, opportunities, and support for teacher leadership and leadership from other members of the school community.
h) Promote the personal and professional health, well-being, and work-life balance of faculty and staff.
i) Tend to their own learning and effectiveness through reflection, study, and improvement, maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 6?	○	○	○	○	○
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 6?	○	○	○	○	○

Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff states Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Develop workplace conditions for teachers and other professional staff that promote effective professional development, practice, and student learning.
b) Empower and entrust teachers and staff with collective responsibility for meeting the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student, pursuant to the mission, vision, and core values of the school.
c) Establish and sustain a professional culture of engagement and commitment to shared vision, goals, and objectives pertaining to the education of the whole child; high expectations for professional work; ethical and equitable practice; trust and open communication; collaboration, collective efficacy, and continuous individual and organizational learning and improvement.
d) Promote mutual accountability among teachers and other professional staff for each student's success and the effectiveness of the school as a whole.
e) Develop and support open, productive, caring, and trusting working relationships among leaders, faculty, and staff to promote professional capacity and the improvement of practice.
f) Design and implement job-embedded and other opportunities for professional learning collaboratively with faculty and staff.
g) Provide opportunities for collaborative examination of practice, collegial feedback, and collective learning.
h) Encourage faculty-initiated improvement of programs and practices.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 7?	○	○	○	○	○
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 7?	○	○	○	○	○

Standard 8: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community states Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Are approachable, accessible, and welcoming to families and members of the community.
b) Create and sustain positive, collaborative, and productive relationships with families and the community for the benefit of students.
c) Engage in regular and open two-way communication with families and the community about the school, students, needs, problems, and accomplishments.
d) Maintain a presence in the community to understand its strengths and needs, develop productive relationships, and engage its resources for the school.
e) Create means for the school community to partner with families to support student learning in and out of school.
f) Understand, value, and employ the community's cultural, social, intellectual, and political resources to promote student learning and school improvement.
g) Develop and provide the school as a resource for families and the community.
h) Advocate for the school and district, and for the importance of education and student needs and priorities to families and the community.
i) Advocate publicly for the needs and priorities of students, families, and the community.
j) Build and sustain productive partnerships with public and private sectors to promote school improvement and student learning.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to	○	○	○	○	○

meet PSEL
Standard 8?

How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 8?	○	○	○	○	○

Standard 9: Operations and Management states Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Institute, manage, and monitor operations and administrative systems that promote the mission and vision of the school.
b) Strategically manage staff resources, assigning and scheduling teachers and staff to roles and responsibilities that optimize their professional capacity to address each student's learning needs.
c) Seek, acquire, and manage fiscal, physical, and other resources to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment; student learning community; professional capacity and community; and family and community engagement.
d) Are responsible, ethical, and accountable stewards of the school's monetary and nonmonetary resources, engaging in effective budgeting and accounting practices.
e) Protect teachers' and other staff members' work and learning from disruption.
f) Employ technology to improve the quality and efficiency of operations and management.
g) Develop and maintain data and communication systems to deliver actionable information for classroom and school improvement.
h) Know, comply with, and help the school community understand local, state, and federal laws, rights, policies, and regulations so as to promote student success.
i) Develop and manage relationships with feeder and connecting schools for enrollment management and curricular and instructional articulation.
j) Develop and manage productive relationships with the central office and school board.
k). Develop and administer systems for fair and equitable management of conflict among students, faculty and staff, leaders, families, and community.
l) Manage governance processes and internal and external politics toward achieving the school's mission and vision.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 9?	○	○	○	○	○
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is	○	○	○	○	○

aligned to PSEL
Standard 9?

Standard 10: School Improvement states Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Effective leaders:

a) Seek to make school more effective for each student, teachers and staff, families, and the community.
b) Use methods of continuous improvement to achieve the vision, fulfill the mission, and promote the core values of the school.
c) Prepare the school and the community for improvement, promoting readiness, an imperative for improvement, instilling mutual commitment and accountability, and developing the knowledge, skills, and motivation to succeed in improvement.
d) Engage others in an ongoing process of evidence-based inquiry, learning, strategic goal setting, planning, implementation, and evaluation for continuous school and classroom improvement.
e) Employ situationally-appropriate strategies for improvement, including transformational and incremental, adaptive approaches and attention to different phases of implementation.
f) Assess and develop the capacity of staff to assess the value and applicability of emerging educational trends and the findings of research for the school and its improvement.
g) Develop technically appropriate systems of data collection, management, analysis, and use, connecting as needed to the district office and external partners for support in planning, implementation, monitoring, feedback, and evaluation.
h) Adopt a systems perspective and promote coherence among improvement efforts and all aspects of school organization, programs, and services.
i) Manage uncertainty, risk, competing initiatives, and politics of change with courage and perseverance, providing support and encouragement, and openly communicating the need for, process for, and outcomes of improvement efforts.
j) Develop and promote leadership among teachers and staff for inquiry, experimentation and innovation, and initiating and implementing improvement.

	Extremely well (5)	Very well (4)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (2)	Not well at all (1)
How well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared or is preparing you to be a school-based administrator to meet PSEL Standard 10?	○	○	○	○	○
How well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to PSEL Standard 10?	○	○	○	○	○

Considering the overall program, how well do you believe the principal preparation program prepared you, or is preparing you, to be a school-based administrator?

o   Extremely well (5)

o   Very well (4)

o   Moderately well (3)

o   Slightly well (2)

o   Not well at all (1)

Considering the overall program, how well do you believe the principal preparation program was/is aligned to the current PSEL Standards?

o   Extremely well (5)

o   Very well (4)

o   Moderately well (3)

o   Slightly well (2)

o   Not well at all (1)

If you are interested in participating in a Focus Group related to this survey, please provide your name, email address, university, and cohort years below. Participation in the Focus Group is completely voluntary. Details regarding date and time of the Focus Group will be determined once responses have been collected.

If you choose to participate, you agree to participate in an audio recorded focus group that will take less than two hours where you will be identified by your first name to others who agree to participate. Pseudonyms will be used in any publications.

If you prefer not to participate, simply leave this question blank.

o   Name _____

o   Email Address _____

o   University _____

o   Cohort Years _____

Appendix D

Focus Group Protocol

(Adapted from the Office for Victims of Crimes, U.S. Department of Justice)

1. Provide introductory comments:

>a. **Greetings everyone! The session will be audio recorded, identify the locations of the recording devices, and inform everyone that I am turning them on now. (TURN ON RECORDER NOW)**

>b. **Welcome and thank everyone for volunteering to participate.**

>c. **Introduce myself briefly.**

2. **Now I will review Consent form first then the purpose of the Focus Group. (DISTRIBUTE CONSENT FORM AND READ IT).** I will answer any questions that may arise. After questions have been answered, if participants consent to participate, I will ask them to sign the Consent Form and hand it in. If anyone decides not to participate, I will thank them for their time and ask if they are willing to share with me why they decided not to participate. At this time, I will offer a copy of the consent form (unsigned) to each person.

3. **AFTER COLLECTING CONSENT FORM: "We are here to discuss the responses to the survey that each of you took in order to gather information regarding how effectively you were prepared to be a school-based administrator by your principal preparation cohort and how aligned the principal preparation cohorts are to current Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). Our purpose is to discuss the survey results and provide any additional insight regarding why significant differences exist on the survey results.**

4. **We will convene in one small group. The first set of survey responses will relate to you as an administrator or as not an administrator. The goal is to determine why significant differences existed on some survey responses between people who are administrators and people who are not administrators. The second session will relate to you as a member of your university cohort. The goal here is to determine why there are significant differences among the universities surveyed. After the first session, we'll take a brief break. But, feel free at any time to grab a snack, something to drink, or use the restrooms (SHOW WHERE RESTROOMS ARE LOCATED).**

5. **Distribute name tags (first names only). "Your name tags have your first name, university attended, and an "A" if you are a school-based administrator. Any other information you would like to share with the group is completely up to you."**

6. Basic guidelines for the focus group:

>a. "If you feel uncomfortable during the meeting, you have the right to leave or to pass on any question. There is no consequence for leaving. Being here is voluntary."

b. "I will be available after the meeting if you have any questions or concerns regarding the focus group process."

c. "Keep personal stories "in the room"; do not share the identity of the attendees or what anybody else said outside of the meeting."

d. "Everyone's ideas will be respected. Refrain from making judgments about what someone else says, but feel free to provide your own opinion even if it is in disagreement with others. Disagreements can provide greater insight, so feel free to provide your true opinion even if it is not in accord with others."

e. "One person talks at a time. But this is intended to be conversational. Be sure everyone has an opportunity to speak."

g. "It's okay to take a break if needed or to help yourself to food, drink, or bathroom break."

h. Everyone has the right to talk. I may ask someone who is talking a lot to step back and give others a chance to talk and may ask a person who isn't talking if he or she has anything to share.

i. Everybody has the right to pass on a question.

j. There are no right or wrong answers.

k. Does anybody have any questions?

7. **I will take notes on my computer during the data discussions. When it appears as if the discussion is at an end, I'll ask for a summary statement from each group represented (administrator/not an administrator or University A/B/C). If comments are published or shared, pseudonyms will be used if necessary. You are free to make comments as well on the papers provided, but I will be collecting them at the end.**

Any Questions?

8. **SEE PREQUESTIONS TO START**

9. **AFTER EACH SESSION**: ask "Is there anything else you want to share that we haven't talked about yet?"

10. Thank all for participating.

Appendix E

Check list for analyzing focus group data adapted from the Social Science Tools for Coastal

Programs

1. Get to know the data

    a. Read and familiarize yourself with the information

    b. Write down impressions

    c. Describe the integrity and quality of the information

    d. Explain the limitations

2. Focus on the analysis

    a. Write down key information needs that are based on goals

    b. Decide how to focus the analysis (by question? by group? other?)

3. Categorize information

    a. Identify and write down any trends or themes that present themselves

    b. Organize your data into these categories

4. Identify connections

    a. Consider combining similar categories to strengthen data groupings

    b. Consider the relative importance level of each category, based on goals

    c. Identify any connections or relationships between categories

5. Interpret the data

    a. Describe, in depth, what has been learned

    b. Draw attention to the main points

    c. Consider what information is most useful for the end user

Appendix F

Focus Group Note Taking Template by Administrator Status

(Templates are modified for space)

Standard 1 Focus Group Analysis: To what do you attribute this significant difference? What could be the reason graduates *with* administrative positions believe they were better **prepared** to meet **PSEL Standard 1** than graduates *without* administrative positions?

Graduates with Administrative Positions Perspective

Graduates without Administrative Positions Perspective

Common Perspective

Standard 1 Focus Group Analysis: To what do you attribute this significant difference? What could be the reason graduates *with* administrative positions believe their program was **better aligned** to **PSEL Standard** 1 than graduates *without* administrative positions?

Graduates with Administrative Positions Perspective

Graduates without Administrative Positions Perspective

Common Perspective

Appendix G

Focus Group Note Taking Template by University

(Templates are modified for space and university pseudonyms are used)

Standard 4 Focus Group Analysis: To what do you attribute this significant difference? What could be the reason graduates and students from **University B** and **University C** believe their program **better prepared** them to meet **PSEL Standard 4** than graduates and students from **University A**?

University A Perspective

University B Perspective

University C Perspective

Common Perspective

Standard 4 Focus Group Analysis: To what do you attribute this significant difference? What could be the reason graduates and students from **University B** and **University C** believe their program was **better aligned** to **PSEL Standard 4** than graduates and students from **University A**?

University A Perspective

University B Perspective

University C Perspective

Common Perspective